

 Adelaide Plains Council	7.1	Thompson Beach, Seasonal Closure of Beach to Vehicles
	Department:	Infrastructure and Environment
	Report Author:	Coastal Conservation Officer
Date: 3 September 2020	Document Ref:	D20/39385

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The purpose of this report is for the Infrastructure and Environment Committee (the Committee) to consider the implications of a request to trial a closure of Thompson Beach from motor vehicles between October 2020 and May 2021 with the view to extend the seasonal closure for future seasons.
- On 11 November 2019 Management were approached by the Senior Ranger for the Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary, who requested a seasonal restriction on motor vehicles at Thompson Beach between September and May annually.
- As part of Council's, Local Government Land By-law 2019, Council has the ability by way of Council resolution, to prohibit a vehicle to be driven or propelled on any part of local government land.
- Migratory shorebirds utilise our coastal areas over the summer months to feed and fatten up in preparation for their annual migration to the northern hemisphere to breed. Disturbance by off road vehicles has been identified threat to migratory shorebirds.
- Migratory Shorebirds are protected under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999*. Some of the species utilising Council's coastal areas are classified as critically endangered.
- Minimising human induced threats to migratory shorebirds in Australia is a key objective in Birdlife Australia's Migratory Shorebird Conservation Action Plan. This is supported by Council's Natural and Coastal Areas Management Plan which was developed to guide the management of the natural and coastal areas to ensure these lands remain a valuable natural resource for existing and future generations
- The request to trial a seasonal closure at Thompson Beach is aligned with Councils 'Natural and Coastal Areas Management Plan' objectives.
- Access management is important for recreational and environmental outcomes and the proposed recommendation seeks to balance visitor use whilst seeking to reduce the impact caused by off road vehicles.

RECOMMENDATION

“that the Infrastructure and Environment Committee, having considered Item 7.1 – *Thompson Beach, Seasonal closure of Beach to Vehicles*, dated 3 September 2020, receives and notes the report and in doing so recommends to Council that it trial prohibiting vehicles on the beach at Thompson Beach between 5 October 2020 and 30 May 2021, with the exception of emergency services, Council and Department of Environment and Water service vehicles or those launching and/or retrieving boats.

BUDGET IMPACT

Estimated Cost:	\$300 (signage installation at vehicle access points within Thompson Beach)
Future ongoing operating costs:	0
Is this Budgeted?	Yes

RISK ASSESSMENT

The recommendation will improve beach safety for pedestrians, fishers and crabbers. Reduced vehicle use will also lessen risk of damage to vegetation and levees surrounding the township. The proposed resolution and long term adoption of the recommendation would benefit natural assets and provide an improved visitor attraction to the region for bird tourism. Given that the proposed restriction is suggested as a trial, Council retains capacity to reinstate vehicle access should the changes be considered unsatisfactory following the trial.

Attachments

Nil

DETAILED REPORT

Purpose

The purpose of this report is for the Infrastructure and Environment Committee (the Committee) to consider the implications of a request to trial a closure of Thompson Beach from motor vehicles between October 2020 and May 2021 with the view to extend the seasonal closure for future seasons.

Background/History

For the past 20 years Council has worked with community and interested environmental groups to protect and improve the coastal environment within the district. The proclamation of a National Park has enabled further protections for migratory shorebirds but significant areas are still under the care and control of Council. In relation to Thompson Beach the area in front of the township is under care and control of Council to the low water mark and the areas both north and south of this are proclaimed National Park.

On the 11 November 2019, Management were approached by the Senior Ranger for the Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary, who requested a seasonal restriction on motor vehicles at Thompson Beach between September and May.

As part of Council's Local Government Land By-law 2019, Council has the ability by way of Council resolution to, prohibit a vehicle to be driven or propelled on any part of local government land. The grey area indicates land under care and control of Council.



Migratory shorebirds utilise our coastal areas over the summer months to feed and fatten up in preparation for their annual migration to the northern hemisphere to breed.

The Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary sits right at the southern end of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) and is one of the key feeding and roosting sites for migratory birds who use the flyway each year.

Across the globe, migratory shorebird populations are declining rapidly. A number of threatening processes have been identified. Disturbance from human activity is a key threat and this includes off road vehicle use on beaches.

In the EAAF, significant regional declines have been identified in at least 18 species, some of which utilise the Adelaide Plains coastline. Under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1990* the following classifications apply to the following birds which are known to feed and roost in the area identified.

<p>Critically Endangered</p>	<p>The Eastern Curlew (<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>), Bar-tailed Godwit (spp. <i>menzbieri</i>), Great Knot (<i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>) and Curlew Sandpiper (<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>)</p>	
<p>Endangered</p>	<p>The Red Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>)</p>	
<p>Vulnerable</p>	<p>Bar-tailed Godwit (spp. <i>baueri</i>)</p>	

Councils Natural and Coastal Areas Management Plan was developed to guide the management of the natural and coastal areas to ensure these lands remain a valuable natural resource for existing and future generations. Objectives include;

- To strengthen natural ecosystems, biodiversity and habitat value relating to the natural and coastal areas
- To manage the use of and access to natural and coastal areas as part of protecting natural environments
- To contribute to the broader objectives and achievements of environmental organisations that have an interest in the District, e.g. relating to the International Bird Sanctuary.

Discussion

As a land manager Council has a responsibility to manage its land in line with its relevant Community Land Management plan. Council's Natural and Coastal Management plan objectives have a focus on strengthening biodiversity and habitat value and allowing for the management of access to protect natural values.

Migratory shorebirds have seen dramatic population declines and face a number of threats along their flyway. Thompson Beach is a terminal feeding site for many species, some of which are considered critically endangered. Management actions which reduce disturbance whilst the birds are present will assist in maintaining habitat condition within our local area.

Thompson Beach is a popular destination for fishers and crabbers with seasonal visitation over the summer months increasing. Maintaining legitimate access whilst reducing impacts from disturbance and habitat decline would be a desired outcome.

Thompson Beach currently has 2 vehicle access points and 17 pedestrian access points within a 3km stretch of coastline. This level of access provides multiple options for people to access the beach without the need to drive onto the sand. There are a small number of residents and visitors who launch a boats from Thompson Beach. By limiting vehicle access to those who launch and retrieve a vessel, the proposed restriction will still maintain legitimate activity whilst discouraging the north and south movement of vehicles. It is the north and south traffic which results in vehicles regularly becoming bogged, leading to the wide spread disturbance and compaction of soils.

The Department of Environment have installed infrastructure at the northern end of Thompson Beach to restrict vehicles accessing the beach area north of the township and infrastructure at Pt Prime to limit access from the south. When on the beach there are limited natural features which provide clear guidance to know when you are on Council Managed Land or National Park.

The proposed recommendation would provide clarity for visitors and residents regarding vehicle use on the beach and maintain access that provides for the recreational activities of fishing, crabbing and bird watching.

Conclusion

As a responsible land manager, Council has a duty to manage its land for all user groups and to do so in accordance with relevant management plans. Access management is important for recreational and environmental outcomes and the proposed recommendation seeks to balance visitor use whilst seeking to reduce the impact caused by off road vehicles.

References

Legislation

Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999

Council Policies/Plans

Council's Natural and Coastal Areas Management Plan