

# Discover the Humboldt Bay Area Coastal Habitats

The Humboldt Bay area beaches, dunes, and wetlands offer exceptional opportunities for nature study, beachcombing, picnicking, hiking, and more.

These rare and fragile habitats consist of a mixture of public and private land ownership.

This map describes some of the best places to experience North Coast beaches and facilities available at each site.

**1 Moonstone Beach County Park**  
The rocky cliffs surrounding Moonstone Beach County Park create a dramatic landscape at this popular surfing, rock-climbing, and picnicking area. The park provides access to Little River, where it meanders through the sandy beach and flows into the ocean.

**2 Little River State Beach**  
This extensive, windswept beach features dunes, wetlands, and a broad expanse of sand. The park is bordered by Little River to the north and Clam Beach County Park to the south. The area can be accessed off the Cannell Rd. overpass and from the northern Clam Beach parking lot. Dogs and off-road vehicles are not allowed in the park.

**3 Clam Beach County Park**  
With miles of sand, Clam Beach is an ideal place for an afternoon stroll or a weekend of camping and beachcombing. Street-legal, four-wheel-drive vehicles (no ATVs, motorcycles, or dune buggies) may access the beach but must stay on the dunes (hardened wet sand adjacent to the ocean surf) and not exceed 15 mph. Recreational dune riding and vehicle play are not allowed.

Clam Beach is an important breeding area for the threatened western snowy plover, and park ordinances require visitors to avoid disturbing plovers and their nests. Dogs must be on a leash during western snowy plover breeding season (March through September), except on the waveslope. Please limit your activities to the waveslope during the breeding season.

**4 Mad River County Park**  
Facilities include parking, restrooms, and boat launch (to Mad River). Vehicle access to the beach is allowed for commercial fishermen, senior citizens, and handicapped individuals by permit only. For permit information, call (707) 445-7541. Dogs must be on a leash during western snowy plover breeding season (March through September), except on the waveslope (wet sand).

**5 Lanphere Dunes, Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge**  
The Lanphere Dunes Unit includes the earliest protected dune area on Humboldt Bay. The site has undergone extensive restoration, and due to the sensitivity of the area, public access to the Lanphere Dunes is restricted to day use by individuals with use permits and guided walks. Call Friends of the Dunes (707) 444-1397 for walk and permit information. Lanphere Dunes has no restroom facilities. Dogs and horses are not allowed.

**6 Ma-le'i Dunes North, Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge**  
Following the traditional place name conferred by the Wiyot people, the Ma-le'i Dunes Unit (Ma-le'i North) encompasses 260 acres of forest, dune, and salt marsh habitat. From Friday-Monday, the public can drive to the parking area to access dune trails. Tuesday-Thursday the access road is closed, but the public can walk or bike to the parking lot to access trails. Open one hour before sunrise until one hour after sunset. Dogs and horses are not allowed.

**7 Ma-le'i Dunes South, Bureau of Land Management**  
Following nearly two decades of invasive weed eradication and native plant restoration, this 152-acre area offers outstanding examples of dune, forest, and freshwater habitat. Hiking, dog walking, and horseback riding on designated trails are popular activities, with picnic tables, vault toilet, and equestrian staging facilities provided. Open one hour before sunrise until one hour after sunset.

**8 Mad River Slough Wildlife Area**  
Managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, this wildlife area was formerly part of Arcata Bay's extensive intertidal salt marsh and mudflats. The area provides opportunities for wildlife viewing and hunting.

**9 Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary**  
The Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary is home to the City of Arcata's innovative wastewater treatment facility. The sanctuary includes 5 miles of walking and biking paths and an interpretive center. The area provides marine and migratory resting places for over 300 species of birds. Free guided walks are offered regularly by the Friends of the Arcata Marsh and the Redwood Region Audubon Society. Call (707) 826-2359 for walk information.

**10 Fay Slough Wildlife Area**  
Managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, this 484-acre previously grazed land has been restored to coastal and seasonal wetlands. Bird watching and wildlife viewing are allowed.

**11 Humboldt Coastal Nature Center**  
This 113-acre reserve with marked trails and an interpretive center, with exhibits highlighting coastal natural history. The Friends of the Dunes, a local nonprofit organization, operates the center and provides guided walks, school education programs, and community restoration work days. Access is via Stamps Lane. A current schedule of activities and events is available at: [www.friendsofthedunes.org](http://www.friendsofthedunes.org) or by calling (707) 444-1397.

**12 Manila Dunes Recreation Area**  
Over 150 acres of beaches, dunes, wetlands, and forest are accessed through the Manila Community Center at 1611 Peninsula Drive, Manila. Facilities include restrooms and ample parking. Dogs are allowed on a leash or under voice control. Horse use is limited to designated trails.

**13 Samoa Beach, U.S.S. Milwaukee Marker, and The "T"**  
These three access sites between Manila Dunes and Samoa Dunes Recreation Area provide quick entry to the beach. At low tide the remains of the U.S.S. Milwaukee can be seen. The cruiser was beached in January 1917 trying to free the grounded submarine, the Garfish.

**14 Samoa Dunes Recreation Area**  
Off-highway vehicle use, surfing, fishing, and picnicking are a few of the more common recreational activities visitors enjoy at this popular 300-acre park. Open one hour before sunrise until one hour after sunset, the area is closed to overnight camping, nighttime vehicle use, firearms use, and vegetation collection. Due to the vast array of activities, it is important to respect the rights of other visitors while exploring Samoa Dunes.

**15 Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge**  
The Salmon Creek and Hookton Slough units of the refuge have spectacular waterbird viewing, especially from October to May. The Salmon Creek Unit includes the refuge office, the Richard Gurdage Visitor Center, and a trail system, and is open daily 8am-5pm, except federal holidays. The Hookton Slough Unit is open 365 days for horse hiking and has a canoe/kayak launch. Dogs and horses are not allowed at either unit.

**16 Elk River Access Area: Hikshari Trail-Elk River Wildlife Sanctuary**  
This area includes the 1.5-mile Hikshari Trail that parallels the banks of the Elk River. Accessed in the north at the foot of Footeville and continuing to the Pound Road/Herrick Park and Ride, the trail contains many improvements, including restrooms, boat launch, and parking, as well as providing access to the Elk River Wildlife Sanctuary which has over 100 acres of restored riparian woodland, freshwater marsh, and dunes.

**Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)**  
MPAs protect important marine habitat so the ocean's bounty will be safeguarded for the economic and recreation activities of future generations. The North Coast MPAs were implemented in 2012. There are two MPAs in the Humboldt Bay area: Samoa State Marine Conservation Area and South Humboldt Bay State Marine Recreation Area. For more information on MPAs visit [www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/mpa](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/mpa)

**17 Mike Thompson Wildlife Area, South Spit Humboldt Bay**  
Named after the congressman who was instrumental in making sure these lands are open for the public to enjoy, this area offers a variety of recreational opportunities. Home to the threatened western snowy plover, people, vehicles, and dogs are required to steer clear of posted areas during the plover nesting season (March through September). Dogs must be leashed on the west side of Jetty Road during plover nesting season. Waterfowl hunting is allowed on the east side of the road and early morning access during waterfowl hunting season is provided. Beach driving is allowed on the waveslope only. Open one hour before sunrise until one hour after sunset.

**18 Elk River Wildlife Area and Crab County Park**  
The Eel is California's third largest river and carries 10% of California's yearly runoff. It is important to our coastal dunes because it carries a tremendous amount of the sediment that forms the building materials of dunes. The Eel River delta can be explored from Crab County Park and the Elk River Wildlife Area, accessed four miles west of Loleta, at the end of Cannibal Island Road. The Elk River Wildlife Area, owned and managed by California Department of Fish and Wildlife, is home to the threatened western snowy plover. In the Wildlife Area vehicles are restricted to the waveslope (wet sand) and the back dune road. Dogs must be on a leash from March through September.

## User Etiquette

- Obey posted rules and regulations and trail designations.
- Stay on the trails to preserve plants and wildlife.

- Dogs (when allowed) must be leashed or under voice control. Voice control is defined as the dog is within view and within voice range of the owner, the dog comes at first calling and the dog is not allowed to approach people in a threatening manner or in any way harass people, wildlife, other dogs, or horses.

- Leave no trace - pack out your trash and pet waste.
- Keep off high-traffic vehicle activities in designated areas only. If violations are observed, call the Humboldt County Sheriff at (707) 445-7251.

## Safety

Watch for water safety signs alerting you to site-specific hazards.

- Ground shaking or the ocean receding or suddenly changing is your warning to leave the beach and go to high ground. A tsunami may be coming.
- Do not attempt to rescue your dog if it gets caught in the surf. Dogs are much more likely to make it out on their own than you are.
- Rocks and jetties can be overtopped by waves at any time and rising tides can cut off access. Stay off rocks and jetties and plan for rising tides.
- Never turn your back on the ocean and stay away from the surf. Sneaker waves can strike at any time, even when most waves are small.

## Off-Highway Vehicle Regulations

In 1984, Humboldt County adopted Code 877, which restricts off-highway vehicles (including 4-wheel drive trucks) from most of the Samoa, Petrolina, and dunes, except the area between the North Jetty and the town of Fairhaven. The only exceptions to this are emergency vehicles, licensed commercial fishers, senior citizens, and those with special permission. The speed limit on the open area is 15 MPH. For permit info, call (707) 445-7541. To report violations, call the Sheriff's Department at (707) 445-7505. Off-highway vehicles are allowed with some restrictions at the Samoa Recreation Area between the North Jetty and the town of Fairhaven, at Clam Beach County Park, at Centerville Beach, at Table Bluff County Park, and at the Mike Thompson Wildlife Area. Vehicle use at Clam Beach, Table Bluff, the South Spit, and Centerville Beach is restricted to the waveslope (the area of beach between the high tide and low tide) and is subject to seasonal closures during western snowy plover breeding season from March through September. The speed limit is 15 MPH. Always observe posted regulations at public access points.

FOR MORE CONTACT INFORMATION - SEE BACK OF MAP

Centerville Beach County Park



## Humboldt Bay Area Beaches, Dunes, and Wetlands

- Parking
- Restrooms
- Surfing
- Fishing
- Hunting
- Picnic Tables
- Pedestrian Access
- Wheelchair Access
- Boat Launch
- Equestrian Staging
- Conservation Area-Limited Access
- Camping
- Recreational OHV
- Limited OHV
- Interpretive Trail
- Guided Walks
- Wildlife Viewing Area
- Emergency Phone
- Paddle

- Dogs On Leash
- Dogs Under Voice Control
- Dogs Not Allowed

- Public Access Points
- Beach, Dunes & Wetlands
- Public Land Areas
- Restricted Access
- Marine Protected Areas



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