

News Release

Parker River National Wildlife Refuge

6 Plum Island Turnpike, Newburyport, MA 01950

(978) 465-5753; Fax: (978) 465-2807; https://www.fws.gov/refuge/parker_river/

March 28, 2017

For Immediate Release

Contact: Parker River National Wildlife Refuge; (978)-465-5753

As Plovers Return, Refuge Beach to Close

The ocean beach at Parker River National Wildlife Refuge will be closed to all public access beginning on Saturday, April 1st in order to provide undisturbed nesting habitat for the piping plover, a small shorebird that is listed as threatened on the federal endangered species list. A small section of beach, accessible via the parking lot 1 boardwalk, will remain open to the public. Sections of the beach may be reopened in late July if it is determined that such action will not be detrimental to the plovers' nesting success. Generally, the entire beach is reopened by mid to late August after the last plover chick fledges.

Refuge beach closures, initiated in 1991, have proven very beneficial for the birds as the number of nesting pairs and fledglings (young which have reached the flying stage) has significantly increased. In 1987, for example, only a single pair of piping plovers was recorded at the refuge and none of their young fledged. During 2016, the refuge beach supported 47 nesting pairs and fledged 77 young.

Visitors are reminded that other areas of the refuge will remain open including the Salt Pannes Wildlife Observation Area, North Pool Overlook, Hellcat Wildlife Observation Area and associated interpretive trail, Pines Trail, Stage Island Pool Observation Tower and Overlook and the Lot 5 boardwalk (which provides views of, but no access to, the beach). Due to the popularity of the refuge, vehicle capacity is periodically reached with a subsequent temporary closure. An early arrival helps visitors avoid this inconvenience. A daily fee of \$5/vehicle, \$2 walk-on or bicycle, remains in effect, with a \$20 annual pass also available. Also, other beaches are available in the area including those in Newbury and Newburyport on the northern end of Plum Island, Salisbury Beach State Reservation in Salisbury, and the beach at Crane Memorial Reservation in Ipswich.