

Ord Dunes park to open soon

*Feds to transfer
979 acres of
land to state*

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City residents and visitors to Marina will soon be able to walk onto the Fort Ord Dunes State Park.

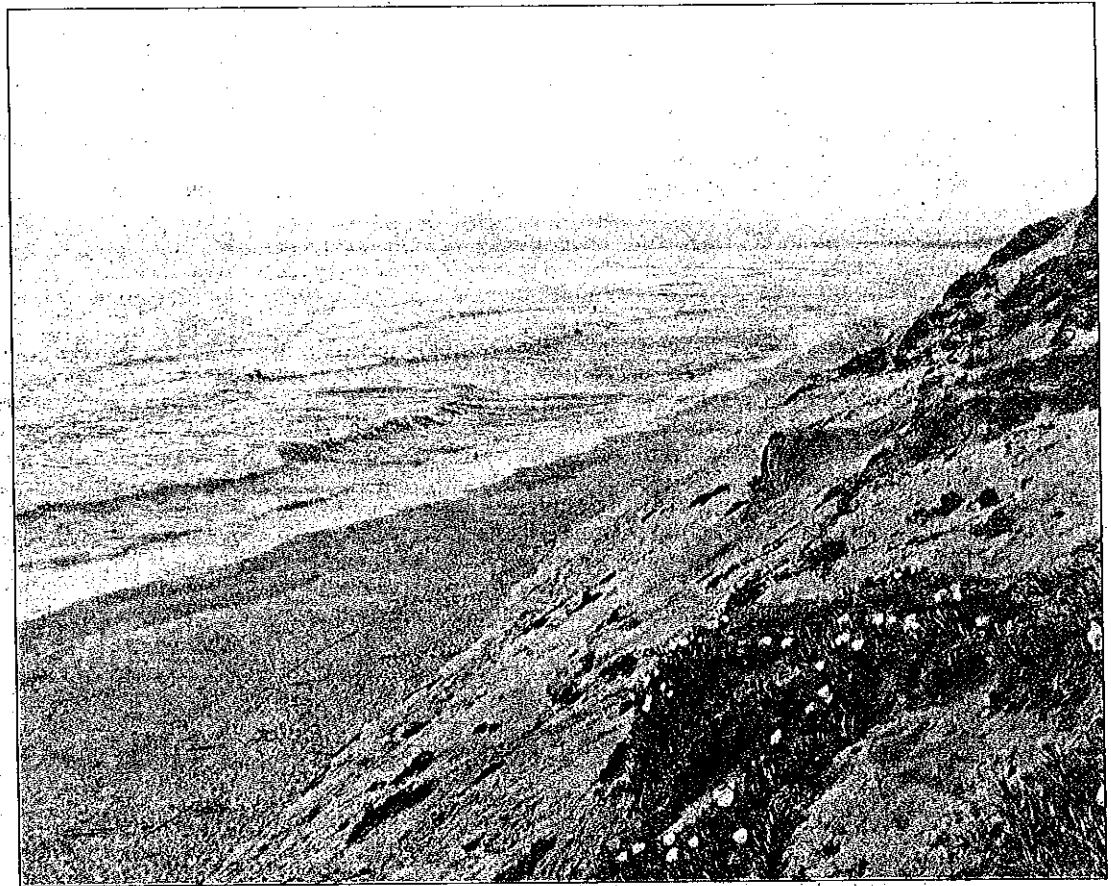
The state's Coastal Commission has approved a plan to open the area for public use in the coming months.

The Coastal Commission in March approved a five-year permit while several improvements are made to a parking lot area and area roads.

The state Parks Department has worked with local agencies to open the area for recreation since 1991, a year after the fort closed. The proposed park covers 979 acres on the 28,000-acre former military base. The area, west of Highway 1, includes coastal dunes and about four miles of beach along the Monterey Bay.

"This is such a beautiful area, and we want to get the park open to the public as soon as possible," said Ken Gray, a state parks planner and Marina City Councilman.

The park will be open to vehicle access at 8th Street from 8 a.m. to 30 minutes after sunset. Vehicles will only be able to drive on 8th Street between an overpass and the parking lot at the former Stilwell Hall and pedes-



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The sun sets Tuesday on Fort Ord Dunes State Park, which will soon open to the public.

WHAT'S NEXT

The National Park Service, which holds the title to the Fort Ord Dunes State Park, is set to transfer the title to the California State Parks agency for public use in the coming months.

Trians will be limited to the existing trails and beach in order to preserve the dune habitat, Gray said.

Beach Range Road will be the main recreational trail and bike path, running along the park's four miles.

The existing chain-link fence will be replaced by a steel bar gate and the parking lot will be repaved with 55 parking spaces. A public viewing area will be established at the former Stilwell Hall site.

The beach will be open for

walking, picnics, surfing and fishing. No campfires or dogs will be allowed on the beach.

About 150 acres of the beach have been designated coastal strand habitat for the western snowy plover. Low-profile fencing will aim to keep visitors from walking into the habitat area, Gray said.

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