

Section 13**Daytime Nesting and Hatching Events****Purpose**

The purpose of daytime nesting and hatchling event surveys are to eliminate or minimize impacts to daytime sea turtle nesting activities and washback hatchling events from vehicular activities on County beaches.

Relevant ITP Condition - G.2.m.

- m. Daytime Nesting and Hatching Events.** “Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this Permit, the Permittee shall develop and submit for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service review and approval a standard operating procedures protocol for regulating vehicle traffic during daytime sea turtle nesting and hatching events. The Permittee may amend the standard operating procedures protocol both prior to and after its implementation upon review and approval of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”

HCP Performance During 2008

Implementation: In September 2006 a *Daytime Nesting and Hatching Events Protocol* was submitted and approved through the USFWS. In addition, Beach Services submitted a *Washback Survey Protocol* (Appendix O) to FWC for approval. After approval from USFWS further review from FWC to obtain authorization for staff, volunteers, and logistical support.

During HCP and Protected Species Training individuals including commercial fishermen, North Beach drivers, Principal Permit Holders (PPH) and their volunteers are thoroughly informed on how to recognize Daytime Nesting, Hatching, Washback, and Stranding events. A series of photographic slides representing each event are presented. Individuals are provided with information on how to respond if no personnel are present and the contact numbers of authorized personnel. This protocol will help in avoiding any possible impacts to sea turtles. In addition, each PPH is provided with a copy of the approved *Daytime Nesting and Hatchling Event Protocol*.

Assessment: No daytime nesting or hatch out events were reported during the 2008 sea turtle nesting season.

The Washback survey program began in September of 2008. FWC requires that Washback volunteers attend training to learn the approved protocol and how to conduct a survey. On September 17, 42 participants attended a general training session and on September 22 and 23 all designated Zone Captains received field training at various beach locations where a wrack line was present. Driving beaches serve as priority for surveying to avoid negative impact to washback post-hatchlings. Varying levels of beach

driving occur along 16.3 miles of 41.1 miles of County shoreline. Approximately 19.8 miles of County beaches were surveyed during this time; 6.0 miles of non-driving beach, 3.5 miles of restricted driving and 10.0 miles of allowed beach driving. Due to a lack of volunteer participation a total of 2.8 miles of restricted driving beaches were not surveyed.

The Ponte Vedra Lodge was issued a permit on November 1 by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Bureau of Beaches and Coastal Systems to remove the wrack line as part of their daily cleaning and raking of the beach. As a condition of the permit a sea turtle nesting survey was required to be completed prior to the removal. The permit also provided that removal shall not occur until the end of sea turtle season, October 31. Additionally, the permit stated that all other applicable local laws apply. As noted in the *Washback Survey Protocol* surveys end on November 30. The coordinator for the beach cleanup at the Ponte Vedra Lodge was contacted and was very willing to work the HCP Coordinator and HCP volunteers to ensure that proper wrack line surveys were complete prior to removal.

Program Improvements: There are no improvements needed for the *Daytime Nesting and Hatchout Event Protocol* at this time. The *Washback Survey Protocol* did not cover all restricted driving beaches. The County would like to increase its volunteer participation in order to cover all driving beaches.