



CITY OF HOMER BEACH POLICY & MANAGEMENT PLAN

Adopted August 9, 2021

Resolution 21-053





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DEFINITIONS

- A. "Berm" means a natural, linear mound or series of mounds in a beach area composed of sand, gravel, or both, generally paralleling the water at or landward of the elevation of mean high water.
- B. "Storm berm" means a berm formed by the upper reach of storm wave surges or the highest tides. Storm berms generally include an accumulation of seaweed, driftwood, and other water-borne materials. A beach area may have more than one storm berm.
- C. "Submerged land" means land covered by tidal water from the elevation of mean low water seaward to the corporate boundary of the city.
- D. "Tideland" means land that is periodically covered by tidal water between the elevation of mean high water and mean low water.
- E. "Beach area" means all of the following, whether publicly or privately owned: submerged land, tideland, and the zone of sand, gravel and other unconsolidated materials that extends landward from the elevation of mean high water to the place where there is a marked change in material or physiographic form.
- F. "Motor vehicle" means a device in, upon, or by which a person or property may be transported or drawn upon or immediately over land, that is self-propelled except by human or animal power.
- G. "Personal watercraft" means a vessel which uses an inboard motor powering a water jet pump as its primary source of motive power. The vessels are designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing or kneeling.



Grassy area of Beluga Slough where highest tides and storm deposit logs and driftwood. Tall grasses and other plants grow there most of the time, and only at the highest tides and largest storms are logs thrown up on this area of the beach.



INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE, & GOALS

Purpose and Intent

The purpose of the City of Homer Beach Policy and Management Plan is to support the enforcement of existing regulations, proposed new regulations, or actions that may be needed, for the seven areas of beaches in City limits. The intent of the policy is to provide guidance to keep Homer's beaches safe and enjoyable for all users while preserving the natural environment. This document will be reviewed and updated on a bi-annual basis by the Parks, Arts, Recreation, and Culture Advisory Commission or as deemed necessary by City Council.

History

The original Beach Policy Task Force was established in 2000 as the result of strong public concern on the current and future use of Homer beaches. They completed the beach policy in 2001 which was adopted by City Council on June 25, 2001. In 2003, per Ordinance 03-27, the City was awarded a \$75,000 Coastal Impact Assessment grant to fund beach access restriction improvements, regulatory signage, a GIS coastal erosion and beach habitat information mapping project and funds for the 2004 United States Geological Survey sediment transport study camera operation.

The Task Force made further recommendations in 2005 through Memorandum 05-78, and concluded their work. In 2007, City Council adopted Ordinance 07-01(A) which added advising on public beaches to the duties of Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission. The Commission formed a Beach Committee to update the Beach Policy, which resulted in this document.

In fall of 2014 the Parks, Art, Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission was directed by Council to review and recommend revisions to the Beach Policy. The Commission worked on the policy the first six months of 2015 and made recommendations via Memorandum 15-102. Council adopted Ordinance 16-05 (S-2)(A-2) on February 23, 2016. Ordinance 16-13 then made minor amendments. The Beach Policy was amended to reflect these revisions through Resolution 16-029(S-2). Resolution 17-021 amended the policy for clarity providing corrections for grammar and content.



*Storm Berm in front of Bishop's
Beach Parking Lot
Photo provided by PARCAC
Member circa 2000*

Goals of this Policy

❖ Education

Educate beach users by providing signage and beach information at convenient locations.

❖ Safety and Prevention

Limit conflicts between motorized users and pedestrians by encouraging courtesy and common sense.

Protect sensitive beach habitat and wildlife from inappropriate use of beaches - e.g., keep motorized vehicles out of lagoon areas and personal watercraft off beaches.

❖ Enforcement

Ensure adequate staffing on holiday weekends, that regulatory signage is installed where needed so laws can be enforced, and gates are operational to prevent or limit access to sensitive or prohibited areas.



Bishop's Beach has a 2-tier parking area that is delineated by driftwood, rocks, and grassy areas. Vehicle access to the west end (Area 7) is located at the northwest corner of the lower lot and a gate at the southeast end restricts access to the East-end of Ocean Drive Loop Seawall to Bishop's Beach Park (Area 6).



GENERAL POLICY & PLAN FOR ALL HOMER BEACHES

A. Identify and improve beach access points. Heavy impacts are created by a large number of people accessing the beach at a small number of places. By finding, improving, and publishing all public beach access points, this will diffuse the impacts and provide a more enjoyable experience to all.

1. Improve and maintain beach access points.
 - a. Document the known public beach access points and tracks their current status, development, and other notes of interest.
 - b. An audit/review for updates of the beach access points and documentation shall be done every three years.
2. Provide signage at selected public access points.

B. Install and maintain signage as needed. Signage shall be positive and informative to encourage courtesy to pedestrians, appropriate pet control and clean up, and indicate where vehicles are permitted. All signage must be installed in a manner that meets the needs of law enforcement.

1. Installed signage shall address the following:
 - a. The berm building process, shore zone wildlife habitat, etc.
 - b. The risks of driving on the beach and the responsibility the owner/driver accepts, specifying that the City shall not be held liable.
 - c. The prohibition of removal and burning of driftwood along the berm, and where campers can locate campfire wood.
 - d. City code prohibitions and applicable fines, so that any violators of the law on City beaches may be ticketed.
2. City shall coordinate with U.S Fish and Wildlife (USFW) on a uniform interpretative signage plan for all City beach parks. Adjust signage language over time to meet changing needs. Include the project in the annual budget.
3. Ensure there are line items in the City's budget for sign repair, updating, and replacement.

*Northwest end of Mariner Park
Signage clearly states City Code and vehicle restrictions, rocks adequately delineate the parking area, and the Alaska flag adds a positive touch.*



C. Be aware of seaward property boundaries when making municipal decisions. Although many believe property lines stop at a water boundary, it has become apparent this is not always the case in Kachemak Bay. Normal property lines next to the ocean are established at mean high tide, and slow erosion does change boundaries. The 1964 earthquake caused the sinking of the Spit and Homer area and the sea flowed over the lowered land. This sudden change is called avulsion and legally does not change land boundaries. However, avulsion does have to be proven which can be difficult without adequate historical records. Common in Alaska, the area below mean high tide is owned by the State of Alaska, and this is true in a few spots in Homer. But generally speaking, the City owns the tidelands below mean high tide.

D. Encourage better enforcement of applicable existing state and local laws. Examples of applicable laws include: HCC 19.08 Campgrounds, HCC 7.16 Vehicles in Beach Areas; HCC18.28.200 Waste or injury to land, and Alaska State Traffic Regulations regarding: DWI, Reckless Driving, Negligent Driving, Basic Speed, and Littering.

1. Evening quiet hours shall be posted and enforced in applicable areas.
2. City driving laws in City beach parking areas and on west Bishop's Beach where driving is permitted shall be enforced.
3. Any observed violations of policies or laws shall be reported to the Homer Police Department.

E. Develop a coordinated public relations campaign. It is important to enlist the public in the campaign to keep our beaches enjoyable for all, to limit the human damage to fragile areas, and to minimize friction between user groups. The City requires everyone's help.

1. Prior to major holiday weekends, beach rules and etiquette in the local newspapers, on social media, and local radio stations shall be advertised.
2. Beach maps and brochures on beach etiquette shall be provided at all City campground facilities, Homer Chamber of Commerce, City Hall, and the Port and Harbor's Office.
3. Beach educational materials shall be distributed to local school district officials to ensure information is included in existing curriculum pertaining to beach activities and field trips.
4. Ensure there are line items in the City's budget for advertising expenses.

F. Perform an annual assessment of beach health and developing impacts.

1. Provide City Council with annual updates from local organizations and entities that support clean-up efforts on city beaches. Host on City Website.
2. On a biannual basis, take photographs of sensitive areas or places and keep a photo record of changes. Host on City website.

G. Driftwood from berm areas should not be removed. Testimony by scientists emphasizes the importance of the natural berm building process to protect the Spit, Mariner Lagoon, and Beluga Slough and provide wildlife habitat. The driftwood plays an important role in building and stabilizing berms and is an esthetic enhancement to the beach. Therefore, it is hoped that providing an alternate source of campfire wood for campers serves the important function of protecting the berms.

1. Prohibit the burning of driftwood from berm areas.
2. Provide alternative wood sources for campfires, or install signage that informs campers where campfire wood can be found.

H. Find ways of supporting beach clean-up.

1. Encourage the elimination of unsightly waste on properties near the beach by working with landowners, particularly in the Louie's Lagoon, Homer Spit, and Mariner Park areas.
2. Support volunteer efforts by providing trash bags for annual clean-up events and dumpsters or trash removal at locations such as Bishop's Beach.
3. Support local organizations and entities that provide clean-up efforts on city beaches. Support may be in the form of providing trash bags, dumpster service at beach parks, and City funding for newspaper advertising educational and beach clean-up activities.

I. Keep cars from encroaching onto beach berms and beaches in city campgrounds, parks, and along the Homer Spit Road.

1. Define parking lots so they do not spread onto the beach.




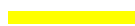

Gates and use of natural vegetation are used to delineate parking lots at parks and beaches at the south end of Mariner Park (top), Southeast end of Bishop's Beach (middle), and Louie's Lagoon parking lot (bottom)



POLICIES & PLANS FOR SPECIFIC AREAS

The following are management plans for specific beach areas, identified as Areas 1 through 7, and follow the beach line from East to West.

Color Key for Area Maps

	No Vehicles Allowed
	Boundary Lines Identified in HCC 7.16
	Vehicles Allowed per HCC 7.16.020 Exceptions

AREA 1

Miller's Landing to East of Airport Beach Access Road

- A. Miller's Landing – Maintain a public viewing spot in the Airport Beach Access Road Right-of-Way off of Kachemak Drive through the use of signage stating the location of the public access. A small parking area may be designated with the use of boulders to discourage trespassing on adjacent properties.
- B. Airport Beach Access Road – Support state efforts to place signage or interpretive displays.
- C. Vehicle use at the bottom of Airport Beach Access Road on the beach is not allowed – Vehicles are allowed east of that area, but there is no public vehicle access point to get to that part of the beach. Land owners, or those with land owner permission, may access the beach from private vehicle access points. Once on the beach, nothing in City laws or policy condones trespassing on adjacent private lands.
- D. Vehicles are allowed on the beach east of the vacated easement (formerly known as Shirlene Circle).



AREA 2

Airport Beach Access Road to North-End of Berm outside of Louie's Lagoon, and Louie's Lagoon

- A. Vehicles are prohibited in this entire area, excluding designated access driveways and parking. Vehicle restriction is necessary to protect the fragile habitats of Mud Bay and Louie's Lagoon.
- B. Maintain signage identifying public pedestrian access points and vehicle parking areas.
- C. Ensure area and easements are zoned for conservation.
- D. Preserve subsistence fishing access through the northern portion of the English Bay property, which traditionally has included pedestrian and vehicle access.



AREA 3

Louie's Lagoon-South to End of Homer Spit, then North to the South-end of Mariner Park

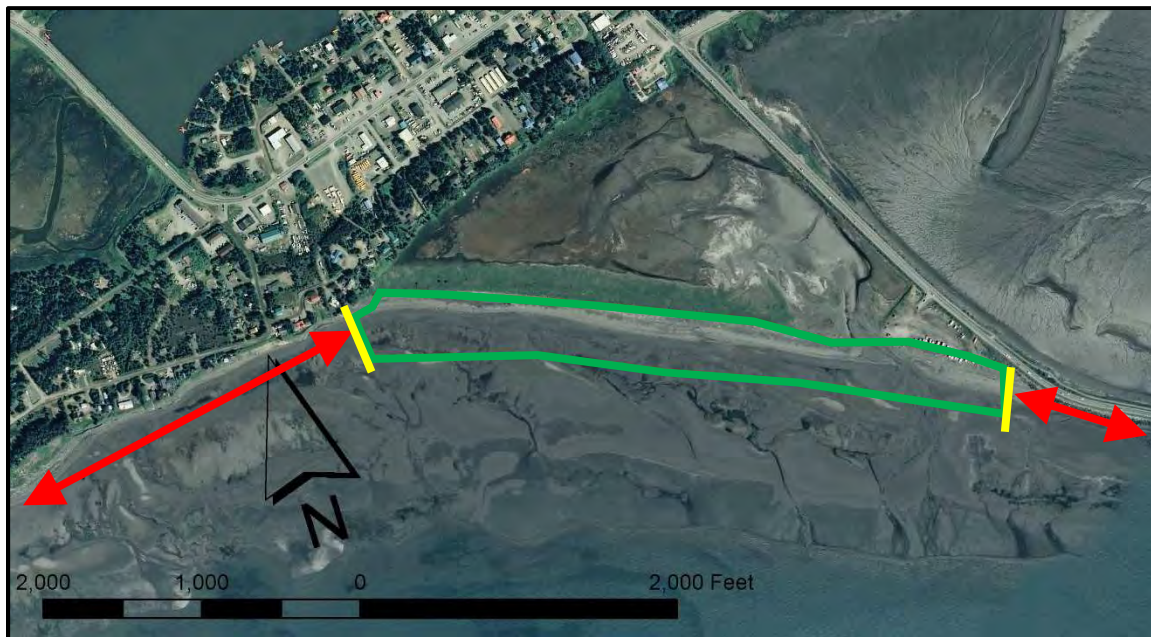
- A. Vehicles are prohibited in this entire area, excluding designated access driveways and parking.



AREA 4

South-end of Mariner Park to East-end of Ocean Drive Loop Seawall

- A. Vehicles are allowed between the south-end of Mariner Park Beach and the east-end of the Ocean Drive Loop seawall from October 1st through March 31st for the sole purpose of gathering sand and coal. The beach is closed to vehicles at all times for any other purpose.
- B. The area in front of the seawall west to the Beluga Slough outfall is closed to vehicles.
- C. Mariner Park Campground and day-use area has defined campsites and controlled vehicle access to the beach through the use of logs, rocks, and a gate. Maintain the campground and these measures as they provide protection to the berm, encouraging natural vegetation growth.



AREA 5

Mariner Park Lagoon and Storm Berm

- A. Vehicles are prohibited in this entire area.
- B. Ensure there are line items in the City's budget to dredge Mariner Slough on a biennial year period.



AREA 6

East-end of Ocean Drive Loop Seawall to Bishop's Beach Park

- A. Vehicles are prohibited in this area.
- B. Maintain the gate and rocks at Bishop's Beach Park to physically block access to vehicles.
- C. Support U.S. Fish and Wildlife efforts to protect berm and promote rye grass/driftwood build-up.
- D. Support U.S. Fish and Wildlife's efforts to develop a plan to maintain the ecological integrity of their educational reserve, including possible conservation zoning.



AREA 7

Bishop's Beach Park Access-West to Homer City Limits

- A. This is a heavily used area and has the greatest potential for conflicts between user groups.
- B. Ensure there is adequate parking and signage at Bishop's Beach Park and in the area. Wayfinding signage may direct people to nearby public parking (e.g., Homer Chamber of Commerce, Islands and Ocean Visitor Center).
- C. Vehicles are allowed west from Bishop's Beach Park access and prohibited to the east. Posted signage shall warn drivers to proceed at their own risk.
- D. Improve erosion control and maintain beach access points.

- E. Work with property owners and interested volunteers to remove derelict vehicles from City beaches. Owner will be responsible for the costs and removal of vehicle(s).



