

Stay In Your Lane on Washington Beaches

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - As thousands of people head to the coast for summer fun, state fish and wildlife managers are reminding those who drive on the state's ocean beaches to steer clear of vulnerable species such as razor clams and snowy plovers. Many ocean beaches are open to motor vehicles, but drivers are required to follow the "rules of the road," said Dan Ayres, a biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Under state law, all vehicles - and horses - are required to travel along the extreme upper limit of the hard sand, when in doubt, follow the path marked by multiple tire tracks. - Dan Ayres

Drivers who veer from that path pose a direct threat to fish and wildlife, Ayres said. Tiny razor clams, feeding just below the wet sand close to the surf, can easily be crushed by the weight of passing vehicles, he said. So can snowy plovers, which typically nest in the dry sand farther up the beach. Motorists who violate state laws on beach driving can face a fine of \$87, said Mike Cenci, deputy chief of WDFW's enforcement program. Fines can be much higher for killing a snowy plover, which are listed by the federal government as threatened and by the state as endangered.

Ocean beaches are patrolled by officers from WDFW, State Parks, the Washington State Patrol and local law enforcement agencies. Other laws in effect on ocean beaches: Set the speed limit at 25 mph.

Allow only licensed, street-legal vehicles (no ATVs, dune buggies, etc.)

Limit beach driving to licensed drivers.

Give pedestrians the right of way.

Prohibit reckless driving, including driving through the surf and spinning tires.

Sections of several beaches are closed to driving between April 15 and Labor Day, except on days when recreational razor clam seasons are open. These areas, which are marked with signs, include:

Long Beach: Seaview Beach approach to the Long Beach/Bolsted approach.

Oysterville Beach approach 2.5 miles north (the area north of that point is closed year-round).

Twin Harbors Beach: Warrenton Cannery Road south.

Bonge Beach approach north.

Copalis Beach: Pacific Avenue beach approach to 'Chance al a Mer' Beach approach.

Ocean City north to the Copalis River.

Mocrocks Beach: Boone Creek south to the Copalis Rocks.

Roosevelt Beach approach to Annelyde Beach approach road.

Moclips Beach approach north to the Moclips River.