

Section 8 Conservation Zone

Purpose

The intent of the Conservation Zone (CZ) is to separate vehicles from the potential of sea turtle nests, sensitive dune habitat and other natural resources that may exist in this zone. Vehicular activity along the toe of the dune can trim pioneering species of dune vegetation but can be prevented with a simple delineation of vehicles and vegetation. This prevents the seaward accretion of the primary dune system which diminishes the potential habitat for AIBM and nesting shorebirds that require vegetation for nesting habitat and reduces protection for coastal properties.

Relevant ITP Conditions - G.1.a. and d., G.2.c

- 1.a Conservation Zone.** “The Permittee shall implement, maintain, and enforce driving and parking prohibitions within a 30-foot wide Conservation Zone from the northern jetty of St. Augustine Inlet south and west to the Tolomato River (commonly known as the Porpoise Point area) and within a 15-foot wide Conservation Zone throughout the remainder of the HCP Plan Area as described and defined in the HCP, except as authorized below [in the ITP].”
- 1.d Emergency and Public Safety Vehicles.** “Emergency and public safety vehicle access is not limited, including access within the Conservation Zone.”
- 2.c Conservation Zone Marking.** “By May 1 of the first full nesting season following the issuance date of this Permit, the Permittee shall, at a minimum, place signage on each trash receptacle post referred to in Condition 11.G.2.b designating the area landward of the post as Conservation Zone.”

Public driving or parking is prohibited year-round landward of the seaward edge of the CZ. Emergency, public safety and protected species monitoring vehicles are prohibited from the entering the CZ unless it is necessary to satisfactorily complete assigned responsibilities and no alternative exists.

HCP Performance During 2012

Implementation: Beach Services currently has two part time Beach Maintenance staff and one full time Beach Enforcement Specialist tasked with the duties of CZ post management, driving lane maintenance, walkover repairs, sign placement and other duties as assigned for the entire 41.1 mile coastline of St. Johns County. Signage is made of 12” x 6” aluminum signs affixed to ¼”, schedule 80, grey PVC (Object 9) that can be easily installed by HCP support staff with a small auger or post hole digger.

Object 9. Conservation Zone Sign

The CZ line is adjusted prior to and after each nesting season. This adjustment is based on the encroaching and eroding coast line due to storm and high tide events. The CZ boundary was established by measuring the required distance from the seaward edge of permanent line of dune vegetation, toe of dune or armoring structure (i.e. seawall, revetment, etc.). As specified in the condition above the width of the CZ is required to be varied based on beach location:

1. HCP plan area – 15 feet, excluding non driving beaches and four wheel drive permitted driving beaches
2. Porpoise Point – 30 feet

County Beaches

On the northern beaches CZ posts start approximately 100 feet north of the Vilano Road beach access ramp and extend south and around the inlet beach at Porpoise Point. As few as three CZ posts are installed north and south of the Surfside Avenue access ramp and none are located at the Usina beach access ramp. The CZ line begins again at 11th Street in the City of St. Augustine Beach and extends south to Fort Matanzas National Monument vehicle access ramp.

Porpoise Point

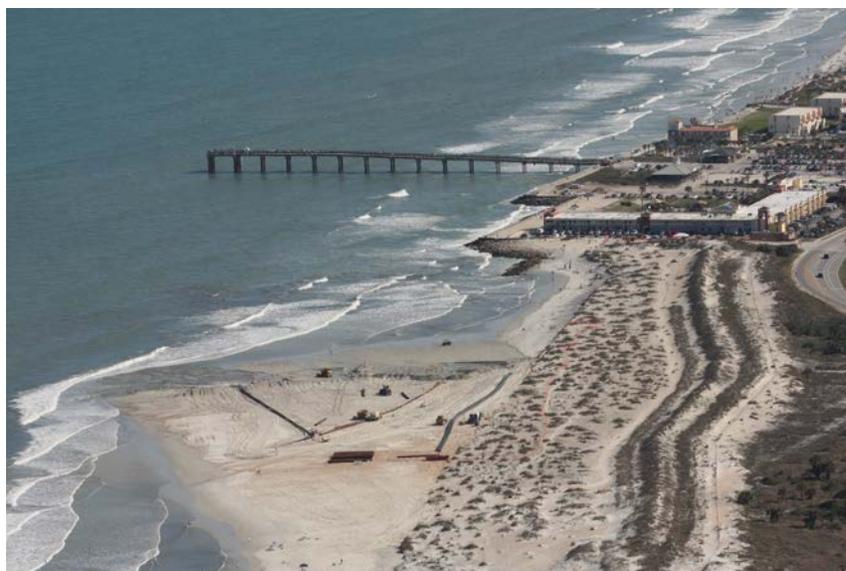
In the spring and summer of 2012 the dredging of the St. Augustine Inlet by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) occurred (Object 10). The ACOE removed a portion of Porpoise Point beach to use as borrow material to renourish the beach at the City of St. Augustine Beach (Object 11 & Map Figure1). That removal caused a reduction in beach area which diminished the available space for beach activities. During certain times, such as high tide or weather events, it is difficult for the County to maintain a 30 foot CZ without risk of public safety, losing CZ signs to the ocean (Object 12 & 13) or having unintentional activity occur in the 30 foot CZ area. Porpoise

Point is the only area in St. Johns County that has a 30 foot CZ as all other areas the County maintains a 15 foot CZ.

Object 10. Porpoise Point Dredging Operation



Object 11. St. Augustine Beach Re-nourishment Project



Object 12. Porpoise Point Erosion



Object 13. Porpoise Point Erosion

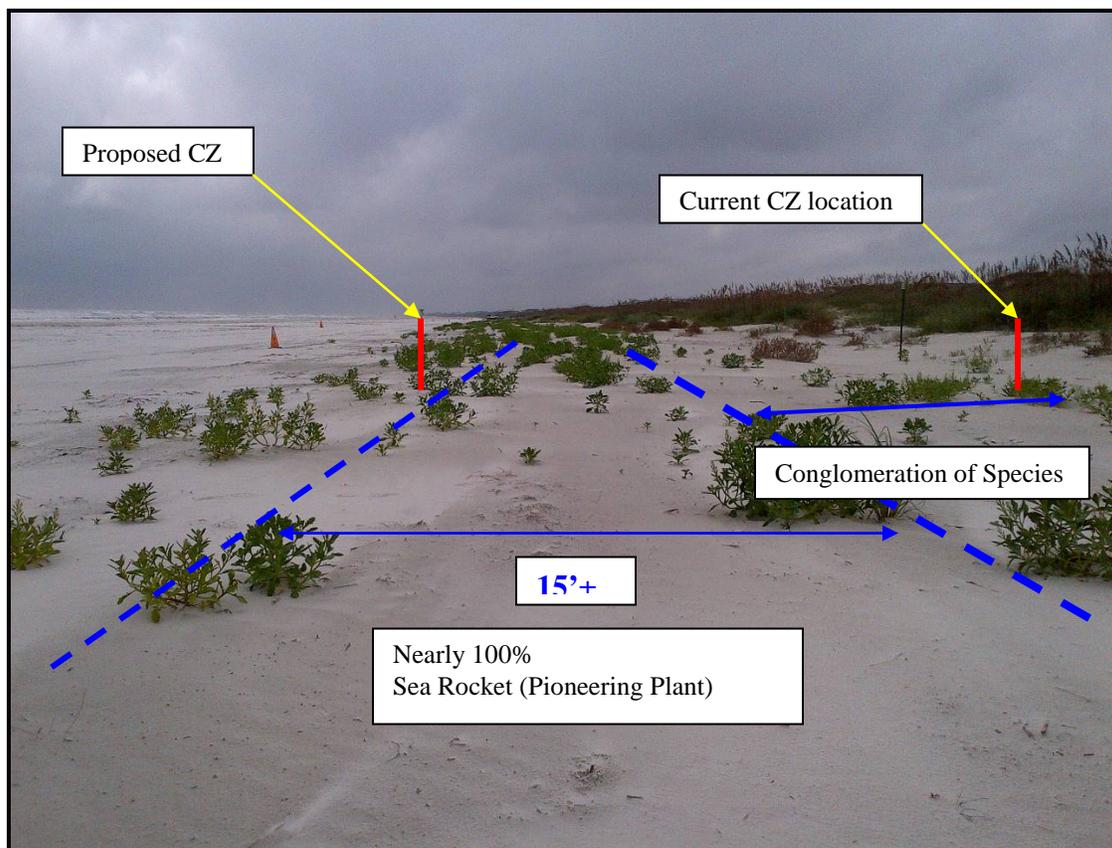


The County responds annually to the possibility of bird nesting by monitoring Porpoise Point each season for any indications that the area is being selected for the season's nesting activity. Through consultation with biologist of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) the area is pre-posted to allow for safe arrival of nesting shorebirds. This protection of

the area includes prohibiting vehicles and pedestrians not only in any CZ area but for a larger portion of the beach including a portion of the beach going from the waters edge to the dunes. Due to dredging operation it was determined that the nesting colony would not return therefore a pre-posting event did not occur.

The ever changing shoreline due to storm and high tide events causes constant erosion and accretion along with pioneering and natural removal of vegetation to occur at an unpredictable rate. This combined with the management of a driving lane and space for parking vehicles can pose an invariable challenge to keep a CZ fully intact. Especially in areas where the tide is lapping against the CZ as it does at Porpoise Point. When evaluating the location and installation of the CZ the existing line must be constantly monitored after storm events and throughout the year. This is done by documenting storm events, recording the dates as to when the CZ is realigned and through photo documentation (Objects 14 & 115).

Object 14. Matanzas Avenue CZ Assessment



Object 15. Summer house condos at Fort Matanzas Vehicle Access Ramp

Post Hurricane Sandy

Assessment: South beaches are significantly broader in terms of management due to the length and vastness of the shore line. CZ posts are increased with the addition of four posts immediately north and south of beach access ramps. In areas where congestion frequently occurs there is a higher density of CZ posts. The CZ line was readjusted accordingly prior to and after the season and throughout the summer. From the A Street vehicular access ramp south to approximately Matanzas Avenue the CZ line was maintained and signage updated as necessary.

The area north of Porpoise Point, commonly referred to as Vilano beach, becomes extremely congested due to its short length and width of the beach. Furthermore, this area does not have a designated driving lane. The amount of CZ posts have been increased substantially thus drastically reducing the amount of vehicles observed in the CZ.

No reports were received of direct impacts to sea turtles, nests, or hatchlings resulting from vehicles illegally parked or driving in the CZ during 2012.

Program Improvements: Overall there are 14.7 miles of driving beaches that require CZ post installation. To be effective, the CZ must be clearly marked and posted, the driving public must be made aware of its purpose and its integrity must be maintained through dedicated education and enforcement. This has been accomplished by maintaining the CZ line throughout the year, by increasing the existing amount of CZ posts in congested areas and by improving the CZ posts and trash can placement.