

## Section 6 Public Awareness Program

### Purpose

Through a public awareness program the County seeks to create a beach community of stewards that understands the goals of the HCP, the species protected by the HCP, and the benefit of the HCP to the community. This goal is achieved by providing education materials, developing science based school age field trips, and attending various public events. Through this County staff is able to educate the community on beach driving policies, the traditional recreational uses on County beaches and how they may impact sea turtles, Anastasia Island beach mice, shorebirds and dune habitats.

### 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 2012

**Implementation:** Prior to the 2012 nesting season the County Public Relations Officer reached out to the public through its several media outlets that include Public Service Announcements distributed to local newspapers, news channels, government television stations and radio. Beach patrons purchasing an annual season pass received a leaflet (Appendix E) providing information on beach driving policies and contact information. Upon entering the beaches during the official beach season from March 1<sup>st</sup> to Labor Day, large yellow signs are affixed to the toll booths informing beach patrons of the Conservation Zone. The existing HCP website <http://www.sjc.fl.us/Environmental/HCP.aspx> continues to be updated with important information. The purpose of the website is to provide citizens and visitors with an understanding of the role of the HCP as well as provide detailed information regarding beach access, permitting information, special events, beach lighting management, protected species and their habitat.

**Assessment:** The HCP website is updated periodically to provide users with new information regarding HCP training, beach access, off-beach parking, protected species, their habitat and the many other beach related activities as mentioned above. Based on statistical records accumulated by the County’s Informational Systems a total of 2,500 site visits (Table 10) were recorded on the HCP County website. The next three most popular pages visited on the HCP website were Beach Use Permits, Driving and Parking, Horseback Riding, and North Beach Permits. Information regarding the HCP, Endangered Species Protection Program, and the BLMP are available on the County Web Page at <http://www.co.st-johns.fl.us/Environmental/HCP.aspx>.

**Table 10. HCP Web Statistics**

Web Page	*Viewed Site	**Actual Entry	***Exited Site
Main Page	267	32	13
Beach Use Permits	470	136	21
Driving & Parking	440	293	44
Horseback Riding	305	164	33
North Beach Permits	137	31	12
Events	245	79	11
Contacts	43	14	4
Ordinances	152	36	4
Beach Mice	46	17	10
Volunteer	113	63	11
Sea Turtles	52	16	6
Habitat Conservation Plan	40	3	1
HCP News	27	1	1

\*Viewed – Unique visitors to web page

\*\*Entry – Visitor came directly to page from outside of sjcfl.us website

\*\*\*Exit – Visitor left page and sjcfl.us website

### **Education Programs**

Throughout the season staff participates in public outreach programs with schools, senior groups, summer camps, private and social organizations. This year the combined departments reached out to 1,734 members of the community.

### **Beach Access Signs**

Sea turtle signs (Object 6 and 7) are posted and maintained at all beachfront parks and public walkovers throughout the County.

**Object 6. Brown sea turtle sign**



**Object 7. Sea turtle signage**



**Brochure/Pamphlets**

Brochures (Appendix F) table tents (Appendix G) and posters (Appendix H) specific to the HCP are distributed throughout the year to local restaurants, hotels, resorts, property management groups and other interested organizations. Contractor education packages hand delivered to construction sites throughout the coastal area of St. Johns County.

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