

## **Duxbury Beach – Piping Plover Update**

*May 15, 2017*

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In keeping with the commitment made by the Town Manager to the public with regard to sharing information pertaining to the presence of Piping Plover on Duxbury Beach, the Town of Duxbury is providing periodic updates on the status of nesting pairs currently inhabiting the beach and the potential impacts that may be experienced by beach patrons. This information is being provided by the Endangered Species Officer in conjunction with the Duxbury Harbormaster's office.

This week there are 17 active plover nests on Duxbury Beach. Additional territorial pairs of plovers may arrive as there were 21 active pairs in the 2016 season. Plovers are currently still considered a Threatened Species (the level just below Endangered) by Federal and State Fish and Wildlife, and their protection is mandated by State and Federal laws. At this time the ORV limits on the crossovers are still 250 Resident 250 Non-resident ORVs.

Based on the best possible current data it appears the time period with the greatest Pedestrian and or ORV Restrictions could begin on or about Thursday, May 25<sup>th</sup>. It is anticipated that approximately 7 plover nests may be hatched at this time and into Memorial Day weekend. It is important to note that these are wild animals and therefore somewhat unpredictable and susceptible to tidal over wash, predation, and mortality from exposure to severe weather, as well as unpredictable movements throughout their habitat on the beach. ORV and Pedestrian restrictions per set of plover chicks is 28 to 35 days, meaning these restrictions may be partially lifting by mid-July. Also important to note is that many of these restricted areas may overlap to an extent in both space (area) and timing (time until chicks can fly).

As mandated when restrictions occur, the maximum ORV limits may be reduced (below 250 Resident and 250 Non-Resident max ORVs allowed when no restrictions are in place) on the front beach to maintain compliance with the Duxbury Beach Management and Conservation Plan, and to maintain public safety and order.

For example: ORV limits may be set down to 125 Resident and 125 Non-Resident ORVs (in some years these numbers have been substantially lower) based on a given area of ORV corridor restricted (in this case, approx. half of ORV corridor restricted). The maximum ORV limits must maintain a 50% Resident and 50% Non-Resident ORV count at the limit. However, there may be a differing number of ORV permits on the beach at a given moment under said limits (100 Resident ORVs and 120 Non-Resident) as long as neither number exceeds the limit set. A temporary ORV beach closure due to ORV limits or capacity being met in this example would occur when 125 Resident and 125 Non-Resident ORVs are on the front beach ORV corridor at one time. It is also possible for Non-Residents to meet the limit and be sent to the overflow beach area (follow the orange overflow lot signs) north of "Blakeman's" bath house while still allowing Resident ORVs over the crossover(s) as they have not met the limit yet (this occurs frequently).

Typically, as a result of higher demand, non-resident beach access can be limited between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. which can last until approximately 2:00 or 2:30 p.m. Once limitations on the beach are in place as a result of the presence of Piping Plovers, and higher demand for access is created as a result of warmer weather, earlier arrival times by beach patrons may help to ensure access (i.e., well in advance of 9:00 a.m. as noted above). We hope that this information will help to illustrate the importance of arriving early since access is provided on a first come, first served basis and can matter greatly if the weather is favorable for beach-going conditions.

Please continue to check for the latest updates as conditions and circumstances can change with little to zero notice based on activities of wild animals. This information will be updated if conditions change or as new

information becomes available. For further information about Duxbury Beach conditions, please visit the Town of Duxbury Harbormaster's website at: <http://www.duxburypolice.org/home/news/harbormaster-beach-notifications>. The most up-to-date information pertaining to beach conditions including restrictions and access limitations may be found by following the Duxbury Harbormaster's Twitter feed at [https://twitter.com/Dux\\_HM](https://twitter.com/Dux_HM)

Thank you for your patience and cooperation as we continue to maintain as much pedestrian and ORV access as possible while managing protected species.