

Standard Sea Turtle Monitoring Protocol

The conspicuous marking and barricading of sea turtle nests are effective means of protecting nests from vehicular impacts. Along St. Johns County beaches where public driving is not permitted, nest marking will provide protection from public safety vehicles, horseback riders, pedestrians, and other official vehicles that are permitted to drive on all County Beaches (vehicles such as those required for wildlife rescue, environmental monitoring, shoreline protection installation or maintenance, code enforcement, or other official St. Johns County or City of St. Augustine Beach business). All procedures will conform to current or future Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Marine Turtle Conservation Guidelines and can be found at <http://www.myfwc.com/seaturtle/Guidelines/Guidelines.PDF>. St. Johns County will provide all needed materials per the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).

Under the sea turtle monitoring plan, St. Johns County sea turtle monitoring personnel will:

- 1) Annually attend HCP and Protected Species training;
- 2) Coordinate conservation efforts through the St. Johns County Habitat Conservation Plan and Incidental Take Permit;
- 3) Provide to HCP Coordinator who to contact in the event the Principal Permit Holder cannot be reached;
- 4) Conduct daily nesting surveys between May 1 and September 30 (or after last nest has emerged) by 8:00 am each morning;
 - a) Report to HCP Coordinator immediately if daily nesting survey on driving beaches are not complete by 8:00 am;
 - b) HCP Coordinator will insure that in the event the daily sea turtle nesting survey is not completed by 8:00 am, beach opening to vehicular traffic will be delayed until completion of the survey.
- 5) Conspicuously mark and barricade all nests deposited in St. Johns County;
 - a) Mark the entire area of the sea turtle nest with at least three stakes, bright flagging tape, bright yellow sea turtle sign, and reflective number on driving beaches;
 - b) Nest located in beach traffic lanes should be barricaded with bright orange cones in addition to items mentioned above;
- 6) Communicate weekly with HCP Coordinator sea turtle nesting activity including false crawls, species, date, estimated emergence date, mileage (on driving beaches), descriptive location, GPS coordinates, actual emergence date, date of evaluation, and reproductive success via email or fax;

- a) Report GPS coordinates of nest location prior to and after relocating nest;
- 7) Document impacts to sea turtles, including, but not limited to, hatchling disorientations, turtles and/or nests impacted by vehicles, and hatchling/rut interactions, tidal inundation, predation, human disturbance;
- 8) Utilize and submit all data forms provided by the County to HCP Coordinator;
- 9) Report to HCP Coordinator and/or Beach Lighting Officer lighting violations on date of violation;
- 10) Report to HCP Coordinator and/or Sheriff's Department HCP violations on date of violation;
- 11) Mark sea turtle monitoring vehicles with obvious signage for all sea turtle related activities;
- 12) Include summary of all information collected on data forms within annual report submitted to USFWS.