



United States Department of the Interior
California Department of Parks and Recreation
Redwood National and State Parks
1111 Second Street
Crescent City, California 95531



N1621 (2015 Incidental Take Report)

January 13, 2016

Bruce Bingham
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Arcata Fish and Wildlife Office
1655 Heindon Road
Arcata, California 95521

Dear Mr. Bingham:

Enclosed is Redwood National and State Parks' annual Incidental Take Report summarizing potential impacts on marbled murrelets, northern spotted owls and western snowy plovers from our operations in 2015. The incidental take we are reporting was authorized under a number of different biological opinions generated by your office between 2007 and the present. If you have any questions regarding any of the information in the report please contact Keith Bensen, National Park Service Fish and Wildlife Biologist, at (707) 465-7777.

Sincerely,

Stephen Prokop
Superintendent
Redwood National Park

Brett Silver
Sector Superintendent
North Coast Redwoods District
California Department Parks and Recreation

Enclosure

cc: Keith Bensen, REDW
David Roemer
Amber Transou

Redwood
National and State Parks

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

California State Parks
Department of Parks & Recreation



2015 INCIDENTAL TAKE SUMMARY REPORT TO THE US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL
MARBLED MURRELET
WESTERN SNOWY PLOVER

I. Summary

This incidental take report describes Redwood National and State Parks (RNSP) 2015 operations that may have adversely impacted potentially occupied northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet habitat and western snowy plover individuals.

Please note that the noise disturbance acreages presented here were calculated using a 500 foot buffer distance around most potential noise disturbance sources (except for those sources where vehicle backup warning signals were utilized – a 0.25 mile buffer distance was used in those instances). Noise disturbance buffer distance guidelines issued by the Arcata Office of US Fish and Wildlife Service in July of 2006 (USFWS ref. # 8-14-2006-2887) were used to calculate incidental take acreages. Per the guideline's instructions, the noise disturbance buffer distances were to be applied to all incidental take reporting from 2007 onward. This year's reported noise disturbance acreages are lower than in years previous to 2007's report because all noise sources were assessed then using a 0.25 mile buffer distance.

Approximately **3,895 acres** of potentially occupied *suitable marbled murrelet habitat* at or within 500 feet to 0.25 miles, depending on the loudness of the noise source emanating from project activities, were potentially impacted by *noise disturbance*. Approximately **10,544 acres** of *suitable marbled murrelet habitat* were subjected to an *increased predation threat* due to project activities and/or park visitor use.

Approximately **2,160 acres** of unsurveyed *spotted owl habitat* at or within 500 feet to a quarter mile, depending on the loudness of the noise source emanating from project activities, were potentially impacted by *noise disturbance*.

No snowy plovers were observed to have been killed by vehicles driving on park beaches or by visitors walking on park beaches. A separate report was submitted to the USFWS containing information on beach vehicle use levels and law enforcement beach patrols.

Summaries of the status of all non-emergency projects with permitted 2015 incidental take are presented in the narrative statements below and in Table 1.

II. Potential Adverse Impacts Associated With Individual Biological Opinions

(BO Ref. # 81331-2008-F-0130) Annual Maintenance (Facilities, Roads, and Trails)

Brushing with power tools occurred along the lower 1.5 miles of the Redwood Creek Trail once per month in June, July and August for 20 hours total work time. This resulted in 91 acres of potentially occupied marbled murrelet and spotted owl habitat being impacted by noise disturbance. Temporary trail bridge installation on Redwood Creek Trail occurred once in June for 20 hours resulting in 10 acres of potentially occupied marbled murrelet and spotted owl habitat being impacted by noise disturbance.

One trail was cleared of a large fallen tree using a chain saw along the Orick Horse Trail in late May resulting in 18 acres of potentially occupied marbled murrelet and spotted owl habitat being impacted by noise disturbance.

Road maintenance work (mowing, trimming, gravel placement) occurred along the A-9 and A-9-9 Roads for two days each in mid-July during the marbled murrelet noise restriction period resulting in 627 acres of potentially occupied marbled murrelet habitat impacted by noise disturbance.

Mowing, blowers and chainsaw work occurred in Elk Prairie Campground (aka Prairie Creek Campground) in mid-May, before Memorial Day, resulting in 360 acres of potentially occupied marbled murrelet habitat being impacted by noise. Mowing, blowers and chainsaw work occurred at the Big Tree Wayside in mid-April and early May, before Memorial Day, resulting in 125 acres of potentially occupied marbled murrelet habitat being impacted by noise. Blowers and chainsaw work occurred in Jedediah Smith Campground in mid-April and mid-May, before Memorial Day, resulting in 460 acres of potentially occupied marbled murrelet habitat being impacted by noise. All other facility maintenance in the three state parks occurred either outside the noise restriction periods or between Memorial Day and Labor Day in high visitor use areas, when ambient background noise is equal to, or greater than, noise generated by maintenance activities or work performed was below general ambient noise levels. No spotted owl habitat was impacted by facility maintenance in the state parks because recent surveys indicated that habitat within 0.25 miles of these sites was not occupied by spotted owls.

(BO Ref. No. AFWO-11B0077-11F0076) Helicopter Use –

There was no law enforcement or fire management helicopter use during the marbled murrelet and spotted owl noise restriction period below 2,000 feet above suitable owl and murrelet habitat in 2015.

(BO Ref. No. 81331-2008-F-031) Vehicle Beach Access

No snowy plovers were observed to have been killed by vehicles driving on park beaches. A separate report was submitted to the USFWS containing information on monitoring results, beach vehicle use levels and law enforcement beach patrols.

(BO Ref. No. 8-14-2003-1517) Trail and Backcountry Management Plan

Marbled murrelets were disturbed by noise generated by park visitors using existing facilities (i.e. roads and campgrounds) across 2,171 acres of suitable habitat. A new facility, the Berry Glen Trail (named the Elk Meadow – Lady Bird Johnson Trail Connector in the proposed action of the 2006 RNSP Trail and Backcountry Management Plan biological assessment), was completed in late 2010 and opened to the public for the first time during the murrelet breeding season in 2011, thus increasing visitor use in a previously unvisited section of the parks. The new trail could potentially be causing visual disturbance of marbled murrelets. Additional disturbance acres of affected murrelet habitat were not calculated, however, because those acres completely overlap with the additional increased rate of predation effects, described next. Marbled murrelets experienced an increased risk of predation across 10,289 acres of suitable habitat due to park visitor use of previously existing facilities (e.g. campgrounds, trailheads, picnic areas, trailheads) and 255 acres for new facilities (the now open Elk Meadow – Lady Bird Johnson Trail Connector).

Spotted Owls were disturbed by noise generated by park visitors using exiting facilities (i.e. roads and campgrounds) across 2,059 acres of suitable habitat. The East Side Trail was not completed in 2015 and so no disturbance occurred due to the use of chainsaws to clear fallen trees.

Up to 8 snowy plovers were present at various times during the non-breeding season on Gold Bluffs Beach in RNSP. Some disturbance of these individuals may have occurred due to visitor use of park beaches. This disturbance, however, was most likely of a low level because beach visitation during the fall, winter and spring is low in RNSP. One nesting attempt occurred in 2015 but failed in early April when beach visitation was extremely low.

III. Report Compiled By

Keith Bensen, NPS Fish and Wildlife Biologist

IV. Contributors

Judy Wartella, GIS Specialist
Mark Weberly, CDPR Maintenance Supervisor
Peter Monahan, CDPR Maintenance Supervisor
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Laura Denny, NPS Chief Ranger
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SUMMARY OF MARBLED MURRELET AND SPOTTED OWL POTENTIAL INCIDENTAL TAKE IN REDWOOD NATIONAL AND STATE PARKS IN 2014			
BA/BO	Marbled Murrelet Habitat Acres Potentially Impacted by Noise Disturbance¹	Northern Spotted Owl Habitat Acres Potentially Impacted by Noise Disturbance¹	Comments
Annual Maintenance/81331-2008-F-0130			
Brushing and Grading Roads	627		NSPO surveys
Down Tree Removal	18		
Brushing Trails	91	91	
Temporary Bridge Installation	10	10	
Campground Maintenance	945		NSPO surveys
Sub Total	1,695	101	
Helicopter Use/1-14-2001-888	0	N/A	
Trail Plan/8-14-2003-1517	2,171	2,059	NSPO surveys
Total Disturbance Incidental Take	3,854	2,160	
	Marbled Murrelet Habitat Acres Degraded	Marbled Murrelet Habitat Acres Subject to Increased Predation¹	
Trail Plan/8-14-2003-1517	N/A	10,544	
Total Degraded Habitat and Increased Predation Incidental Take	0	10,544	

¹ Acres potentially impacted are based on the assumption that all acres were occupied by the species of concern at the time of project implementation.