

Section 13
Daytime Nesting and Hatching Events

Purpose

The purpose of surveying and reporting daytime nesting and hatchling observations are to eliminate or minimize impacts to sea turtles or washback post hatchlings that may occur during the daytime from vehicles 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 2012

Implementation: In September 2006 a *Daytime Nesting and Hatching Events Protocol* (Appendix Q) was approved by the USFWS. In addition, a *Washback Survey Protocol* (Appendix R) was submitted and approved by FWC. After approval from USFWS further review from FWC was obtained for authorization of staff and volunteers to support the program and all the logistics that must be incorporated for the program to be successful. The system is set up so that each area to be surveyed has a designated Zone Captain who is responsible for contacting the volunteers that are available and providing the equipment needed to perform the surveys.

During HCP and Protected Species Training individuals including County staff, coastal construction vehicle operators, 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. In addition, each PPH is provided with a copy of the approved *Daytime Nesting and Hatchling Event Protocol* at the annual HCP Protected Species Training.

Assessment: No daytime nesting events were reported during 2012.

FWC requires that Washback volunteers attend annual training to understand the approved protocol and to be qualified to handle and transport washbacks. St. Johns County Human Resources Department additionally requires they complete a volunteer application to be approved to participate in the program. In the 2010 season it was recognized that the training program needed to undergo improvements to retain its volunteers and to improve the abilities of the volunteers while conducting surveys. This was done by requiring all volunteers to first attend a general information meeting offered at different locations and dates throughout the County, one mandatory training session offered, and one field training (Object 20) conducted by the Zone Captain and prior to an actual survey. Washback volunteers are the core of the program

and with out their time this program would not be possible. They are requested to survey their zones with little notice and during the hottest times of the year. It is not always likely that our dedicated volunteers will find a washback during their surveys. To keep them interested we also teach them the importance of the wrack line, other findings they may discover while conducting surveys and to remove debris that has washed in while walking.

Object 20. Photo of washback surveyor



Informational meetings and training dates

- General Information Meeting Dates – 64 individuals attended
 - July 14th
 - July 21st
 - August 4th
- Mandatory Training Session – 88 individuals attended
 - August 21st
- Zone Captain Beach Trainings – 12 individuals attended
 - August 25th and 27th

Surveyed Zones

28.2 miles of County coastline were surveyed; 12.1 miles of non-driving beach from North County line to Seranata Beach Club, 5.3 miles of restricted driving from Seranata Beach Club to North of Vilano Road access ramp and 10.8 miles of allowed beach driving from North of Vilano Road access ramp South to Porpoise Point and from A Street vehicle access ramp to Fort Matanzas vehicle access ramp. The North Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve (GTMNERR) was not surveyed.

Recovery Summary

During the surveys 10 live and 0 dead washback post-hatchlings were recovered (Table 14). All live washbacks post-hatchlings were brought directly to Volusia Marine Science Center. None of

the washbacks discovered in 2012 were done so by washback volunteers even though surveys had been conducted during some of the findings.

Table 14. Washback Recovery Summary

Date	Species	Recovered By	Scheduled Survey	Location	Wrack Present
September 25	Cc (1)	County Staff	Yes	Spyglass Condos	Yes
October 14	Cc (1)	Sea Turtle Patrol	No	GTMNERR	Unknown
October 15	Cc (1)	Beach Patron	Yes	Matanzas Ave	Yes
October 17	Cc (1)	Beach Patron	Yes	4850 A1A S	Yes
October 23	Cc (1)	Beach Patron	No	Crescent Beach	Unknown
October 24	Cc (1)	Beach Patron	No	100 Sea Colony Pkwy	Unknown
October 26	Cc (1)	Beach Patron	No	Ocean Trace Road	Yes
October 27	Cc (1)	Beach Patron	No	Ocean Trace Road	Unknown
October 28	Cc (1)	Natural Resource Deputy	Yes	6300 A1A S	Yes
October 28	Cc (1)	County Staff	Yes	Dondanville Road	Yes

Volunteer Hours

Approximately 144 hours were spent surveying the beaches by 123 volunteers with a total of 77 surveys performed in all. Multiple volunteers returned in 2012 with 6 veteran and 6 new Zone Captains and 3 zones coordinated by County employees.

Program Improvements: No improvements are scheduled at this time.