

GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC ACCESS TO SENSITIVE SITES IN CAPE COD NATIONAL SEASHORE



In general, and unless otherwise marked or identified in the Superintendent's Compendium (see link below), nearly all areas throughout the National Seashore are open to exploration by visitors, staff, and outside organized groups. This bulletin provides guidelines and best practices to minimize the effect that groups in particular, but also individuals could have on sensitive resources throughout the park. <http://www.nps.gov/caco/parkmgmt/index.htm>, scroll down under management documents.

Sensitive resources include but are not limited to the following: natural areas that are fragile or rare habitats and can be easily degraded by frequent visits or group visits; areas where protected species may be nesting or congregating; and areas where abundant or unusual archeological and other cultural resources are found which can be damaged either by foot traffic or by looting.

The following areas and resources have been identified as being sensitive:

Sensitive natural resources:

- ❖ All shorebird nesting and staging areas during nesting and staging seasons.
- ❖ Vegetated dunes and their bog; the banks and shorelines of other wetlands such as vernal pools, kettle ponds and salt marshes; and heathlands where fragile vegetation is present.
- ❖ Foredunes and coastal banks are protected areas under the Superintendent's Compendium and access is limited to established paths.



Penniman House kitchen

Sensitive cultural resources:

- ❖ Archeological artifacts and features from all eras, which include:
 - ❖ Exposed shell middens;
 - ❖ Small cemeteries;
 - ❖ Earthworks such as, civil war batteries and rock walls;
 - ❖ Cellar holes and trash middens;
 - ❖ Shipwrecks;
 - ❖ Historic building interiors.



piping plover adult with eggs

Private properties held within Cape Cod National Seashore are also considered sensitive sites for the purpose of these guidelines.

Guidelines for visiting sensitive areas:

- ❖ Outside groups inquiring about taking groups off main trails will be provided these guidelines. Guidelines are posted on the park website at www.nps.gov/caco, and are applicable to all parties leading public tours into sensitive sites (this includes park staff).
- ❖ Park staff leading tours will become familiar with these guidelines through training programs and will limit group size to minimize impacts to sensitive sites.
- ❖ When groups are brought to sensitive archeological and other cultural sites, care must be taken to avoid trampling resources. The benefit of pointing out at least a sample of an archeological feature accompanied by a strong protection and preservation stewardship message outweighs the threat of the rare occasion of resource looting or destruction.
- ❖ Remain out of closed or posted shorebird areas. Respect signage and do not linger near these areas. Watch the birds from a distance.
- ❖ Stay at least 50 yards away from seals and other marine mammals and restrict viewing time to less than thirty minutes.
- ❖ *Leave No Trace* principles provide further direction on visiting sensitive natural areas and need to be followed. They can be found at www.lnt.org.

We encourage organized groups to submit a proposed hike route map to park headquarters staff for review.