

# OPEN LETTER TO COOS COUNTY FROM CONCERNED WEST COAST ORGANIZATIONS



The undersigned organizations and our tens of thousands of members are extremely concerned about Coos County's resolution of January 16, 2002 to use county taxpayers' money to challenge the Snowy Plover Critical Habitat Designation under the Endangered Species Act. The modest beach restrictions provided by this Designation protect nesting areas of this small and lovely bird, which depends on our ability to preserve unspoiled sandy beaches. The restrictions have only minimal effects on you and your county. However, your county's lawsuit, if successful, will nullify the careful public processes that have resulted in an active recovery program for this fragile and legally threatened bird along the entire West Coast.

Many counties enjoy this bird and welcome its presence on their beaches as a source of both enjoyment and economic advantage. Tens of thousands of children have been actively involved with Western Snowy Plover education field trips in Southern California alone. Dozens of other counties have found that modest and necessary protections for the Snowy Plover will lead to increased tourism through higher numbers of birders, students and travelers. These groups contribute greatly to the communities they visit both economically and culturally.

The Federal protection applies only to public lands or to projects using Federal funds or permits. It only limits access to the dry sand portion of a few beaches during the nesting season. This is why most communities go beyond the Federal government's requirements and do even more to protect this elusive shorebird. Recovery for the rare Snowy Plover in Oregon entails increasing its population from 100 to 250 birds. Coos County can hasten the recovery process by positively redirecting your county's interest in the Snowy Plover to improving law enforcement over illegal motorized use of county beaches.

If successful, your county's suit will directly benefit two narrow interest groups: (1) advocates of motorized access to West Coast beaches, and (2) developers who need Federal funds or permits to build on parcels of privately owned ocean front property. At the very minimum, your county's suit will divert the scarce resources now available for recovery

efforts for the Snowy Plover into the paperwork necessary to defend against the suit. Whether it is successful or not, this suit will not help ongoing recovery efforts for the Western Snowy Plover.

We ask the Commissioners of Coos County to abandon the current county position as it relates to the Snowy Plover. In the spirit of stewardship, we ask you to join us and other counties in our efforts to protect the critical habitat necessary for the survival of this species.

As coastal neighbors we ask you to take these three positive steps:

1. Revoke the County resolution of January 16, 2002 that challenges the Critical Habitat Designation for the Western Snowy Plover.

2. In its place, please pass a resolution declaring that Coos County will work cooperatively with other counties and federal and state agencies to aid in the recovery of the Western Snowy Plover. This resolution should declare your county's support for the necessary minimal beach restrictions designed to protect Snowy Plover habitat during the breeding season.

3. Use the financial resources that the county committed to challenge the Critical Habitat Designation for increases in law enforcement budgets. These funds should be used to enforce existing laws against illegal motorized vehicle use on your county's beaches. All counties have the responsibility to enforce the laws that govern motor vehicle use on their beaches and in critical habitat areas.

Coos County beaches are among the loveliest on the West Coast. In addition to providing a place for the citizens of the county to relax, recreate and enjoy nature, they provide essential habitat for a variety of wildlife species, including the Western Snowy Plover. The nesting grounds of the Snowy Plover are in critical condition, and we urge you to support continued protection for these threatened birds. We hope that you will act as exemplary stewards of the lands that these birds depend on, and we look forward to working with you.

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**Call or write the Coos County Commissioners and ask them NOT to file this lawsuit.**

**Coos County Commissioners:**

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**VOLUNTEER TO HELP STOP THIS SUIT**

call 344-0675 or [onrcdoug@efn.org](mailto:onrcdoug@efn.org).

For more facts on Griffith's lawsuit: <http://www.onrc.org/snowyplover/>