



MARK WILLIAMS
COMMISSIONER

DOUG HAYMANS
DIRECTOR

April 5, 2022

Allie Hayser
Manomet
P.O. Box 85
Tybee Island, GA 31328

Re: Letter of Permission (LOP), Sign Placement, Temporary Activities in the State's Shore Protection Act (SPA) Jurisdiction, North Beach Area, Tybee Island, Chatham County, Georgia

Dear Ms. Hayser:

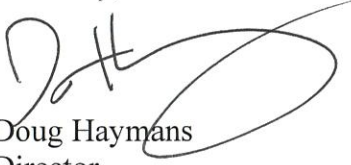
This letter is in response to your request to install educational signage at multiple locations to help raise public awareness of a designated Wildlife Beach Zone (WBZ) on Tybee Island, Chatham County. This pilot project involves the installation of signage within a 14-acre area located on the island's northern point, seaward of Van Horne Avenue and Pulaski Street. The dry sand beach at this location has a documented history of recorded observations of federal and state priority listed shorebird species. In addition to signage, volunteers trained as WBZ Stewards will monitor the area and engage individuals in an effort to increase public awareness of Georgia's unique coastal environment. The project is an attempt to enhance habitat, document shorebird roosting flocks, improve the probability of nesting success among species of high concern, identify nesting activity, and minimize shorebird disturbance from human activities. This project has the potential to benefit several beach nesting birds including high priority colonial seabirds such as Black Skimmer, Gull-billed Tern, and Least Tern. The temporary project will begin no sooner than 15 days after the date of this letter and be completed within 6 months.

The project scope includes the installation of two (2) types of signs. To increase awareness of the WBZ project, educational signs on wooden posts will be strategically placed in the vicinity of high traffic public dune crosswalks on Tybee Island's north end. WBZ Reminder signs on stakes will be installed on the dry sand beach to identify the approximate limits of the designated habitat. In addition to educating the public about the importance of minimizing human disturbance to roosting shorebirds and suggesting voluntary behaviors that can minimize shorebird disturbance, WBZ Stewards will monitor the integrity of the projects signs and posts.

The Department authorizes the temporary installation of signage and will work with the applicant to install signage as depicted in the attached site plan. This LOP is valid for the above referenced project. Any change in the use, location, dimensions, or configuration of the approved project, without prior notification and approval from this office could result on the revocation of this permission and in the required removal of the materials and related structures. This LOP is not meant to exempt the above referenced activity from future environmental laws. **No unauthorized equipment, materials or debris may be disposed of, or stored in jurisdictional areas.**

Thank you for working with the Department on this project. Please do not hesitate to contact Deb Barreiro at 912.266.3695, if you have any questions about this or any other project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Doug Haymans', with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

Doug Haymans
Director

Enclosures: WBZ Project Description, WBZ Exhibits, WBZ Support Letters

cc: Tim Keyes
Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Wildlife Resources Division
One Conservation Way
Brunswick, GA 31520

LOP2022024



P.O. Box 85
Tybee Island, Georgia 31328
912-220-0591
manomet.org

Re: Request for Letter of Permission (LOP)

Dear Ms. Jill Andrews:

Manomet, in partnership with Georgia DNR and with support from the City of Tybee, requests a letter of permission to post a temporary, seasonal, and voluntary wildlife beach zone in an area on the north end of Tybee Island. On Tybee Island, the Wildlife Beach Zone is proposed to encompass 14 acres north of the beach groin (Figure 3.). We will post signage around the perimeter of this zone, at access points and above the tideline (Figure 4.) to help beach users identify when they are entering critical habitat.

Two types of signs will be used: Reminder Signs and Educational Signs. Reminder signs will be posted at beach access areas where there is light to moderate beach user traffic. Educational signs will be posted at beach access areas where there is heavy beach user traffic. Reminder signs will be approximately 8x10 inches (Figure 1.), printed and laminated with 5 mil plastic sheets, and affixed to wooden stakes. Educational signs will be approximately 10x13 inches (Figure 2.) and printed and laminated. They will be affixed to wooden posts 3 ft in height and located strategically to provide context about the Wildlife Beach Zone. These signs will be installed with hand tools and materials will be transported and carried by hand. We will have 30 signs at Tybee Island. Mockups of these signs and maps of these areas are attached to this document (Figures 1-4.). We plan to install these signs in March of 2022. The usage of these signs will be coordinated with Georgia DNR to determine appropriate number and location of signs.

Volunteers will be enlisted as stewards. We expect to have 2-3 stewards talking and engaging with public on the beach for several hours of the day at these wildlife beach zones. Stewards will check signs at periodically through the day to ensure that the signs remain in good order.

Manomet will collaborate with the City of Tybee, Public Works, Tim Keyes and Deb Barreiro from GA DNR, the Tybee Marine Science Center, and local community groups to use signage where appropriate, launch a coastal bird steward program, and provide consistent messaging about the benefits of the Wildlife Beach Zone using Community-based Social Marketing to shift behavioral norms. This communication will spotlight the incredible example provided by Tybee Island for other public beaches in the state and more broadly across the Atlantic Coast.

These wildlife beach zone areas will be evaluated each season, moved, and adjusted to fit the needs of wildlife, people, and safety. By educating beach users about which areas are important to wildlife like shorebirds, then they are empowered to act in ways to help protect

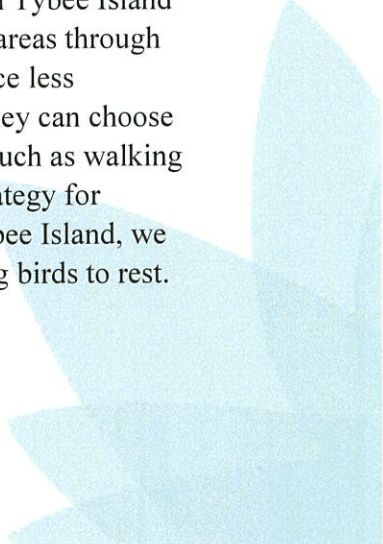
good habitat and will increase local pride as well as awareness of the ecological values of these areas.

Background

Georgia's coast is internationally recognized as an Important Bird Area and provides habitat for at least 300,000 shorebirds every year. Our coast has two Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) sites including the 2017 designation of the Georgia Barrier Islands, which encompasses 79,709 acres including Tybee Island. We hold more than 30% of the biogeographic population of *rufa* Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) and of the Great Lakes breeding population of Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus circumcinctus*). This area includes more than 10% of the biogeographic populations of American Oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*), Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*), and Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*).

Manomet has been a leader in bird research and conservation for 50 years and through Manomet, the Georgia Bight Shorebird Conservation Initiative (GABSCI) was launched in 2018 to address specific threats to the shorebirds dependent on the southeastern region of the Atlantic Coast. The GABSCI has been invested and involved in shorebird and sea bird monitoring on the coast of Tybee Island since its creation. Our goals at the GABSCI include working with partner groups to reduce threats to shorebirds and protect habitat by addressing human disturbance, disturbance from dogs, loss of habitat, and other issues that impact coastal birds. In order to answer management and conservation questions, we have been conducting International Shorebird Surveys (ISS) and disturbance surveys to acquire long-term data to inform conservation actions of the entire coast and participate in pilot studies at a nation-wide level.

In our monitoring efforts, we have recorded state priority species using Tybee Island throughout the year. We have seen banded Black Skimmers from New York, Virginia, North Carolina, New Jersey, and Massachusetts resting and foraging on our barrier islands (Figures 5-6.). The Tybee Island WBZ has been the site of a Black Skimmer nesting colony in past years. Additionally, Piping Plovers have been documented roosting during the winter on Tybee Island (Figure 7.). These species show a high degree of site fidelity, so protecting these areas through designating Wildlife Beach Zones will ensure the habitat they need will experience less disturbance. To reduce disturbance, we will educate the public about behaviors they can choose that will allow them to use the area while reducing negative impacts to wildlife, such as walking below the tideline and giving roosting birds space. This will create a positive strategy for management of nesting habitat and areas of recreational value to humans. On Tybee Island, we will ask that people give birds space, and to stay on the wet sand to allow roosting birds to rest.





P.O. Box 85
Tybee Island, Georgia 31328
912-220-0591
manomet.org

Manomet's GABSCI has partnered with Virginia Tech and Audubon groups from four other states to reduce disturbance across the Atlantic Flyway. As part of this collaboration, our state will serve as a pilot site to demonstrate that designating Wildlife Beach Zones, a non-regulatory, temporary, and voluntary section of a public beach can protect habitat for shorebirds and sea birds, while enhancing the experience of beach users. Using data from our ongoing monitoring, we have identified certain zones that are of high importance for sea birds and shorebirds, and can be used for different recreational or management goals. We appreciate the active and engaging support from GADNR, including Tim Keyes and Deb Barreiro, in the formulation of this project and aiding in this process.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

3 / 15 / 2022

Allie Hayser
Shorebird Technician
Georgia Bight Shorebird Conservation Initiative
Manomet, Inc.

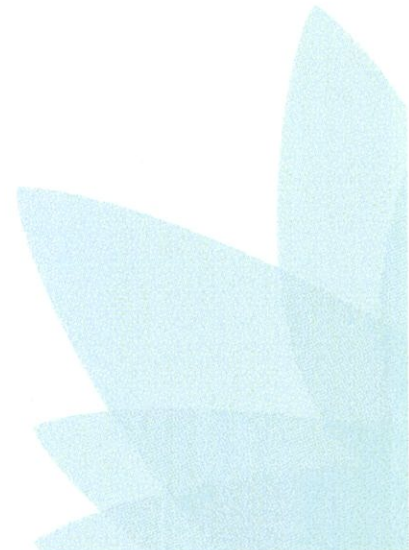


Figure 1. Reminder Sign for Tybee Island:



Figure 2. Educational Sign for Tybee Island:

Wildlife Beach Zone



This section of Tybee Island is a Wildlife Beach Zone. **Please walk on the wet sand** to help protect rare and threatened birds, wildlife and plants.

Protect our coastal birds using this beach:



Black Skimmers nest in colonies on our beaches. They need space to raise their chicks from April-August.



Endangered Piping Plovers spend the winter with us, feeding and resting.



Rare Wilson's Plover nest here from March-August. Stay on the wet sand to avoid disturbing them as they raise their chicks.

Figure 3. Map of proposed Wildlife Beach Zone on Tybee Island (Area: 14 acres):

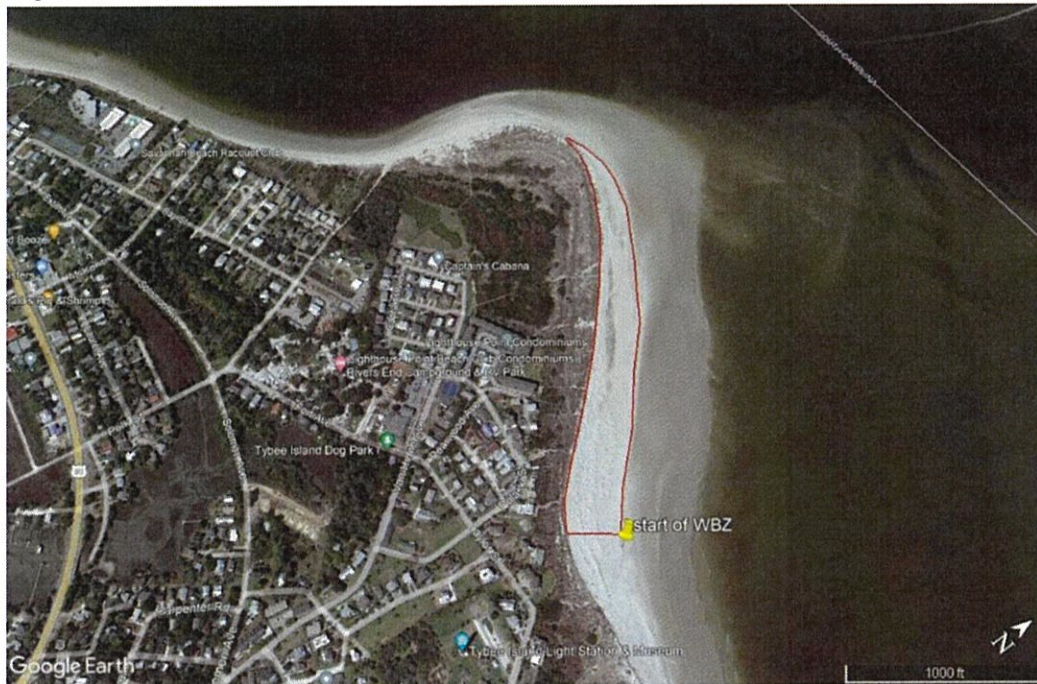


Figure 4. Proposed area for sign installation on the beach above the tide line.



Figure 5. Black Skimmers in the proposed Wildlife Beach Zone on Tybee Island where we resighted color bands from New York, Virginia, North Carolina, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. Photo taken on 2/11/2022.



Figure 6. Black Skimmer with blue-colored band from New Jersey in the proposed Wildlife Beach Zone area. Photo taken on 3/10/2022.



Figure 7. Piping Plovers roosting in the proposed Wildlife Beach Zone on Tybee Island. The colored bands are from the Great Lakes Piping Plover Project. They've been coming here to Tybee specifically for years! They are still here in March 2022 but will be leaving soon. Photo taken on 11/1/2021.



MAYOR
Shirley Sessions

CITY COUNCIL
Barry Brown Mayor pro tem
Jay Burke
Nancy DeVetter
Michael "Spec" Hosti
Monty Parks
Brian West



CITY MANAGER
Shawn Gillen

CITY CLERK
Janet LeViner

CITY ATTORNEY
Edward M. Hughes

CITY OF TYBEE ISLAND

February 21, 2022

Ms. Deb Barreiro
Department of Natural Resources
185 Richard Davis Drive, Suite 104
Richmond Hill, GA 31324

Dear Ms. Barreiro:

The City of Tybee Island staff have worked closely with Manomet in the planning of the proposed Wildlife Beach Zone program and supports this Letter of Permission (LOP) to establish a temporary, seasonal, voluntary area encompassing approximately 14 acres north of the North Groin, as specified in the LOP, and strongly urge you to grant their request for the LOP.

As a part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, the City recognizes and appreciates its role as stewards of our environment that plays host to the hundreds of thousands of migrating shorebirds each year. We expect the Wildlife Beach Zone to be an effective outreach and educational effort to the millions of visitors to the Island each year.

Thank you for your kind consideration and your continued support of Tybee Island as we work to build our coastal resilience while maintaining and even improving the natural habitat for fish and wildlife.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Best regards,

Shawn Gillen
City Manager
City of Tybee Island
PO Box 2794
Tybee Island, GA 31328

Cc: Shirley Sessions, Mayor
Michelle Owens, Assistant City Manager
Alan W Robertson, Project Manager

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MARK WILLIAMS
COMMISSIONER

TED WILL
DIRECTOR

2/16/2022

To: Jill Andrews

Coastal Resources Division
One Conservation Way
Brunswick GA 31520

Wildlife Conservation Section biologists have worked closely with Manomet in the planning of the proposed Wildlife Beach Zone (WBZ) program and support this LOP. The WBZ program should improve public understanding of shorebirds and reduce disturbance at a sites on the Georgia Coast. We fully support this effort which asks beachgoers to voluntarily engage in behaviors which are proven to reduce the disturbance of nesting, roosting and foraging shorebirds, primarily staying on the wet sand on Tybee north beach.

The Georgia Coast is a designated landscape of hemispheric importance for shorebirds (through the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network: WHSRN) due to the large number of conservation priority shorebirds which use the coast on an annual basis. The WBZ program would significantly advance the education/outreach efforts for shorebirds on one of the most heavily visited beaches in the state and we hope will continue the goal of creating a culture of conservation awareness among our residents and visitors.

This program should highlight the fact that with some planning and effort, beach recreation and wildlife conservation and appreciation can go hand in hand.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Timothy Keyes".

Timothy Keyes
Wildlife Conservation Section
One Conservation Way
Brunswick GA 31520
Tim.keyes@dnr.ga.gov