

Section 6

Public Awareness Program

Purpose

Providing education materials and attending periodic public events will continue to educate the beach driving public about driving regulations, sea turtles, Anastasia Island beach mice, shorebirds and dune habitats and will aid in a better understanding of the protections and policies in place. Many people will act as stewards of the environment and protected species if provided with conservation-minded recommendations through public awareness campaigns.

Relevant ITP Condition - G.2.g.

- g. Public Awareness Program.** “By May 1 of the first full nesting season following the issuance date of this Permit, the Permittee shall develop public awareness materials regarding beach driving requirements contained within Chapter 7 of the HCP, this Permit, and local ordinances and codes, provide such materials to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for review and approval, and after receiving U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval, make such materials available to the public. Public awareness materials may be subsequently amended prior to and after their distribution upon review and approval of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”

HCP Performance During 2008

Implementation: The public was reached through various media options throughout the sea turtle season. Prior to the 2008 nesting season a media campaign informing the beach driving public of beach regulations was launched through local newspapers, news channels, Government television stations, and radio. Individuals purchasing an annual pass season received a leaflet (Appendix D) providing beach regulations and contact information. Upon entering the beaches during the official beach season from March 1 to Labor Day, large yellow signs are affixed to the toll booths informing beach patrons of the CZ. Educational brochures (Appendix E) and posters were provided to local restaurants, hotels, resorts, groups and organizations throughout the season. Approximately 1,000 brochures were stocked throughout these locations. The HCP Coordinator continues to work closely with the County’s Information Systems department to maintain and update the existing HCP website www.sjcfll.us/HCP/index.aspx. The purpose of the website is to provide all HCP rules and regulations as well as detailed information regarding protected species and their habitat, permitting information, special events and beach lighting management. Beach Services also provided education material (Appendix F) to sea turtle monitoring personnel and other staff members. Staff was encouraged to place brochures on vehicles that were

parked in the CZ. Sea turtle monitoring personnel were additionally encouraged to place education flyers on furniture and tents that were left on the beach overnight.

Assessment: The HCP website was updated with new information regarding protected species, beach access, off-beach parking and many other beach related activities as mentioned above. A total of 2,872 site visits were recorded on the HCP County website. This number is almost double compared to 2007 where 1,214 hits were recorded. This number does not include all other layers within the website. In addition, a monthly newsletter (Appendix G) offering information on hot topics regarding protected species and the beach environment is posted on the website and submitted to over 150 individuals via email. The newsletter serves as an additional avenue to provide the public with up to date information regarding HCP rules and regulations and the protected species that inhabit our coastal system. Public outreach programs are provided by the County to schools, senior groups, summer camps, private and social organizations throughout the year and reached approximately 800 people. The County has only made minor additional changes to the beach brochures and education programs.

Program Improvements: No formal changes to policies or procedures regarding public education efforts are anticipated.