

OFF-ROAD VEHICLE ACTIVITY REPORT

CAPE COD NATIONAL SEASHORE

2024

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Executive Summary

On April 10, 2024, the oversand office opened for permit sales. On April 15th, the oversand route opened with 1.4 miles of corridor on Race Point North Beach followed by an additional 1.7 miles of corridor on Race Point South Beach open on April 16th.

The spring oversand route remained relatively small due to a combination of shorebird nesting protection and beach conditions. Drive-through areas were prominently used throughout the spring and were very effective in keeping sections of the route open while maintaining required buffers around plover nests. Flexible management was used twice on one pair of plovers that renested. Both of their nests were lost to predation.

An average of two miles of oversand route was open in spring from April 15th to June 17th. The entire route closed on June 18th, due to piping plover chick hatchings.

Closures were not as extensive as in 2023. The oversand route remained in total closure for 46 days until gradual re-openings began on August 3rd. An average of 3 miles of oversand route was open in the late summer and fall, until the permit season closed on November 15th.

Piping plover nesting results showed that the majority of nests documented by shorebird staff occurred on the oversand route. The Race Point Beach area alone accounted for over 25% of staff documented piping plover activity in the rest of the park. Average nest productivity on the oversand route slightly exceeded productivity averages from the rest of the park.

2024 Permit sales and revenues were comparable to those in 2023.

There was an emphasis on oversand presence and enforcement in 2024. The number of violation notices issued (20) remained comparable to 2023 and recent years. The overall number of oversand route incidents by enforcement staff reported in this document (177) increased by 285%, from 2023.

Regulatory History

Since the creation of Cape Cod National Seashore in 1961, Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) operations have been strictly regulated. During the 1960's and 1970's, ORV trails and routes were extensive. Almost the entire outer beach from Long Point in Provincetown to Nauset Inlet in Eastham was available for ORV use. Additionally, an extensive system of inner routes and trails behind the primary dune (i.e., landward) existed in Provincetown and North Truro. In 1978, Eastham closed the route between Coast Guard Beach and Nauset Inlet because the Blizzard of '78 had destroyed the available ORV route. At approximately the same time, Wellfleet Town Meeting banned the use of ORV's on their beaches between June 15 and September 15. Then in the early 1980's Wellfleet closed the outer beach to ORV use year-round. As a result, the ORV route on the back beach was limited to the area from the Wellfleet-Truro town line north to Long Point in Provincetown.

In 1980, the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) sued the Seashore for what the CLF believed were inadequate controls over ORV driving within the Seashore. The Seashore created a new ORV management plan that addressed a variety of concerns. The ORV Management Plan of 1981 closed all inner routes and trails to the public except for dune cottage residents or their caretakers, dune tour operations, and National Park Service patrols. The 1981 plan also limited the ORV route on the back beach from Hatches Harbor to the Wellfleet town line, and only allowed ORV operation on the beach from Head of the Meadow in Truro to the Wellfleet town line at night.

In 1984, the judge hearing the CLF suit in Boston ruled that the Seashore's 1981 plan was adequate and suggested the plan could be improved but did not require that the plan be changed. Following the judge's suggestion, the ORV Management Plan of 1985 was implemented. The 1985 plan permanently closed the portion of the ORV corridor between High Head in Truro and the Wellfleet town line. It further restricted the use of ORV's by creating a season for general operation between April 15 and November 15. ORV's could operate on the beach between November 16 and April 14 only for the purposes of accessing town shellfish beds, picking up flotsam and jetsam, or in the case of dune cottage residents or their caretakers for accessing their cottage. A limited access pass (LAP) was required for these uses and no travel was permitted within 2 hours of high tide.

In 1986, the Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*), a small beach-nesting shorebird, was federally listed as a threatened species. The Seashore was required by law to protect threatened and endangered species occurring within the park. The Seashore began to routinely close portions of the existing ORV corridor when Piping Plover chicks were present. As the plover population on the Seashore increased, the amount of ORV corridor decreased during June and July each year. In 1995, as little as 0.3 mi. of ORV corridor was available for several weeks.

The need for new regulation was motivated by several events including management issues related to the inflexibility of the existing rule to deal with changing conditions on the beach. To revise the regulation, in 1995, the Seashore entered into a negotiated rule-making process along with 22 agencies, organizations, and interest groups with long-term interests and involvement in ORV management at the Seashore. Members from the environmental, mobile sports fishing, and ORV communities along with representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, and the six towns in which the Seashore's boundary lies, comprised the rule-making committee. These groups met over a period of three

months with the objective of reaching consensus on a new ORV management plan. In November 1995, the committee presented a proposed rule for ORV Management at Cape Cod National Seashore. The rule was published in the Federal Register for public comment and became codified into 36 CFR in 1998 (36 CFR 7.67).

The Committee agreed to a variety of mutual concerns (see Federal Register 63:9143-9148 for the complete final rule). ORV use remained limited to April 15 through November 15. The designated route was established, including the back beach from Hatches Harbor to High Head in Truro. The portion of beach from Exit 8 to High Head would be closed from April 1 to July 20. The area from Coast Guard Beach in Truro to Longnook Beach in Truro would be open for the purpose of night fishing, and the area from High Head to Head of the Meadow Beach, including the access at Head of the Meadow, would be open from July 1 through August 31 (Figure 1). Plover nesting and other resource or public safety issues could require that all or portions of the corridor be closed for indefinite periods of time. The amount of open ORV corridor is typically less in the beginning of the season than in August due to the terms of the negotiated rule. Up to 10.5 miles of ORV corridor could potentially be open in late July and August, depending on the availability of the High Head portion of the corridor, condition of beach cuts and would require that all plover chicks are fledged.

The negotiated rule also addressed NPS responsibilities for monitoring the use and condition of the oversand routes (see map in Figure 1) for the purpose of reviewing the effects on natural, cultural, and aesthetic resources of vehicles in designated corridors. The rule further stated that information gathered from this process would be used as the basis for an annual report to the Secretary of the Interior and the public describing the results of the monitoring conducted. This document is the **26th** annual ORV monitoring report as required by the negotiated rule.

The negotiated rule set a limit of 3,400 ORV permits as the maximum amount to be sold annually. The rule specified that the 3,400 permits were to be a combination of both annual oversand and self-contained vehicle (SCV) permits. In 1998, the first year that the negotiated rule was implemented, the cap was reached in the first week of September. Many people who traditionally came to Cape Cod in September and October to fish were unable to purchase a permit. To allow a more equitable distribution of permits throughout the season, in 1999 the Seashore converted 200 of the 3,400 permits available into rotating weekly permits. The rationale was that some of the people who purchase annual permits actually use the permit for 7 days or less. No more than 200 weekly permits were active at any one time so as not to exceed the 3400-permit cap. From 1999 until 2004, the 3,200 annual permits sold out on progressively earlier dates each year and there has been a corresponding increase in the number of weekly permits sold during the summer months. Annual permits went on sale on April 10 each year and sold out in late July 1999, early July 2000, late June 2001, May 24, 2002, April 26, 2003, and April 19, 2004.

In 2006 the sales process continued to run smoothly. Seasonal permits were available throughout the season and there were adequate weekly permits available each day. The ORV corridor, in 2006, was completely closed for daytime recreational use for the first time, and there was a near to total closure from June 11 – July 12. The Seashore began efforts to explore possible options, which would allow for adaptive management alternatives. The Seashore hosted an informational public meeting on the ORV closures on July 18, 2006. The Cape Cod National

Seashore Advisory Commission hosted an ORV and Piping Plover Public Meeting and Workshop in December.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLE ROUTE

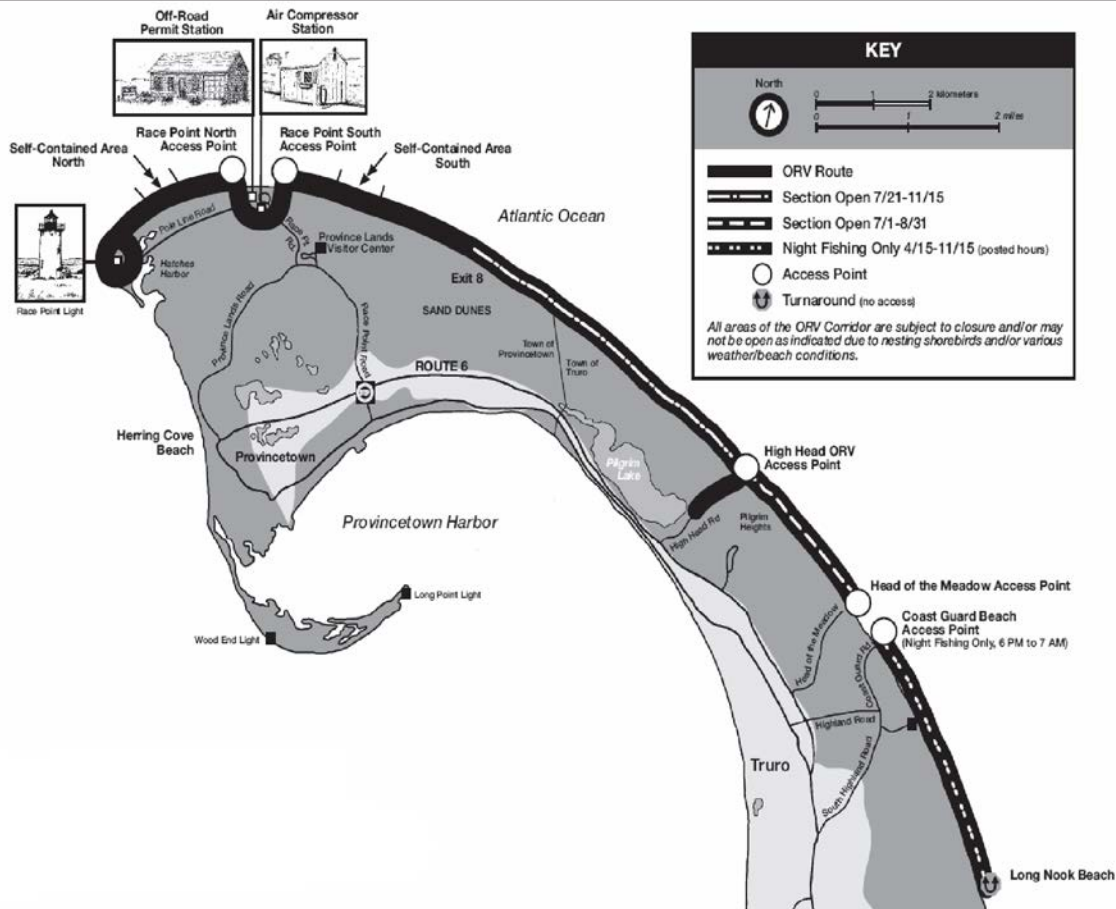


Figure 1. Map of the current oversand vehicle routes defined by the negotiated rule, Cape Cod National Seashore.

In 2007 the Seashore completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) to improve ORV access while maintaining piping plover protection. The Selected Alternative from the EA provided three management options to improve access to the ORV Corridor if there was a near (<0.5 miles) or total daytime ORV corridor closure. On June 22, the three ORV accesses near Race Point Beach closed and 0.5 miles of corridor was opened at the High Head access, which was one of the options made available from the 2007 ORV EA. High Head remained open until July 13, when a total daytime closure occurred. Hatches Harbor was closed from May 28 through July 27. In 2007 the entire ORV corridor reopened on August 29.

In 2008 a portion of the ORV corridor remained open during the bird nesting season. This was the first time this had happened since 2005 and was directly attributed to the 2007 ORV EA.

From 2009 to 2012 additional changes were made to provide increased resource protection on the ORV corridor. The ORV management regulations have remained unchanged during these years.

In 2013, there was a total closure of the ORV corridor due to the government shutdown from October 1, 2013, through October 17, 2013.

From 2014-2016 ORV management remained unchanged. There were temporary closures of the corridor due to storms during the season.

During the spring and summer 2017 season the weather was generally cooler, with more rainy days than the previous year. High Head and Head of the Meadow ORV access roads remained closed for the entire season. There was a total closure of the corridor from July 20th through July 24th. From May 26th until August 9th there was less than a half mile of corridor open.

The 2018 season had fairly good weather. Head of the Meadow and Coast Guard Beach night fishing accesses remained closed for the entire season due to beach conditions. There was a total closure of the corridor from June 26th through June 30th.

The 2019 season saw the longest period of total closure since the Negotiated Rule went into effect in 1998. The corridor entered near closure on June 16th. Daytime use of the ORV corridor closed on June 28th and the entire corridor was closed from July 5th – August 4th.

In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic caused the opening of the corridor to be delayed. The corridor and permit office opened for the season on June 3rd. Due to the delayed opening many piping plover broods had nested which, in combination with beach conditions, resulted in SCV's not being allowed on the corridor until late summer. The corridor entered near closure on June 19th and the entire corridor was closed from July 4th- July 29th.

In 2021 the oversand operation returned to business as usual with permit sales opening on April 10th and the corridor opening on April 15th. A nor'easter Memorial Day weekend resulted in many piping plover nests to be lost and elongated the breeding season. The entire corridor was closed from June 18th – August 11th.

During the 2022 season Flexible management was implemented for the first time within the ORV corridor. A nest adjacent to the Race Point South access was flexibly managed allowing vehicles to travel within 14 meters of the nest. This management decision allowed the South access to remain open for 27 days until the nest hatched.

A wet summer in 2023 saw rain affecting visitation on many weekends throughout the summer season. One instance of flexible management was used again on Race Point South to allow access past a nest near the Race Point South access. There was a total closure of the corridor from June 5th – August 8th. Hurricanes passing offshore brought high surf conditions which caused the closure of the majority of the corridor on August 30-31 and September 15-16.

2024 brought challenging shortages in staffing, including the departure of several employees integral to oversand corridor management and permit sales. The trend of prolonged oversand closures due to shorebird nesting continued in 2024. Flexible management was again employed to keep the Race Point South Access open. There was a total closure of the beach from June 18th – August 2nd. The route was also closed Sep 18-21 due to over-washes.

2024 ORV MANAGEMENT ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Regulatory and Policy Changes

In 2024 there were no regulatory or policy changes. The following are examples of the continuation of policy changes from recent years.

- Park management again implemented the use of flexible management on the Oversand Corridor. One pair of piping plovers that nested close to the Race Point South Access had flexible management used twice on them (their first nest then a subsequent re-nest). Unfortunately, both of those nests were lost to predation.
- Implementation of drive-through areas was widespread. This policy is becoming rather well established; thanks to the new signs and buy-in from the public. Drive-throughs were especially effective in keeping significant portions of beach open in the spring, while also providing a safe buffer for nests. Some enforcement of drive-through areas has still been needed, however oversand users are largely complying with expectations.
- Parking restrictions for SUVs and boat trailers utilizing the alternate SCV area located at Province Lands Visitor Center during corridor closures remained in effect.
- The Hatches Harbor spit continues to be managed as critical habitat for Piping Plovers. The spit was symbolically fenced as potential nesting habitat from April 1 to June 30. Again, three pairs of plovers had nests in the area. This year, Hatches Harbor opened to vehicles on August 23rd (8 days later than last year).

Number and Type of Permits Issued

Permit sales opened on April 10th 2024. The mail-in renewals continue to be a popular option.

The 46 day total closure of the oversand corridor during the height of the summer (Jun 18-Aug 2) contributed to another decrease in oversand permit revenue for 2024. The overall decrease in revenue from permit sales this year was less than 1% but marks the third straight year of decline in permit revenues. (see fig. 2)

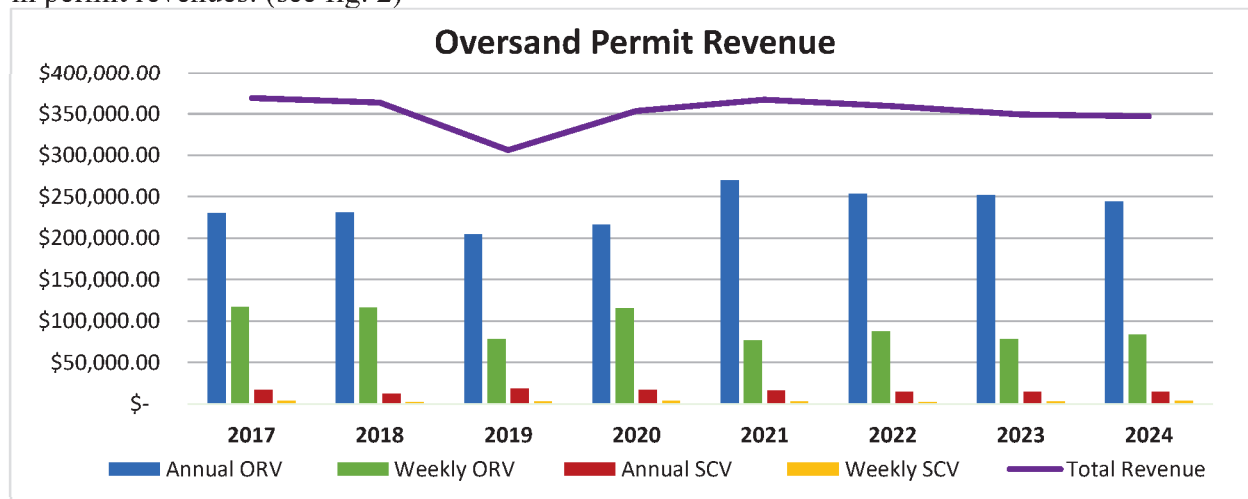


Figure 2. Bar graph showing of oversand permit revenue by year.

The total number of permits sold in 2024 increased, however that increase is due to more weekly permit sales over annual permit sales. Due to the pricing structure, revenues dropped even though 67 more permits were sold in 2024 than 2023. (see fig. 3)

The following is a comparison between 2024 and 2023 permit sales.

- 2024 Annual ORV Permit: sold 54 less, representing 3.2% less than 2023
- 2024 Annual SCV Permit: sold 2 less, representing 3.0% less than 2023
- 2024 Weekly ORV Permit: sold 110 more, representing 7.0% more than 2023
- 2024 Weekly SCV Permit: sold 13 more, representing 30.9% more than 2023

YEAR	Annual ORV Permits	Annual SCV Permits	Total Annual Permits	Weekly ORV Permits	Weekly SCV Permits	Total Weekly Permits	Total Permits Sold
2005	2361	280	2641	3463	60	3523	6164
2006	2021	221	2242	2936	49	2985	5227
2007	1697	171	1868	2659	89	2748	4616
2008	1457	141	1598	2294	65	2359	3957
2009	1342	133	1473	2437	86	2523	3998
2010	1355	137	1492	2873	104	2977	4469
2011	1293	115	1408	2576	81	2657	4065
2012	1347	113	1460	2577	75	2652	4112
2013	1397	95	1492	2514	76	2590	4082
2014	1414	88	1502	2495	52	2547	4049
2015	1443	95	1538	2590	61	2651	4189
2016	1607	92	1699	2654	56	2710	4409
2017	1538	76	1614	2351	50	2401	4015
2018	1544	57	1601	2333	32	2365	3966
2019	1369	85	1454	1569	44	1613	3067
2020	1443	78	1521	2309	53	2362	3883
2021	1803	74	1877	1533	43	1576	3453
2022	1694	65	1759	1763	33	1796	3555
2023	1682	67	1749	1573	42	1615	3364
2024	1628	65	1693	1683	55	1738	3431

Figure 3. Chart number and types of oversand permits sold by year.

There are up to 3,000 annual oversand permits available each year. In 2024, 56% (1,693) of those permits were sold. Of the 1,682 annual permits sold, 96% were ORV and 4% were SCVs.

The 400 remaining available permits are weekly permits. Weekly permits can be reissued after they expire, as long as there are not more than 400 active at any given time. In 2024, there were a total of 1738 weekly permits sold. That means 51% of all permits sold in 2024 were weekly permits. That represents a 3% increase in number of weekly permits sold over annuals since 2023. (48% of permits sold in 2023 were weekly)

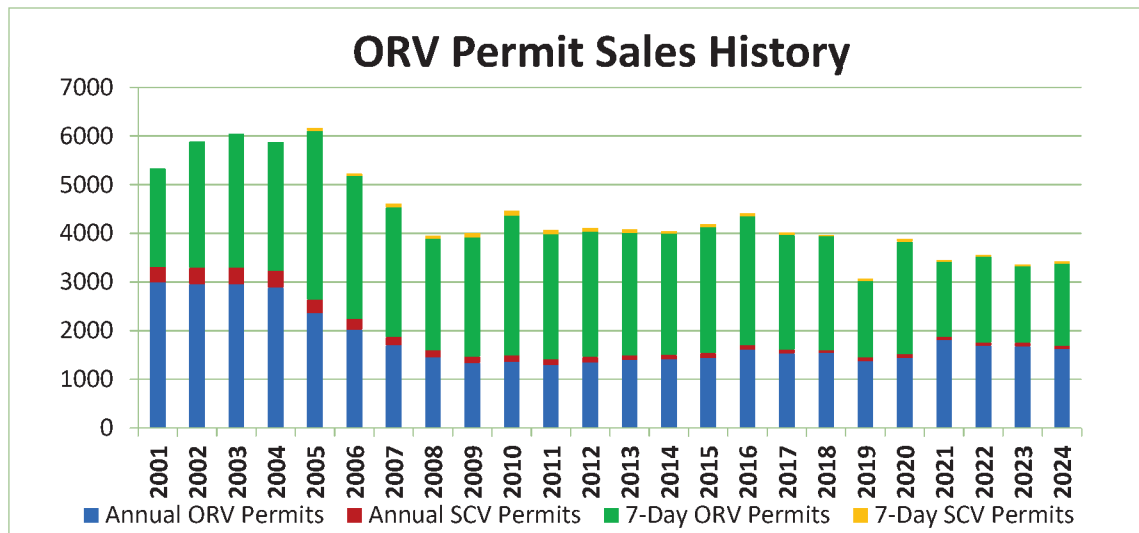


Figure 4. Bar graph of recent history of permit issuance in the ORV program.

Oversand Route Closures

** For this section, closures and statistical comparisons of closures exclude the 2.5 miles of oversand route at Coast Guard Beach in Truro which is only open for night fishing. Unless otherwise specified, the following reports of closures specifically refers to regular use sections of the corridor from Race Point to Head of the Meadow.*

In 2024, a combination of beach morphology and protected shorebird nesting activities resulted in large amounts of the oversand route being closed.

Starting off in the spring, the oversand route opened with a little more than half of what is scheduled to be open at Race Point. That amount declined to less than 2 miles for most of the spring, until the whole oversand route closed on June 18th.

Hatches Harbor spit was closed all spring and through the total closure. A small turnaround area was open at the end of the pole line route in the spring.

Coast Guard Beach for night fishing was closed all spring and did not open until the end of the piping plover nesting season in August.

The SCV areas were closed for significant portions of the spring due to nesting habitat, and/or beach morphology in the form of a deep trough at the base of both the Race Point North and South accesses. An alternate SVC area was established in the Race Point Parking lot. The traditional SCV area opened for the first time May 19th on Race Point South but was limited to only pickup campers, because of the trough. Race Point North SCV opened on May 22nd without any limitation but very few SCV permit holders risked bringing their campers through either trough. Most SCV users in spring elected to stay in the alternate SCV area of Race Point lot because of the poor access conditions.

Between April 15th and the total closure on June 18th, Shorebird Technician staff and Ranger staff were able to implement numerous drive-through areas. The drive-throughs were successful in getting oversand vehicles past nests in close proximity to the corridor, while still maintaining established buffers. Flexible management was also utilized on one pair that nested twice at the

Race Point South Access. Both of those flexibly managed nests were lost due to predation. The successful implementation of the drive through areas and flexible management made a significant difference in keeping the spring closures from being much worse than what they were.

The total closure in 2024 lasted 46 days from June 18th through August 2nd; and was due to piping plover nesting activities. This year's total closure was a 19-day improvement from 2023 when the total closure was 65 days. The 2024 total closure also marks six consecutive years that the entirety of the oversand route has been closed for a majority of the summer season. (see Fig. 5)

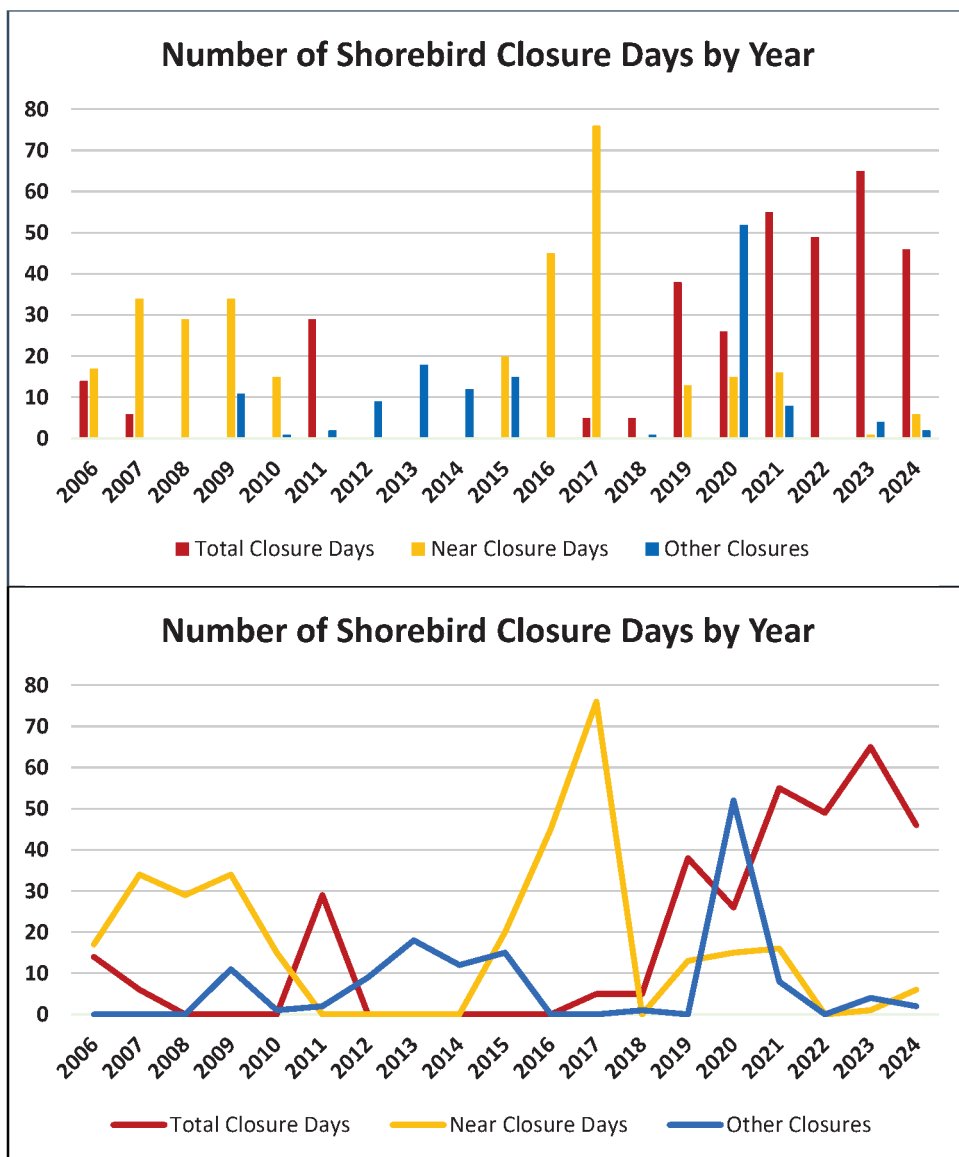


Figure 5. Charts showing number of days the oversand route has been total or near closure by year. *note “Other Closures” mostly refer to weather events, except for the 2013 Gov. Shutdown and 2020 Covid closures. *These stats do not include CGB night fishing.

The oversand route began a gradual reopening, starting the first week of August, as piping plover broods started fledging. Shorebird technician staff reported several challenges to monitoring efforts such as large numbers of broods intermingling over relatively short distances making it

difficult to discern which brood was which. This was especially the case at Race Point North Beach. They also reported difficulty with the availability of their staff to regularly and simultaneously monitor all pre-fledgling broods that could have resulted in oversand openings.

The first portions of oversand route opened almost a week earlier than in 2023. The rate of the openings however were still gradual and offered a small fraction of open oversand route compared to what was legislatively scheduled to be open for that time of year. Only two out of ten possible miles were open toward the end of August.

The trend of having only a fraction of the possible oversand route throughout the oversand permit season continues. 2024 saw some improvements in comparison to 2023, but large sections of the oversand route remained unavailable for permit users. (see fig. 6)

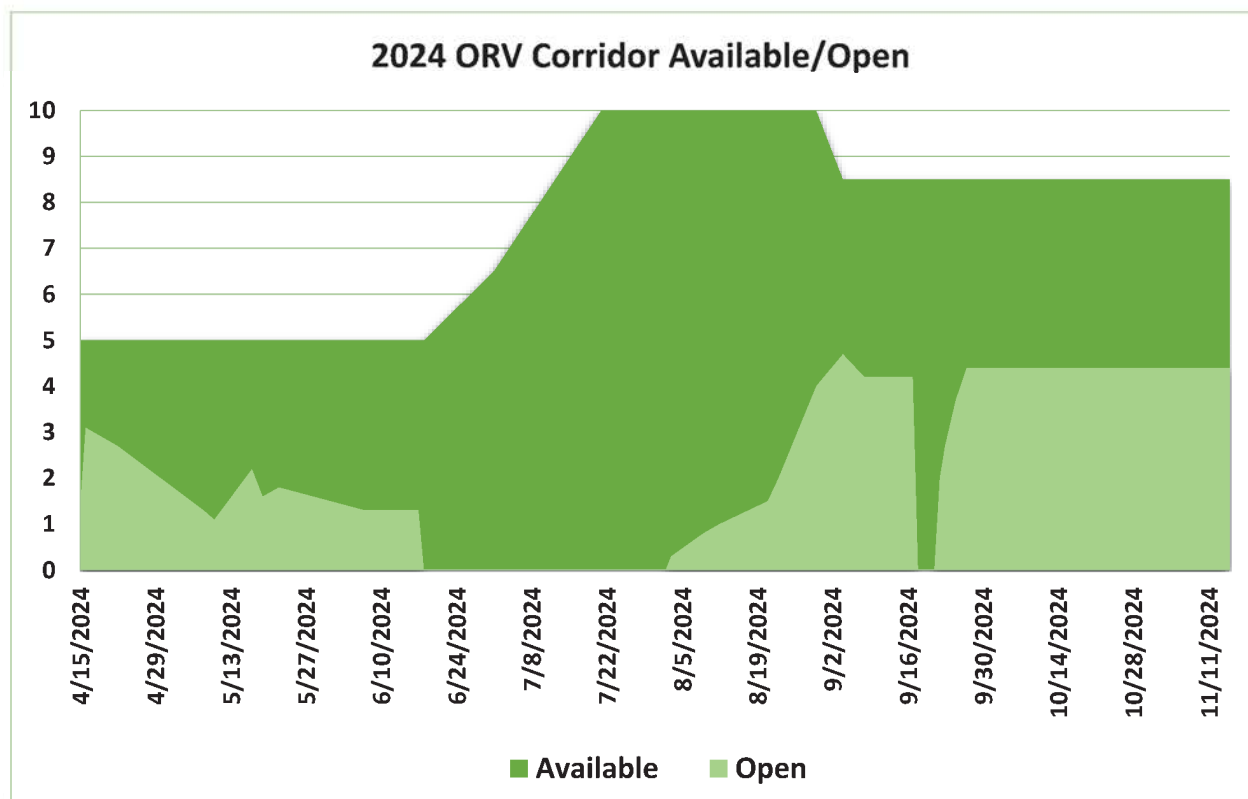


Figure 6: Chart showing available and open ORV corridor in miles for the 2024 season
See Figure 1 for dates sections of the corridor are available to be opened per regulation.
**Note This figure excludes the 2.5 miles of Coast Guard Beach for Night Fishing.*

High Head was the first portion of the route to reopen on August 3rd for only 0.3 mile. The Oversand route remained in near closure (0.5 mile or less) until August 9th when High Head was expanded to 0.8 mile. This was the same day that Coast Guard Beach opened for night fishing for 2.3 miles.

The first section of oversand route to reopen at Race Point was on August 12th when 1.0 mile of Race Point North Beach opened. Race Point South Beach did not reopen until August 30th.

The SCV areas reopened at Race Point North and Race Point South on August 12th and 30th respectively.

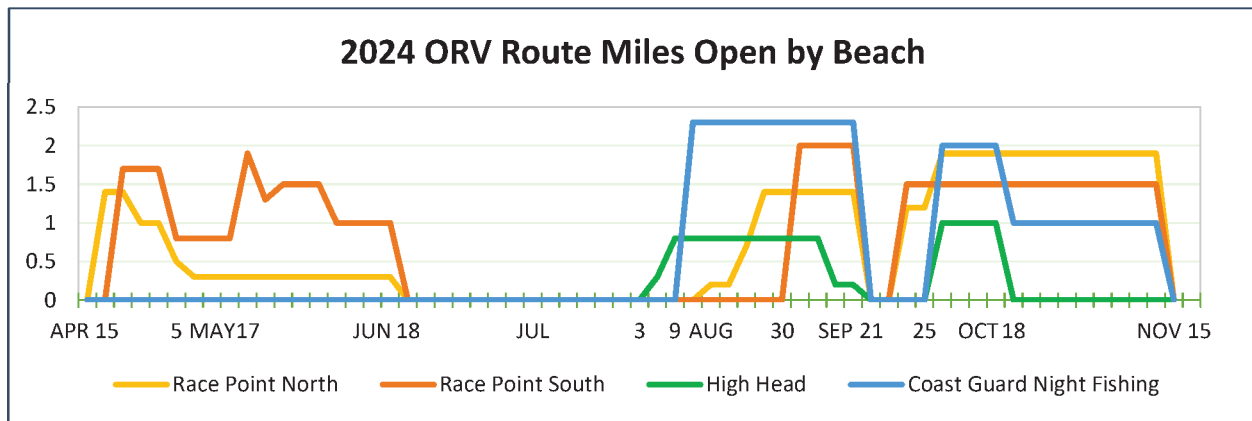


Figure 7: Graph showing miles of ORV Route open by beach for the duration of the season.
**Race Point North includes Hatches Harbor*

Other notable closures from 2024:

- Head of the Meadow oversand route never opened in 2024 initially due to shorebirds. A beach cut immediately south of the High Head Access and the very poor condition of the Head of the Meadow Access kept it closed for the last week of August.
 - A small beach cut 0.3 mile north of High Head access posed challenges in 2024. The cut was minor enough that it only filled on the higher end of the monthly tide cycles. A single lane was established above the cut, close to a large swath of dune grass. As the tide cycles rose the cut worsened. Rangers observed vehicle tracks driving through dune grass to avoid the cut. As a result, on Sept. 8th, rangers closed the half mile of route beyond the cut. On Oct 18th, all of High Head closed due to additional delineator post violations. High Head stayed closed for the remainder of the oversand permit season. (see pictures in “Enforcement” section of report)
 - A large cut between High Head & Race Point South Beaches continues to prevent the connecting of those two routes. The High Head side of the cut improved this year adding approximately a quarter mile of corridor, but the deep cut beyond that was too treacherous to open.
 - Race Point North Beach never opened all the way to Hatches Harbor this year. The beach remained especially narrow for the last quarter mile, before reaching the crossover access. As a result, the Pole Line Route was needed to access Hatches Harbor this year.
 - Coast Guard Beach for night fishing did not open until August 9th.
 - A Sept. 9th surprise wash-over of the corridor occurred on one tide. Rangers dedicated nearly entire shift to adjusting the route to avoid a closure. They were successful.
 - High tides and surf prompted rangers to preemptively close the oversand route for 4-days from Sep 18th to Sep 21st. The entire route was washed over daily during this span.
 - The route was preemptively closed for one other projected high tide, but reopened on the same day.
- **See Appendix A for comprehensive status log of the 2024 Oversand Route showing every opening and closing for the season.**

Piping Plover Breeding Success

In 2024, Cape Cod National Seashore (CACO) staff documented piping plover nesting activity along approximately 40 miles of beach across the park. Oversand routes comprise 12.5 miles or 31% of the beach that is monitored by CACO staff. Despite representing a little less than a third of the area monitored for plover nesting, The Oversand Routes accounted for over half of all plover nesting activities. (see fig. 7 & Appendix B)

The approximate 5 miles of Race Point Beach from Hatches Harbor to Mission Bell / Exit 8 area continues to be a hot spot for piping plover nesting activities. Race Point Beaches alone accounted for over a quarter of all piping plover nesting activity monitored by CACO staff.

The productivity rate of nesting pairs of piping plovers across the park averaged 1.5 successfully fledged chicks per pair. The average productivity rate on oversand routes and Race Point Beach specifically exceeded that of the park average and met species recovery goals for the year. (see fig. 7 chart).

The National Seashore falls within the New England Recovery Unit of the Atlantic Coast Piping Plover Recovery Plan, which has a recovery goal of 625 breeding pairs (maintained for five years) and a five-year average productivity goal of 1.5 chicks fledged per pair. (For more detailed information reference *Monitoring and Management of Piping Plovers and Colonial Waterbirds at Cape Cod National Seashore 2024*)

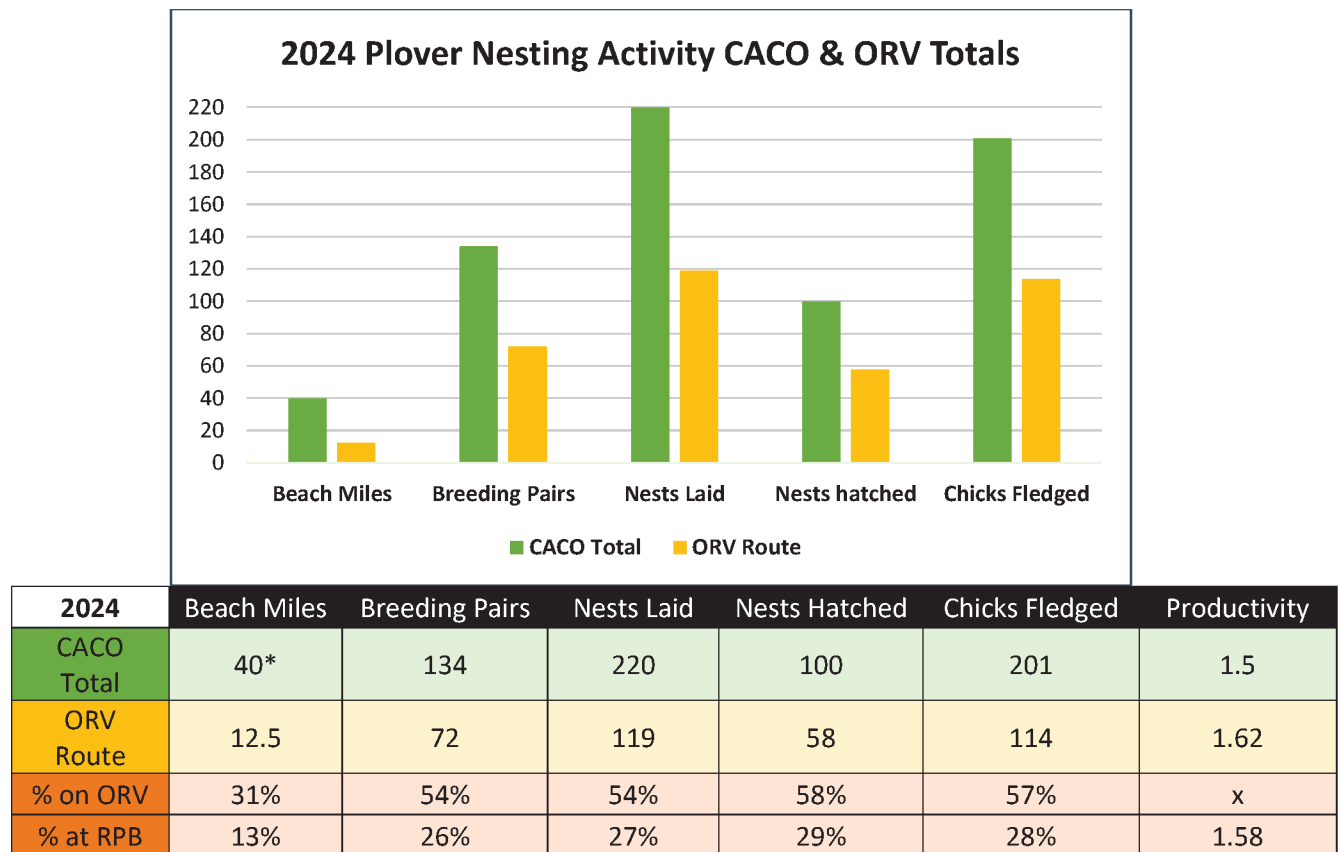


Figure 8: Graph & Chart comparing levels of piping plover nesting activity monitored by CACO staff across the park with levels on monitored on CACO oversand routes (includes CGB) And percentages of nesting activity specifically at the Race Point Beach Oversand Routes.

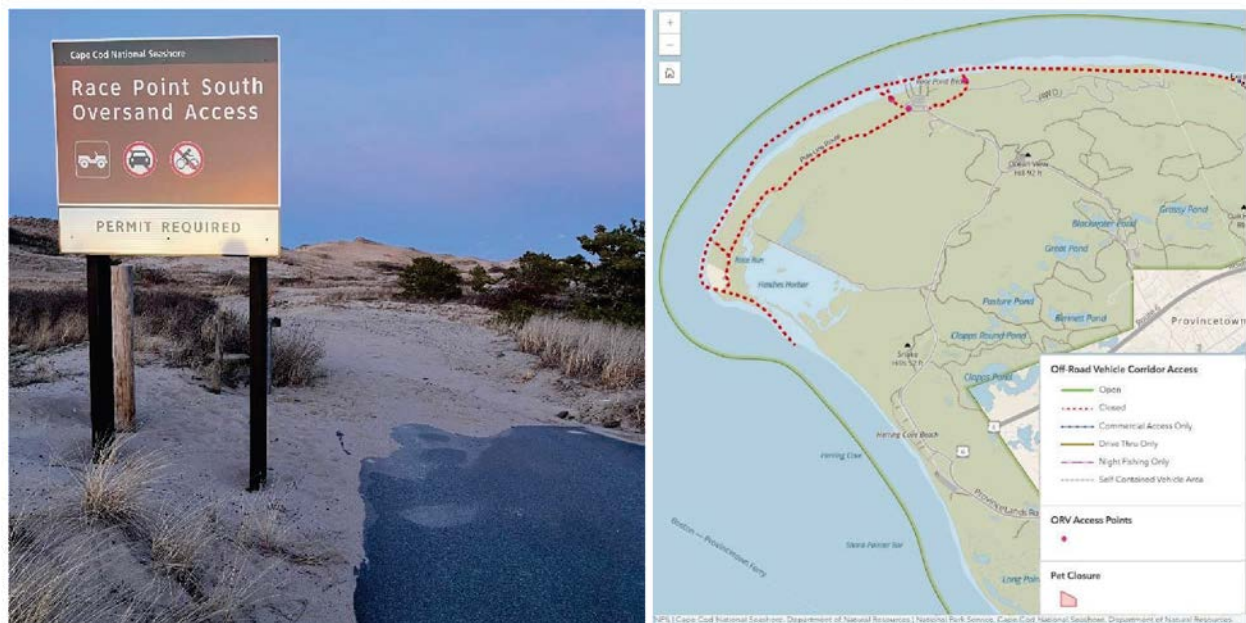
Education and Safety

The most significant change to education in 2024 was the implementation of a new and interactive Oversand Route Status Map on the Cape Cod National Seashore website.

Accessible with this link: [Cape Cod National Seashore Off-Road Vehicle Corridor Status](#)

The new map is ArcGIS based and can be updated in real time by staff in several fields. Instead of just showing open and closed sections of ORV route, the new map also shows SCV areas, Drive-Through Areas, and Night Fishing Only Areas. Another significant feature is real time pet closure data entered by shorebird technician staff. Oversand corridor pet violations have been an ongoing concern especially where signage is lacking or confusing. The addition of the map helped to inform the public of pet closure areas and gain better compliance.

A parkwide sign update project was completed in 2024 which included the installation of new oversand route signs. Most notably were the very large regulation signs identifying each access point. Rangers installed new signs at the Air Lot and acquired additional signs for 2025.



Examples of New Oversand Access Signs and the GIS based Oversand Route Status Map

Ongoing education and safety efforts continued this year including; The information/regulation brochure, “Low & Slow” initiative (low tire pressure & slow speeds), Bulletin boards displaying shorebird, shark, seal, and ORV general information. Mirrors were installed at the Race Point South access. Emergency stop the bleed kits were installed at Exit 8 and High Head.

Permitted users continue to play an important role in education and safety of the ORV program. Years of outreach and engagement by Cape Cod National Seashore staff with oversand users has resulted in added support from the group; even when users are faced with mounting frustrations from trends of increasing closures. Many users will alert NPS staff of concerns observed on the route including violations that result in a law enforcement response. This is largely because most regular users understand and care about the implications of violations on the oversand route.

Cape Cod National Seashore staff continued to work with the Mass Beach Buggy Association on several events at Race Point including two beach cleanup project days, an instructional family fishing day for the public, and support toward educating the broader audience of permit holders on oversand use regulations and guidelines. All of these efforts contribute to an ongoing shared stewardship with the oversand permit user groups and the public as a whole.

Enforcement

On duty presence and enforcement of regulations on the oversand route was emphasized in 2024. Law enforcement staff prioritized oversand patrol presence and regulation enforcement, whenever a portion of the route was open. Rangers were also supported by shorebird technician staff and fee staff who regularly communicated violations and conditions they observed that would require an enforcement response. The collaborative and cooperative effort between these work groups continues to be a strong foundation of oversand program enforcement.

Rangers issued 20 violation notices related to the oversand route in 2024, which is comparable to the number of violations issued for the preceding five years. (see fig. 9)

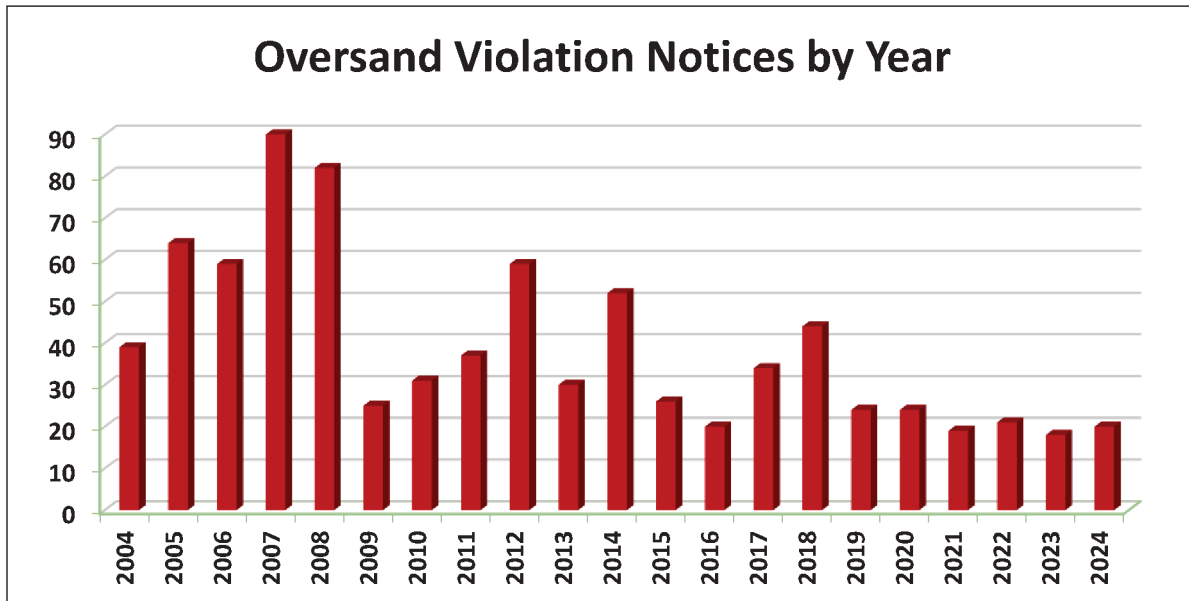
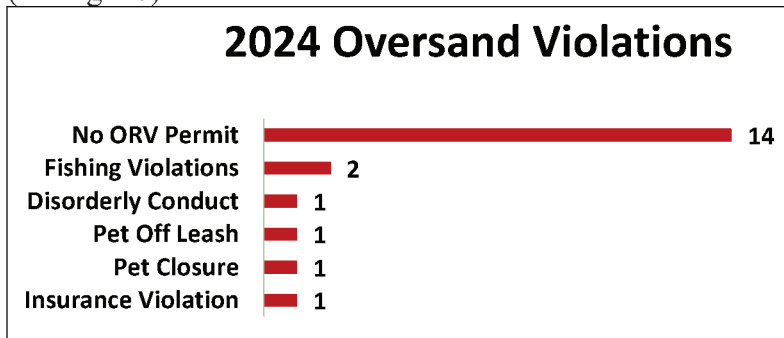


Figure 9: Graph comparing number of violation notices issued on the oversand route by year.

Failure to possess an oversand permit continues to be the most common violation notice issued. (see fig. 10)



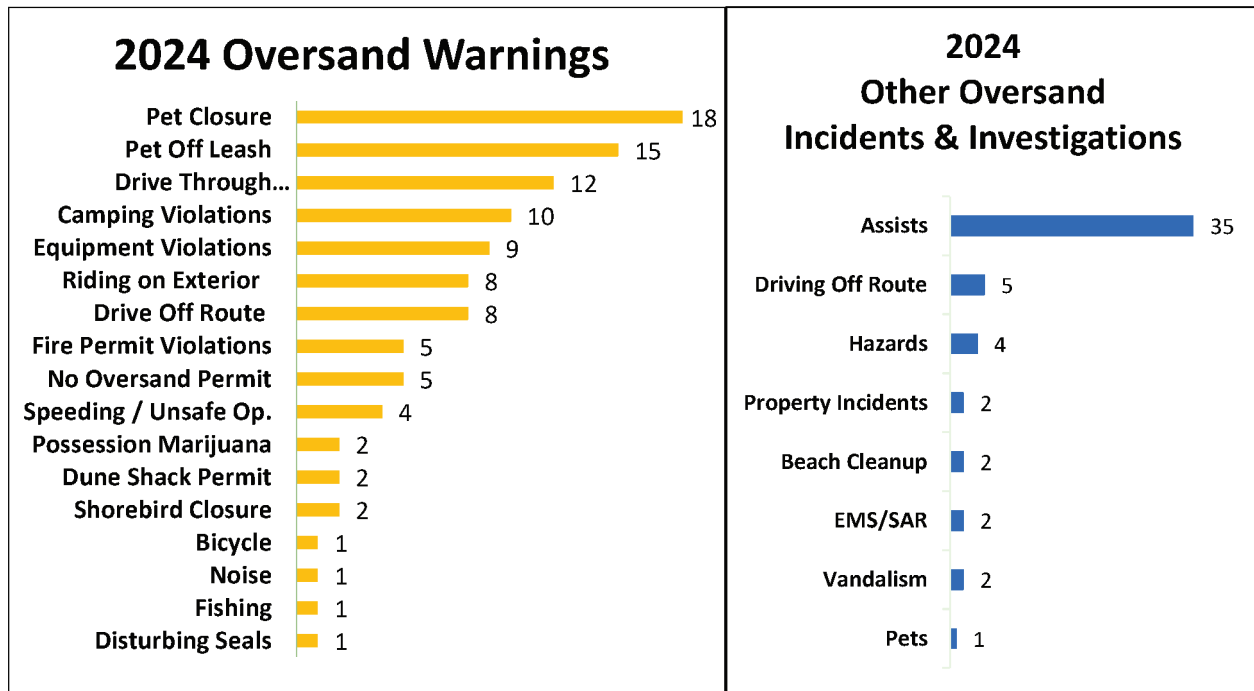
*Figure 10:
Graph showing the number
and type of violation notices
issued on the oversand route
in 2024*

The emphasis of Protection Ranger presence and enforcement on the oversand route in 2024 also included changes to how oversand related incidents were documented. By rangers consistently applying an “Oversand” location code into the incident tracking database, a more comprehensive statistic of oversand related incidents was produced for 2024. Overall, there were 177 total incidents reported in 2024 with a nexus to the oversand route.

The most significant statistic showing the emphasis on enforcement and documentation of oversand related incidents is the number warnings reported in 2023 (28) compared to 2024 (104).

The violations that rangers noted the most enforcement actions for in 2024 were pet related. Rangers and shorebird staff observed many pet closure violations on the oversand route, especially in the spring. Through interactions with our pet owner violators, rangers were getting consistent messages of confusion on where pets were allowed. The vast majority wanted to comply but interpreted signage wrong. The new “Pets Prohibited” signs deployed in 2023 have been an improvement but do not do a good job at directing oversand users to a spot where their pets are allowed. The new oversand map helped later in the season.

Despite being one of the more common violations reported by rangers, the number of people correctly using the drive-through areas has been remarkable. Drive-through areas were prevalent in the spring and saw high volumes of use by anyone driving the oversand route. The combined education and enforcement efforts by staff has been very successful at gaining compliance.



Figures 11 & 12: Graphs showing number / types of oversand warnings & other incidents.

There were two other enforcement trends that rangers observed over the course of the 2024 oversand permit season.

1. Delineator Post Violations:

These may not have ranked high on any of the preceding incident charts, but rangers and shorebird staff have often observed vehicle tracks behind delineator posts. In problem areas where the corridor was pinched narrow, due to beach morphology or high tides, Rangers would respond by adding posts and adjust the route.

In some areas, fresh tracks would continually be found behind the posts or be witnessed first hand by staff. These circumstances prompted action by the ranger staff.

At the beach cut 0.3 mile north High Head Access, continual delineator post violations and failed attempts to gain compliance through added posts, signs, and route adjustments led to premature closure of the High Head section of the oversand route for the season. (see below pictures)

Rangers are formulating strategies to make delineator post enforcement and compliance a point of emphasis for 2025. (see 2025 Goals)



Pictures show delineator post violations & dune grass driving above a High Head beach cut; Which resulted in the Sep. reduction & Oct. closure of the High Head Oversand Route.

2. Alternate Self-Contained Vehicle (SCV) Area Camping Violations:

When the traditional SCV areas on the Race Point Beaches are closed or have circumstances limiting the access of permitted SCVs, Cape Cod National Seashore (CACO) has established an alternative SCV area in designated parking lots such as Race Point Beach Lot, Province Lands Visitor Center Lot, or the Pilgrim Heights Lot. An Alternative SCV area is signed stating that an SCV permit is required after midnight, when the lot is legislatively closed to all other vehicles.

In 2024 a trend of visitors abusing this courtesy during times of total closure has gained momentum on two separate fronts.

First are those visitors who do not have the required SCV permit and are utilizing these lots for illegal camping. Due to significantly reduced staff & shift coverage (8AM-7PM in 2024), Law Enforcement Rangers have not been able to appropriately address these camping violations. This has created frustration from SCV permit holders who paid to legally camp at CACO through their permit, while violators get to essentially camp for free without consequences. Permit holders would report illegal camping violations to rangers but few were able to be followed up on because the suspect was often gone on arrival.

Second are visitors who are acquiring an SCV permit with never having any intention of using the permit to bring their camper on the beach. This has become evident when rangers have contacted permit holders for parking in the wrong lot or trying to use a closed alternative SCV area even when the traditional beach SCV areas are open. Several such contacts resulted in the SCV permit holder admitting that they never intended or would not bring their camper on the beach. This has also generated complaints among legitimate SCV permit holders who are concerned that such misuse of the alternative SCV areas might result in a discontinuation of the courtesy, thus depriving them of a space to land in times of beach closures.

Rangers intend to address misuse of the alternative SCV areas in a manner that will preserve the courtesy to our displaced SCV permit holders under its original intent. (see 2025 Goals)

Improvements

Summary of improvements to the oversand program implemented in 2024:

- New Oversand Route Status map link on the Seashore website that is interactive, ArcGIS based, and shows additional features including pet closure areas.
- New oversand route access signs installed from parkwide signs project
- Replacement of air lot signs
- Consistent implementation of oversand location code in the incident management database resulting in more comprehensive statistical representation of oversand incidents.
- Increased improvement in the execution of and user compliance with drive-through areas.
- Increased emphasis of oversand patrol presence and enforcement across the entire protection ranger staff.
- Wider distribution and sharing of oversand route management responsibilities across Visitor & Resource Protection staff.

2025 Goals and Anticipated Updates / Changes

Looking ahead to 2025, several areas of the oversand program have been identified for improvement or improvements are already in progress.

- The Permanent Career Seasonal Fee Supervisor position that had been vacated before the 2024 oversand permit season was filled in the fall of 2024 with a member of staff who is familiar with the Cape Cod National Seashore oversand program. This is expected to improve on site leadership and consistency to the oversand permit office.
- The Visitor & Resource Protection Division intends to hire General Ranger(s) to supplement Protection Ranger staff in support of tasks that do not require a law enforcement commission. It is intended to start at least one such General Ranger in April for the opening of the oversand route and focus that position to assist with oversand route management.
- A continuation of the collaborative and cooperative efforts between the Natural Resource Management and the Visitor & Resource Protection workgroups, to manage both the shorebird nesting and oversand permit seasons according to established regulations and the spirit of the National Park Service Mission. Including; the continued use of flexible management, drive through areas, and maintaining required buffers through necessary closures; And resulting in a successful piping plover nesting season meeting or exceeding species recovery standards.
- Continuation of engagement and outreach with the Oversand Permit User groups including MBBA.
- Creation of a new Oversand Instructional Video as required viewing for all permit holders and their associated drivers in the 2025 permit season.
- Weekly SCV permits will not be issued during times of closure of the SCV area. This is in response to visitors misusing weekly SCV permits (i.e. illegal camping at alternate SCV Area).

- Updates to the Oversand Brochure including the following policy clarifications.
 - Change in messaging from recommended 12 PSI tire pressure “Tips” to “Requiring a maximum tire pressure of 12 PSI”.
 - Change in messaging of SCV size limitations to SCVs over 36’ or with low ground clearance “Not Recommended”. A specific size prohibition will not be imposed at this time.
 - Added messaging prohibiting refunds.
 - Add messaging stating that all drivers must watch the ORV video
 - Add messaging that weekly SCV permits will not be issued during closure of SCV area.
 - Add messaging about designated SCV areas
 - Add messaging about delineator post compliance & enforcement
- Rangers to continue an emphasis of presence and enforcement on the oversand routes, and to specifically address the identified enforcement trends from 2024
 - Illegal camping & abuse of alternative SCV Areas: Rangers will add new more professional looking signs to the entrance of the Alternate SCV Areas. Updated messaging to be distributed to 2025 SCV permit applicants. Develop strategies to detect and deter camping violations under current operational circumstances.
 - Delineator post violations: Increased messaging to permit holders (video, brochure, draft brochure insert, display at ORV Permit Station). Increased patrol emphasis and enforcement actions against delineator post violations.
 - Pet Closure Violations: Full season benefit from new oversand route map. Acquire new “PETS ALLOWED” signs (see below); to be used in conjunction with existing “pets prohibited” signs; These will help users find pet allowed areas



Additional signs acquired for the upcoming 2025 season to improve oversand education and enforcement efforts.

Appendix A: Synopsis of 2024 ORV Oversand Route Openings and Closings

**Coast Guard Night Fishing not included total mileage "status".*

**See last line of each entry for CGB status*

Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Apr 15 – 15	1.4 mi open	RPN - Open 1.3 mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
1 Day		HAHA - Open 0.1 mi	Spit closed. Nesting Habitat
		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Closed	Unknown
	SCV North/South =	Both Closed	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
		HH -Closed	Scheduled
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Closed	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Apr 16 – 21	3.1 mi open	RPN - Open 1.3 mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
6 Days		HAHA - Open 0.1 mi	Spit closed. Nesting Habitat
		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Open 1.7 Mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
	SCV North/South =	Both Closed	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
		HH -Closed	Scheduled
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Closed	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Apr22–May27	2.7 mi open	RPN - Open 0.9 mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
16 Days		HAHA - Open 0.1 mi	Spit closed. Nesting Habitat
		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Open 1.7 Mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
	SCV North/South =	Both Closed	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
		HH -Closed	Scheduled
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Closed	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
May 8–May 9	1.3 mi open	RPN - Open 0.4 mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
2 Days		HAHA - Open 0.1 mi	Spit closed. Nesting Habitat
		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Open 0.8 Mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
	SCV North/South =	Both Closed	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
		HH -Closed	Scheduled
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Closed	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes

May10–May16	1.1 mi open	RPN - Open 0.2 mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
7 Days		HAHA - Open 0.1 mi	Spit closed. Nesting Habitat
		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Open 0.8 Mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
	SCV North/South =	Both Closed	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
		HH -Closed	Scheduled
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Closed	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
May17–May18	2.2 mi open	RPN - Open 0.2 mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
2 Days		HAHA - Open 0.1 mi	Spit closed. Nesting Habitat
		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Open 1.9 Mi	Beach Morphology
	SCV North/South =	Both Closed	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
		HH -Closed	Scheduled
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Closed	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
May19–May21	1.6 mi open	RPN - Open 0.2 mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
3 Days		HAHA - Open 0.1 mi	Spit closed. Nesting Habitat
		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Open 1.3 Mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
	SCV North/South =	N. Closed / S. Open	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
		HH -Closed	Scheduled
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Closed	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
May 22–Jun 6	1.8 mi open	RPN - Open 0.2 mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
16 Days		HAHA - Open 0.1 mi	Spit closed. Nesting Habitat
		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Open 1.5 Mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
	SCV North/South =	N. Open / S. Open	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
		HH -Closed	Scheduled
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Closed	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Jun 7–Jun 17	1.3 mi open	RPN - Open 0.2 mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
11 Days		HAHA - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		Pole Line - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		RPS - Open 1.0 Mi	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
	SCV North/South =	N. Open / S. Open	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat

		HH -Closed	Scheduled
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Closed	Beach Morphology / Nesting Habitat
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Jun 18–Aug 2	0 mi open	RPN - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
46 Days		HAHA - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
TOTAL CLOSURE		Pole Line - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		RPS - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
	SCV North/South =	Both Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		HH -Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		HOM - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Aug 3 – Aug 8	0.3 mi open	RPN - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
6 Days		HAHA - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
NEAR CLOSURE		Pole Line - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		RPS - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
	SCV North/South =	Both Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		HH -Open 0.3 mi	Unfledged Plover Chicks beyond 0.3
		HOM - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks / Morphology
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Aug 9–Aug 11	0.8 mi open	RPN - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
3 Days		HAHA - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		Pole Line - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		RPS - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
	SCV North/South =	Both Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		HH -Open 0.8 mi	Unfledged Plover Chicks beyond 0.8
		HOM - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks / Morphology
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Open 2.3 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 2.3
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Aug12–Aug20	1.0 mi open	RPN - Open 0.2 mi	Unfledged Plover Chicks beyond 0.2
9 Days		HAHA - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		Pole Line - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		RPS - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
	SCV North/South =	N. Open / S. Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		HH -Open 0.8 mi	Unfledged Plover Chicks beyond 0.8
		HOM - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks / Morphology
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Open 2.3 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 2.3
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Aug21–Aug22	1.5 mi open	RPN - Open 0.7 mi	Unfledged Plover Chicks beyond 0.7

2 Days		HAHA - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		Pole Line - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		RPS - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
	SCV North/South =	N. Open / S. Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		HH -Open 0.8 mi	Unfledged Plover Chicks beyond 0.8
		HOM - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks / Morphology
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Open 2.3 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 2.3
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Aug23–Aug29	2.0 mi open	RPN - Open 0.7 mi	Unfledged Plover Chicks beyond 0.7
7 Days		HAHA - Open 0.5	E. side of spit closed embrionic dune
		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
	SCV North/South =	N. Open / S. Closed	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		HH -Open 0.8 mi	Unfledged Plover Chicks beyond 0.8
		HOM - Closed	Beach Morphology / Bad Access
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Open 2.3 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 2.3
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Aug 30–Sep 3	4.0 mi open	RPN - Open 0.7 mi	Unfledged Plover Chicks beyond 0.7
5 Days		HAHA - Open 0.5	E. side of spit closed embrionic dune
		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Open 2.0 mi	Morphology /Staging birds beyond 2.0
	SCV North/South =	N. Open / S. Open	
		HH -Open 0.8 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 0.8
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Open 2.3 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 2.3
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Sep 4–Sep 7	4.7 mi open	RPN - Open 0.7 mi	Unfledged Plover Chicks beyond 0.7
3 Days		HAHA - Open 0.5	E. side of spit closed embrionic dune
		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Open 2.7 mi	Morphology/Staging birds beyond 2.0
	SCV North/South =	N. Open / S. Open	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		HH -Open 0.8 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 0.8
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Open 2.3 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 2.3
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Sep 8–Sep 17	4.2 mi open	RPN - Open 0.7 mi	Unfledged Plover Chicks beyond 0.7
10 Days		HAHA - Open 0.5	E. side of spit closed embrionic dune
		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Open 2.7 mi	Morphology /Staging birds beyond 2.7
	SCV North/South =	N. Open / S. Open	Unfledged Plover Chicks
		HH -Open 0.3 mi	Delineator Violations / Morphology

		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Open 2.3 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 2.3
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Sep 18–Sep 21	0 mi open	RPN - Closed	Tide & Surf Forecasted Washovers
4 Days		HAHA - Closed	Tide & Surf Forecasted Washovers
TOTAL CLOSURE		Pole Line - Closed	Tide & Surf Forecasted Washovers
		RPS - Closed	Tide & Surf Forecasted Washovers
	SCV North/South =	Both Closed	Tide & Surf Forecasted Washovers
		HH -Closed	Tide & Surf Forecasted Washovers
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Closed	Tide & Surf Forecasted Washovers
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Sep22–Sep22	2.0 mi open	RPN - Open 0.5 mi	Beach Morphology / Tides
1 Day		HAHA - Closed	Beach Morphology / Tides
		Pole Line - Closed	Beach Morphology / Tides
		RPS - Open 1.5 mi	Beach Morphology / Tides
	SCV North/South =	N. Open / S. Open	
		HH -Closed	Beach Morphology / Tides
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Closed	Beach Morphology / Tides
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Sep 23–Sep 24	2.7 mi open	RPN - Open 0.5 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 0.5 mi
2 Days		HAHA - Open 0.7	E. side of spit closed embrionic dune
		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Open 1.5 mi	Beach Morphology
	SCV North/South =	N. Open / S. Open	
		HH -Closed	Morphology & Delineator Violations
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Closed	Beach Morphology / Tides
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Sep 25–Sep 26	3.7 mi open	RPN - Open 0.5 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 0.5 mi
2 Days		HAHA - Open 0.7	E. side of spit closed embrionic dune
		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Open 1.5 mi	Beach Morphology
	SCV North/South =	N. Open / S. Open	
		HH -Open 1.0 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 1 mi
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Open 2 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 2 mi
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Sep 27–Oct 17	4.4 mi open	RPN - Open 1.2 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 1.2 mi
21 Days		HAHA - Open 0.7	E. side of spit closed embrionic dune

		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Open 1.5 mi	Beach Morphology
	SCV North/South =	N. Open / S. Open	
		HH -Open 1.0 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 1 mi
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Open 2 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 2 mi
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes
Oct 18–Nov 15	3.4 mi open	RPN - Open 1.2 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 1.2 mi
29 Days		HAHA - Open 0.7	E. side of spit closed embrionic dune
		Pole Line - Open	Beach too narrow south of crossover
		RPS - Open 1.5 mi	Beach Morphology
	SCV North/South =	N. Open / S. Open	
		HH -Closed	Chronic Delineator Violations
		HOM - Closed	Scheduled
	Plus night fishing	CGB - Open 1.0 mi	Beach Morphology beyond 1 mi
Dates	Status	Description	Reason / Notes

Appendix B: 2024 Piping Plover Monitoring Stats from Shorebird Technician Staff

Site Name	Pairs	Singles	Nests Laid	Lost Nests (Total)	Hatched Nests (Total)	Fledglings	Productivity
Wood End/Long Point	14	1	24	15	9	21	1.50
Herring Cove	2	0	2	2	0	0	0.00
Hatches Harbor	4	0	7	3	4	6	1.50
Race Point North	14	0	25	13	12	23	1.64
Race Point	5	0	12	7	5	10	2.00
Race Point South	4	0	5	2	3	4	1.00
Mission Bell	8	0	11	6	5	14	1.75
Exit 9	4	0	4	1	3	7	1.75
Armstrong	11	0	23	15	8	14	1.27
High Head	9	0	13	6	7	9	1.00
Head of the Meadow	5	0	8	4	4	12	2.40
Coast Guard	8	0	11	4	7	15	1.88
Longnook	2	1	2	0	2	7	3.50
Ballston	2		3	1	2	7	3.50
Bound Brook	4		7	4	3	9	2.25
Cahoon Hollow	1		1	0	1	2	2.00
Coast Guard Eastham	5	1	11	8	3	1	0.20
Duck Harbor	11		19	13	6	7	0.64
Great Island	5		8	5	3	3	0.60
Jeremy Point	7		11	7	4	7	1.00
Lecount Hollow	0		0	0	0	0	0.00
Marconi Beach	1		2	1	1	3	3.00
Marconi Station	5		6	1	5	11	2.20
Nauset Light Beach	0		0	0	0	0	0.00
Newcomb Hollow	2		4	2	2	7	3.50
White Crest Beach	1		1	0	1	2	2.00
Park Total	134	3	220	120	100	201	1.5

North District	Pairs	Singles	Nests Laid	Lost Nests (Total)	Hatched Nests (Total)	Broods	Eggs Hatched	Nests Fledged (Total)	Fledglings	Productivity
Total North District	90	2	147	78	69	69	246	57	142	1.57778