

Section 10

Beach Driving at Summer Haven

Purpose

Summer Haven is a unique and extremely narrow portion of sandy beach. It is one of the most critically eroded beaches in St. Johns County exhibiting recurring wash over zones and repeated inlet formation. Summer Haven has been developed with at least 23 homes and some utilize off-road trails behind primary dunes to access their homes. The demarcation between the access trails and the beach proper is ill-defined and vehicles periodically drive on the beach. Reducing the amount of vehicular traffic on the beach will serve to protect and conserve the ecological significance of this unique area.

Relevant ITP Condition - G.2.n.

- n. Management of Beach Driving at Summer Haven.** “The Permittee shall continue to maintain and manage a locked gate barricade along old U.S. A1A immediately south of the terminus of the existing rock revetment along the Atlantic Ocean coastline in the town of Summer Haven. Ingress and egress through such barricade shall only be authorized for owners and/or residents of homes along old U.S. A1A.”

Per Chapter 7.3.4 of the HCP, Measures to Mitigate Unavoidable Impacts, Restoring the primary dune along Summer Haven. The County is responsible for restoring the primary dune along Summer Haven to preserve and enhance the nesting habitat along Summer Haven for both nesting sea turtles and Least terns.

HCP Performance During 2008

Implementation: On March 11, 2003 a steel gate was installed on the northern portion of Summer Haven and locked to allow only residents with a key access to their homes from the north end of Summer Haven. However, after multiple storms, high winds and continuous washovers due to high tides, the topography of the beach changed dramatically earning the gate the name of “air gate”. With the changes the gate can easily be driven around and so the locked mechanism serves no purpose. Residents have been instructed to use the “way of necessity” trail that is located on western slope of Summer Haven. Residents access from Old A1A and continue south on the trail until reaching their homes. The County Road and Bridge Department installed bollards adjacent to the rock revetment located on the northern end of Summer Haven with signage to prevent non-residents from driving on the beach. Throughout the year increased erosion threatened the possibility of a breach of the already eroded dune system.

Then on Wednesday, October 10th during an extreme high tide and storm event a complete breach in the dune system occurred on the northern end of Summer Haven

forming a new inlet (Object 8) and discontinuing any access by homeowners. The homeowner at the end of old A1A on the northern end was experiencing rapid erosion and lost parts of his yard including his fence (Object 9). The homeowner was observed pushing his fence and sand back into his property line with a large piece of construction equipment. After the breach occurred the homeowners that could previously access their homes from the northern end were forced to access from the south and enter onto the beach.

Object 8.



View of new Summer Haven inlet from north facing south.

Object 9.



View of new Summer Haven inlet from east facing west towards Summer Haven river and A1A.

Assessment: No impact from vehicles on sea turtle nest was reported by sea turtle patrol. In addition, no citations or infractions were reported during the 2008 sea turtle nesting season associated with restricted driving on Summer Haven.

Program Improvements: No improvements are scheduled at this time. The County will continue to coordinate with the Engineering and Road & Bridge Departments on projects in this area.