

Section 14 Emergency and Coastal Construction

Purpose

Emergency and non-emergency coastal construction can affect sea turtle and Anastasia Island beach mice nesting and foraging habitat. Coastal construction may decrease sea turtle nesting or nesting habitat, place an increased energy burden on nesting female sea turtles or reduce the survivorship of sea turtle eggs and hatchlings. Coastal construction also has the potential to directly affect the dune habitat of Anastasia Island beach mice (AIBM) causing a reduction in plants available for foraging, impacting burrows or nest chambers or causing a fragmentation of habitat area. Ensuring that coastal construction contractors have an understanding of the HCP and ITP will effectively administer its over arching goals.

Relevant ITP Conditions - G.1.j. and G.1.k

- j. Coastal Construction.** “Between November 1 or the date on which the last sea turtle nest has hatched and April 30 or the date on which the first sea turtle nest is laid, the Permittee may authorize vehicle access, including within the Conservation Zone, for the purpose of non-emergency coastal construction provided any related construction activity, the resulting structure, and any environmental impacts, including potential incidental take of listed species, have been properly authorized by local, State, and/or Federal regulatory agencies. The Permittee shall ensure operators of vehicles accessing the beach for coastal construction complete training specified in Condition 11.G.2.o.”
- k. Emergency Coastal Construction.** “The Permittee may authorize vehicle access, including within the Conservation Zone, for emergency coastal construction projects throughout the year. The Permittee shall ensure operators of vehicles accessing the beach for emergency coastal construction complete training specified in Condition 11.G.2.o.”

HCP Performance During 2012

Implementation: Starting in March of 2012 the re-occurring St. Augustine Beach re-nourishment project began by dredging sand off of Porpoise Point and pumping it to Anastasia State Park and the City of St. Augustine Beach. County staff including members from the Engineering Department, Beach Services and the Habitat Conservation Section attended pre-construction meetings as well weekly dredge meetings providing guidance on access and habitat.

Additionally, Beach Services works with the County Engineering, Planning and Building Departments, as well as the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Bureau Beaches and Coastal Systems, to ensure that projects occurring on the coast comply with the HCP and ITP. When property owners and Contractors are in the process of applying for erosion or armoring protection for their homes the above mentioned agencies have the opportunity to comment or contribute by implying conditions that are meant to reduce impact to the natural resource. From the County level these conditions

require contractors and their staff to attend HCP and Protected Species Training before conducting work and in order to gain access on County beaches.

Contractors are required to provide to the Environmental Coordinator a copy of their DEP issued permit, the address where construction will occur, the type of equipment being used and the date when construction will be initiated and concluded. Additionally, permit conditions require removal of ruts left from driving on beach and to return the beach to the condition in which it was found. Permits issued do not cover multiple construction projects.

Assessment: St. Johns County issued six Coastal Construction permits during 2012. None of these permits required the contractor to enter during sea turtle season.

Program Improvements: The County will continue to communicate with the County Engineering, Planning, and Building Departments to obtain information regarding coastal projects.