

**California Department of Fish and Game
Office of Spill Prevention and Response**



**U.S. Department of
Homeland Security
United States
Coast Guard**



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Press Release

North Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve clean-up operations complete

The clean-up project at the north end of Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve will be completed late today. To ensure protection of both public and ecosystem health, the area has been closed since February 3. It will be re-opened to the public on Saturday, February 11, 2006.

The project that closed the beach was to remove oil-contaminated sump material (oily sand) and pipelines near four old oil wells that are no longer in operation. Thriftway Company has conducted the clean-up, in cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard and California Department of Fish and Game Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR).

When the wells were drilled at the site, oil-soaked sand was generated as waste. Prior to effective environmental regulation, drillers would dispose of this oily material by digging a pit nearby and burying it. While Thriftway Company was the final operator of the wells, it did not drill them.

High tides and heavy surf eroded the beach enough to expose the oily sump material, and some is likely to have been released into the ocean. The contaminated sump material and pipelines have been removed.

No injured or oiled wildlife was observed during the cleanup project. It was important to finish the cleanup project prior to March 1 because that is the beginning of western snowy plover nesting season. The snowy plovers (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) are five-to-seven-inch long shorebirds, with whitish undersides, pale brown coats, black legs and a slender, black bill. They inhabit sandy beaches and salt flats, and are listed as threatened on the Federal Threatened and Endangered Species list.

The Coast Guard, OSPR and Thriftway Company worked with other local, state and federal agencies, and the Center for Natural Lands Management, a nonprofit organization that manages the beach for owner Santa Barbara County.

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