

**Beach Plum Island Nature Preserve  
Management Plan  
May, 2016**

Beach Plum Island was dedicated as a State Nature Preserve on December 14, 1990. It offers the only “wilderness” beach in the State Park system. The function of a nature preserve is to protect important features of the natural heritage of Delaware and guarantee their existence for future generations. Beach Plum Island Nature Preserve was established to protect and to maintain the barrier spit, its flora and fauna, and its unaltered geological processes. Site-specific management policies will be based on protection of the natural resources of Beach Plum Island. Visitors are allowed on certain portions of the Nature Preserve, subject to the policies of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, Division of Parks and Recreation. Visitors are to use only those areas designated for public use.

The barrier spit ecosystem at Beach Plum Island, encompassing beach, dune, tidal marsh and riverine habitats, is a dynamic system that is susceptible to damage caused by unregulated human activity. Dunes, and the vegetation that are integral in their creation and persistence in particular, are extremely susceptible to damage from trampling by humans.

During 2015 a trained volunteer assisting both the Division of Parks and Recreation and the Division of Fish and Wildlife, documented the birds observed on the beach and/or just offshore. Based on 27 reports containing bird observations these data were collected. A total of 22 species were noted. The most commonly observed species include: Sanderling, Ruddy Turnstone, Least Tern, Semipalmated Plover, Willet, Royal Tern, Black-bellied Plover, American Oystercatcher, Common Tern, and Piping Plover (federally listed). Data available from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s eBird database (a database of bird observations reported through an online application by birders that is reviewed by local experts) includes an additional 50+ bird species recorded at Beach Plum Island. Additionally, terrapin nests were also observed within the preserve. Observed terrapin nesting activity was more along the portion of the beach closed to the public.

As a matter of policy and of public record the Division of Parks and Recreation has the authority to set limits on the location and type of use of the Nature Preserve. The 2016 Management Plan for Beach Plum Island includes the following actions to allow recreational use and to protect the natural resources of Beach Plum Island.

**Surfishing**

1. Surf fishing vehicle access shall be restricted to the beach area beginning where the vehicle crossing enters the beach to a point approximately 0.6 miles to the south. The southern boundary of the surf fishing beach shall be marked by fencing and signed appropriately. See map attached entitled “Beach Plum Island Nature Preserve Beach and River Access Management Plan”

**Rationale:** This is consistent with the goal of resource protection while offering recreational use of the Nature Preserve, and follows the Division policy regarding the safe use of the beachfront by vehicles. When the Nature Preserve was first dedicated, it was recognized that Beach Plum Island could provide a location for surf fishing vehicle access in addition to the ocean beaches in Cape Henlopen, Delaware Seashore and Fenwick Island State Parks. As such, the Natural Areas Advisory Council agreed to allow vehicles on the

beach *on a trial basis* to determine if it would be compatible with the Nature Preserve's primary purpose of resource protection. While it is illogical to assume there are no negative impacts to our coastal resources associated with vehicular activity on our beaches, this section of beach has been a dedicated area for surf fishing for the last 26 years and the vehicle access agreed upon will not change with this plan.

The beach being utilized for this activity will always be roughly the same size from year to year, as long as there are no hard structures and natural dunes remain behind the beach. It is our policy at this time to maintain the status quo in terms of length of beach for surf fishing access.

### ***Pedestrian River Access***

2. A pedestrian trail shall be maintained from the southwest corner of the parking lot heading southeast to the banks of the Broadkill River to provide access for bank fishing and crabbing. Snow fencing or "symbolic" fencing shall be erected on the river side running from the southwest corner of the vehicle crossing to the east bank of the Broadkill River. This fence will provide just over 1,000 feet of bank fishing access. Access to approximately 1.76 miles of dune and marsh area south of this fence will be prohibited.  
Rationale: This provides for controlled access to fishing spots on the river. It also keeps disturbance to the dunes, back dune, marsh and wetlands to a minimum. This will also protect nesting terrapin sites.

### ***Closure***

3. The approximately 1.2 miles of beach south of the fence marking the south end of the surf fishing beach shall be closed to vehicles and pedestrians. Access to this prohibited area may be allowed for Division approved management activities, permitted research, wildlife monitoring and educational and interpretive programs.  
Rationale: This area is set aside as the only "wilderness" beach [approximately 1.2 miles out of 18.14 miles of beach in Delaware State Parks (.066%)] for habitat preservation and species protection, and research on natural succession, and coastal processes.

### ***Refuse***

4. Beach Plum Island shall maintain a "carry in- carry out" policy for trash.  
Rationale: All State Parks maintain this policy.

### ***Enforcement***

5. The area shall be patrolled by Park Enforcement Officers in cooperation with Delaware Fish & Wildlife Species Conservation and Research Program staff on a consistent basis, and using trained volunteers when available.  
Rationale: Beach Plum Island is a very active fishing area in the spring, resulting in a lot of activity on a 24 hour basis. To adequately address resource protection issues and to be "good neighbors", park staff should be on-site on a regular basis. This may be once a shift during the busy spring months.

### ***Domesticated Animals***

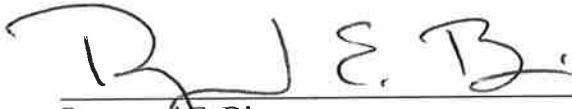
6. Pets shall be permitted in surf fishing areas of the nature preserve per park regulations. Pets must be kept on a leash not to exceed six feet in length, must be under proper control at all times, shall not be left unattended, and owners shall be responsible for the clean-up and removal of any feces deposited by the animal. No equine activity is allowed.

Rationale: There is no reason to keep pets off of the beach, as long as regulatory compliance is maintained. If compliance is determined to be an issue, this will change.

Access dates: Beach Plum Island is typically closed to vehicles and parking lot access by a gate at the entrance road during the winter. Beach Plum Island is open from March 1 – December 31.

The Beach Plum Island Nature Preserve Management Plan shall be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary.

Signed this 14<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2016.



Raymond E. Bivens  
Director, Parks and Recreation

