



**ST. JOHNS COUNTY
HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN
2019 ANNUAL COMPLIANCE REPORT
ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA**



Photo Credit: Washback Volunteer

Prepared for:

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ACRONYMS

AIBM	Anastasia Island Beach Mouse
ASP	Anastasia State Park
BLMP	Beach Lighting Management Plan
DEP	Department of Environmental Protection
FWC	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
GTMNERR	Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve
HCP	Habitat Conservation Plan
ITP	Incidental Take Permit
MTPs	Marine Turtle Permit Holders
NRDs	Natural Resource Deputies
SJC	St. Johns County
SSTMP	Standard Sea Turtle Monitoring Protocol
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The St. Johns County (SJC) Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and Incidental Take Permit (ITP) is a 20-year plan to protect and improve beach and dune habitat for listed, threatened and endangered species while continuing to manage the beaches for continued public access. The HCP provides the framework for managing vehicular beach access and other related activities on the County's beaches in a manner and extent compatible with the protection of sea turtles and Anastasia Island beach mouse (AIBM). Issuance of the permit was conditioned upon the County's adherence to a variety of measures to minimize and mitigate the potential for Incidental Take of five species of federally protected sea turtles which utilize County's beaches as nesting habitat and the AIBM which inhabits the beach dunes but may also frequent the beach. As a requirement of an ITP application, a HCP was prepared that outlines compliance measures to achieve desired protections. On August 6, 2006, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) issued the 20 year ITP to the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners. The Permit is in its 13th year of implementation.

The Annual Report was prepared by the Environmental Supervisor in conjunction with data obtained by the Marine Turtle Permit Holders (MTPs), Beach Lighting Officer, Beach Enforcement Specialist, and the Beach Superintendent. Administrative review was done by the Manager of the Environmental Division and data processing was done so by the Environmental Specialist. The Imperiled Species Section of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) provided administrative review of Section 3: Standard Sea Turtle Monitoring Protocol. The report summarizes programs, policies and procedures implemented by St. Johns County during 2019 in support of the HCP and ITP. It assesses the effectiveness of these measures, identifies program deficiencies and describes steps that will be taken by the County to further improve HCP/ITP performance.

In a study conducted by expert researchers in the field of sea turtle populations they recognize that sea turtle nesting on Florida beaches has seen many fluctuations with an increase between 1989 and 1998 to a steep decline between 1998 and 2006, thus demonstrating a net decrease over this 18-yr period (S.A. Ceriani, P. Casale, M. Brost, E.H. Leone, B.E. Witherington, 2019).

The nesting season of 2019 was a record breaking year for the beaches of St. Johns County with a recorded total of 1,145 nests; 1,068 loggerheads (*Caretta caretta*), 73 greens (*Chelonia mydas*), and 4 leatherback nests (*Dermochelys coriacea*). Although Hurricane Dorian swept the coast on September 4th washing away 124 nests and included in this total 307 did not hatch leaving 838 nests that were successful. Overall nesting activities lead to an 73% nesting success rate and an 87% hatchling success frequency where 73,861 hatchlings emerged from the sand of St. Johns County beaches.

Nests deposited on driving beaches accounted for 87 nests (8%), 934 nests (82%) on non-driving beaches and 124 nests (11%) on restricted driving beaches, with percentages representing the overall distribution of nesting. Disorientations maintained consistency with past seasons with 14 recorded in 2019. A seasonal review confirms this observation with 12 disorientations in 2018, 18 in 2017 and 21 in 2016.

From March through September, weather depending, toll operators are collecting money for the sale of annual and daily passes for the purpose of beach driving and parking access. Historically, the annual compliance report would predict through a previously created formula the number of vehicles that would enter. Over the last several years the conditions have changed such that staff cannot calculate the numbers of vehicles that enter annually but can report on how many beach passes were sold. A more comprehensive study would need to be created. The beaches are increasingly reaching maximum capacity and no formal evaluation is being done to summarize the use. The cost of a beach pass remains the same as last year but this year revenue increased from \$799,366 in 2018 to \$881,852.09 in 2019.

St. Johns County sea turtle patrol is coordinated by six different permit holders and based solely on volunteer efforts with the exception of park rangers in Anastasia State Park. Both FWC and St. Johns County are dependent on the hundreds of volunteers to patrol the beaches seven days a week from the beginning of May until approximately mid-September for the purpose of collecting sea turtle nesting data. Coastal erosion is playing an important role in creating additional challenges for sea turtle patrol for access capabilities and requiring extra documentation of obstacles encountered during nesting activities.

The HCP was prepared to establish compatibility between protected species and beach user groups. The implementation of the HCP requires support and awareness of all aspects of the HCP and ITP from other County departments, outside governing agencies, beach users, and volunteers. The County must coordinate programs within and among numerous County departments, uphold its excellence in public safety, provide training and coordinate the activities of outside contractors, commercial fishermen, North Beach 4x4 permittees, horseback riders, and groups involved in protected species monitoring. Due to the complexity of the HCP, the diversity of program participants and the scope of activities it is expected that unforeseen issues sometimes occur; such issues are quickly and successfully addressed, thereby ensuring the effective implementation of the HCP.

INTRODUCTION

Background on the St. Johns County HCP

St. Johns County prepares an Annual Report based on the commitments outlined with in the HCP Implementation Agreement formally known as the ITP. The HCP Annual Report is composed of programmatic management activities on SJC beaches covered under the HCP, sea turtle monitoring efforts, conservation strategy achievements, enforcement, public access, and other related programs. The purpose of the annual report is to assess the effectiveness of programs implemented by the County to minimize and mitigate impacts associated with beach driving, and other recreational activities related to public access and protected species.

This year's report was prepared by the Environmental Supervisor with assistance from the Environmental Division Manager, Beach Superintendent, Beach Services Supervisor, both Environmental Specialist and the Office of Management and Budget. The Geographical Information Systems Department in conjunction with data obtained from other County departments, and the FWC Marine Turtle Permit Holders also provided valuable data which helping in summarizing the activities and programs conducted on St. Johns County beaches during the 2019.

Enforcement

Through a partnership with the County's Sheriffs department, three full time Natural Resource Deputies (NRDs) are assigned to the beach for the purpose of implementing the HCP/ITP and public safety through enforcement of the Beach Code (SJC Code Ordinance number 2007-19). They participate in informative HCP, shorebird/seabird identification, marine mammal response, and sea turtle stranding training.

Marine Turtle Permit Program

A Section 6 Agreement of the Endangered Species Act with the USFWS allows the authority of the FWC to provide special authorizations to Marine Turtle Principle Permit Holders (MTPs). Marine turtle permits are issued annually to qualified individuals for the purpose of patrolling the beaches to collect sea turtle nesting data and to stake off nests. St. Johns County's 41.1 miles of coastline are broken into twelve zones by the FWC marine turtle permit program. All twelve zones are surveyed daily and coordinated by six different MTPs from May 1 to mid September or until the last nest has been removed. Through Condition G.2.i. of the ITP, a Standard Sea Turtle Monitoring Protocol (SSTMP) was created in coordination with MTPs, FWC and USFWS staff. More information on this plan can be found in Section 3: Standard Sea Turtle Monitoring Protocol

SECTION 1: PUBLIC VEHICULAR ACCESS

Applicable ITP Conditions - G.1.b., c. and e.

- b. **Public Driving.** “From May 1 through October 31, each year, and only after completion of daily sea turtle nesting surveys, the Permittee may authorize public vehicle access outside of the Conservation Zone between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. On July 4 and July 5, each year, the Permittee may also authorize public access onto the beach south of the Vilano Road beach access ramp and north of St. Augustine Inlet, from 8:00 p.m. July 4 to 1:00 a.m. July 5. From November 1 through April 30, each year, the Permittee may authorize public vehicle access outside of the Conservation Zone at any time.”*
- c. **Commercial Fishermen.** “The Permittee may authorize eligible commercial fishermen vehicle access outside of the Conservation Zone from May 1 to October 31, between 5:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Between November 1 and April 30, each year, the Permittee may authorize eligible commercial fishermen access outside of the Conservation Zone at any time.”*
- e. **Sea Turtle Monitoring.** “Vehicle access for properly permitted sea turtle monitoring is not limited, including access within the Conservation Zone.”*

Implementation: Ten vehicular access ramps are positioned on the coastline to allow for vehicles to enter driving beaches in the following order starting from North to South; Surfside Avenue, Vilano Road, Genoa Road (Porpoise Point access), A Street, Ocean Trace Road, Dondanville Road, Matanzas Avenue, Mary Street, Cubbedge Road (Crescent Beach access), and Fort Matanzas National Monument (Map Figure 1).

Public Driving

Nine of the ten vehicular access ramps are scheduled to be manned by toll booth operators employed by the County throughout the beach season of March 1st to Labor Day. Use and Conduct signs are located at the each entrance of each beach access ramps. At the conclusion of each business day an a-frame style sign notifying visitors of times and dates for beach gate closures is placed by toll booth operators. Surfside Avenue beach access ramp is an unmanned ramp, which is secured with a combination lock, and is only accessed by a special permit, law enforcement, and County staff.

July 4th Event

From 8:00 a.m., July 4th until 1:00 a.m., July 5th, NRDs and additional Sheriff’s Deputies are scheduled at Porpoise Point to patrol the area to ensure compliance with the Beach Code while the fireworks across the bay from the City of St. Augustine take place.

Commercial Fishermen

Based on beach driving conditions on the beaches and at the ramps authorized commercial fishermen are permitted to enter the beaches at designated vehicular access ramps. To gain such

access, permittees must complete HCP training, provide proof of FWC commercial fishing permit with a Restricted Species endorsement, as well as provide vehicle description, vehicle tag number and the annual pass number. Upon approval, individuals are supplied with a hang tag permit, two large magnets that identify them as a Commercial Fishermen, and a combination code to access. To facilitate management of the vehicular access point, the code is changed monthly.

Sea Turtle Monitoring

Out of the twelve zones monitored by sea turtle patrol volunteers, eight of the organized groups obtain County permits to drive and park on the beach for the purpose of surveying the beaches. The HCP requires them to complete protected species training, submit a copy of their FWC marine turtle monitoring permit, as well as vehicle description. Permittees located on driving beaches are provided a beach gate key to access beaches before gates are officially opened by County staff.

Assessment: The St. Johns County Beach Code provides the legal framework in which the beach is managed and echoes the stipulations provided in both the HCP and ITP. To successfully educate, implement, and enforce the Beach Code, and the conditions as stated above, a positive working relationship with multiple departments and agencies is necessary, and sets the program up for success.

Public Driving

Although ten vehicular access ramps are depicted on Map Figure 1, they all have varying degrees of availability due to erosion and lack of legal space for driving. Vilano Road beach access has periodically open since Hurricane Matthew but was permanently reopen November of 2019. Genoa Road also referred to as Porpoise Point access has gone from one extreme to the next with lack of sand and extreme flooding to accretion of sand. While A Street, Ocean Trace Road, Dondanville Road, Matanzas Avenue, Mary Street, Cubbedge Road (Crescent Beach access) continue to allow vehicles but with restrictions based on coastal flooding. Lastly, the ramp at Fort Matanzas National Monument has been closed since the impacts that occurred during Hurricane Matthew in September of 2016.

Beach passes are required for vehicles to enter the beach from March through September. Beach access ticket options include Annual, Daily, Handicap, and Military passes. Annual passes include price options for St. Johns County Residents, Non-county residents, Handicap, and Disabled Veterans. Daily passes are sold for \$10, and a discount of \$5 to Handicap and Active Military are available (See Table 1). Previously it was thought that a season pass holder entered the beach 5 times per year but after further discussion with Beach Services it is has been difficult to identify how many vehicles are entering the beach without a formal study. The beaches are increasingly reaching maximum capacity and no formal evaluation is being done to summarize the use. The beach pass prices remained the same this year but revenue increased from \$799,366 in 2018 to \$881,852.09 in 2019.

Table 1. Fee Schedule Beach Passes

Year	Daily Fees				3 Day Pass			Annual Fee (October 1-March 1)			Annual Fee (March 2-Sept 30)		
	R	NR	H	T/M	R	NR	H	R	NR	H	R	NR	H
2007	\$6.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$30.00	\$40.00	N/A	\$40.00	\$50.00	N/A
2008	\$6.00	\$7.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$30.00	\$40.00	N/A	\$40.00	\$50.00	N/A
2009	\$6.00	\$7.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$30.00	\$40.00	N/A	\$40.00	\$50.00	N/A
2010	\$6.00	\$7.00	NA	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$30.00	\$40.00	N/A	\$40.00	\$50.00	N/A
2011	\$6.00	\$7.00	\$5.00	N/A	\$15.00	\$18.00	\$12.00	\$30.00	\$40.00	\$20.00	\$40.00	\$50.00	\$30.00
2012	\$6.00	\$7.00	\$5.00	N/A	\$15.00	\$18.00	\$12.00	\$30.00	\$40.00	\$20.00	\$40.00	\$50.00	\$30.00
2013	\$6.00	\$7.00	\$5.00	N/A	\$15.00	\$18.00	\$12.00	\$30.00	\$40.00	\$20.00	\$40.00	\$50.00	\$30.00
2014	\$6.00	\$7.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$15.00	\$18.00	\$12.00	\$30.00	\$40.00	\$20.00	\$40.00	\$60.00	\$30.00
2015	\$6.00	\$7.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$15.00	\$20.00	N/A	\$30.00	\$40.00	\$20.00	\$40.00	\$60.00	\$30.00
2016	\$6.00	\$8.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$15.00	\$20.00	\$12.00	\$30.00	\$40.00	\$20.00	\$40.00	\$60.00	\$30.00
2017	\$6.00	\$8.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	NA	NA	N/A	\$30.00	\$40.00	\$20.00	\$40.00	\$60.00	\$30.00
2018	\$10	\$10	\$5	\$5	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$50	\$100	\$40	\$50	\$100	\$40
2019	\$10	N/A	\$5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$50	\$100	\$40	\$50	\$100	\$40

*R = Resident, NR = Non-Resident, H = Handicap, T/M=100% Disabled Military Veteran

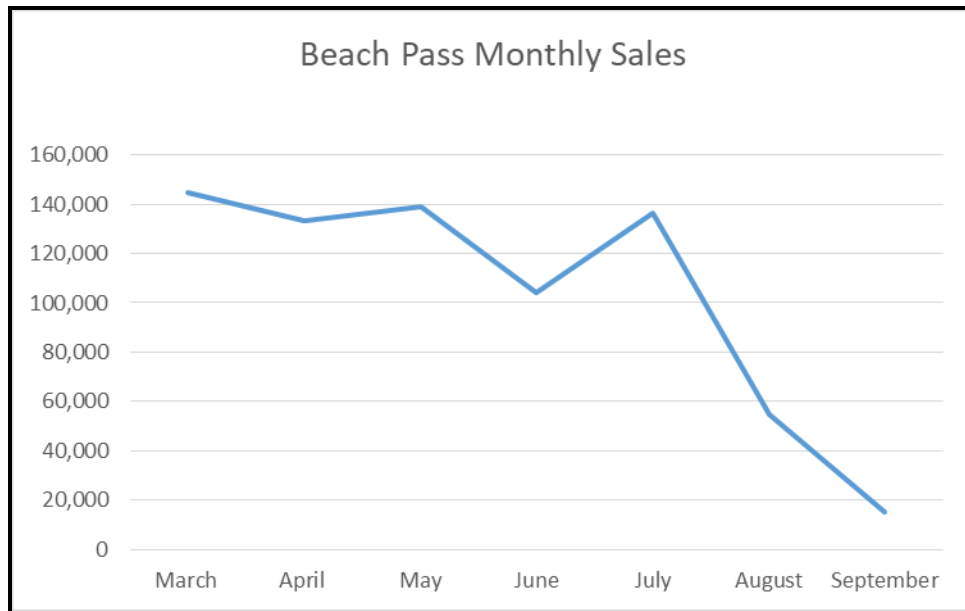
Table 2. Summary of Beach Passes Sold

Year	Total Daily Passes Sold	Total Annual Passes Sold	Total 3 Day Passes Sold	Twilight and Military	Total Amount	Vehicles entered beach season
2007	101,953	12,512	NA	NA	\$1,055,688	164,513
2008	90,645	10,604	NA	NA	\$995,720	143,665
2009	107,511	10,702	NA	NA	\$1,111,026	161,021
2010	88,942	9,919	NA	NA	\$954,800	138,537
2011	78,376	10,210	1,879	NA	\$912,559	129,426
2012	76,104	5,536	1,786	NA	\$873,447	103,784
2013	61,504	5,466	1,640	NA	\$775,771	88,834
*2014	58,878	9,428	2,126	8,457	\$849,587	262,273
2015	49,542	9,812	1,721	9,645	\$803,799	116,151
2016	47,627	10,191	NA	11,187	\$767,475	98,582
2017	36,021	9,030	NA	8,056	\$619,597	NA
2018	39,900	7,329	NA	5,428	\$799,366	NA
2019	41,824	7,458	NA	790	\$881,852.09	NA

*Previous formula: (total annual passes sold*5 + total daily passes sold + (total 3 day passes sold*)) /4 + vehicles entered beach season *2014 Formula :(total annual passes sold*20+total daily passes sold + (total 3 day passes sold*3) + twilight and military) /4 + vehicles entered beach season.

The monthly sales of beach driving passes fluctuated depending on the month and visitor use. March sales mark the beginning of the beach season, as spring break crowds from local schools arrive. As the season progresses, an increase in sales maintains a steady pace until about mid-June when sales drop off a bit. This may be partially attributed to afternoon rain, which prevents Beach Services from manning toll booths, thus sales decrease. However, they pick back up through the arrival of the popular July 4th holiday (Graph 1) where the beach becomes inundated with people and vehicles. Then as schools begin their academic year sales begin to drop off again ending the beach season.

Graph 1. 2019 Beach Pass Monthly Sales



Gate Openings

During the beach season from March 1st to Labor Day weekend vehicle access ramps were manned by toll booth operators that collect fees for patrons to access the beach. At the start of the season March 1st to April 30th vehicle access ramps were manned from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. then beginning on May 1st until the Labor Day weekend these same ramps were manned from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. allowing for toll operators to open beach gates by 8:00 a.m. When toll operators were no longer available alternative County staff were scheduled to open gates until the conclusion of the sea turtle nesting season of October 31st, however due to Hurricane Irma, beach gates were shut down on the evening of September 9th.

Nighttime Gate Closures

Seasonal staff (commonly referred to as HCP field assistants) are responsible for gate closures Monday through Thursday for gates located on both north and south beaches. Beaches located north of the St. Augustine inlet were cleared by one staff member in either a 4x4 vehicle, or an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) such as a mule (side by side). South beaches were cleared by three HCP field assistants in similar vehicles. Occasionally staff could not find the owner of the vehicle and were forced to lock the vehicle on the beach. Signs inform individuals locked on the beach to contact the Sheriff's department to request to have the gate unlocked so they can exit the beach.

On weekends from Friday through Sunday, and on Federal Holidays, St. Johns County Sheriff's Deputies were responsible for clearing the beaches. NRDs began by informing vehicle operators around 6:30 p.m. of gate closing times and would continue until all vehicles were cleared off the beach locking the gates by 7:30 p.m.

July 4th Event

During the July 4th celebration, the City of St. Augustine sets off fireworks over the downtown bay front which can be seen from the inlet, as well as Porpoise Point. This beach becomes inundated with visitors when the gates open at 8:00 a.m. As expected, July 4th saw heavy beach use in the Vilano and Porpoise Point areas, and were both placed under a 4x4 mandated driving conditions. The beach was at capacity by 10:30am in Vilano Beach. The crowds remained throughout the day into the night for the firework celebrations.

Commercial Fishermen

For the 2019 season, 13 individuals received permits to access the beaches from 5:00 am to 10:00 pm. See Section 18: HCP and Protected Species Training for more information.

Sea Turtle Monitoring

Marine turtle permit holders and their volunteers were provided with an online training program to complete prior to the 2019 season. From the 12 designated zones 32 volunteers completed the training. See Section 18: HCP and Protected Species Training for more information.

Program Improvements: The Division of Beach Services, Habitat Conservation Section, and the Sheriff's Department, will continue to work closely to ensure the beaches remain safe during significant events and they are open, cleared and secured by the required time, as set forth in the HCP/ITP and Beach Code.

SECTION 2: INSTALLING AND MAINTAINING TRAFFIC BARRICADES

Applicable ITP Condition - G.2.a.

a. Installation, Maintenance, and Operation of Traffic Barricades. “The Permittee shall maintain and/or enhance all existing traffic barricades on public beach access ramps to ensure they effectively exclude public vehicle traffic when closed. The Permittee shall install and maintain additional traffic barricades at locations where vehicles have regularly accessed the beach illegally. The Permittee shall close the traffic barricades to limit public vehicle access as described in Conditions 11.G.1.b and c.”

Implementation: All vehicle access ramps are affixed with heavy duty steel gates with locks and chain affixed to allow for being locked, thus meeting Condition 11.G.1.b and c. They are locked during extreme circumstances such as extreme high tides, storm events, and law enforcement activities. Gates are occasionally opened and closed by sea turtle patrol during their routine morning monitoring activities, County staff, or Sheriff’s Deputies. Surfside Avenue is the only vehicle access ramp that is locked year round.

Assessment: All through the 2019 nesting season no gates were reported to be vandalized. However, several reports were made regarding gates being “dummy” locked, and several gates were found open upon arrival by both sea turtle patrol and beach staff prior to 8:00 a.m. This will continue to be monitored by staff and law enforcement.

A post and cable was installed at Micklers Landing to discourage special event entry with vehicles and nighttime drivers. This access is only used by Marine Rescue, SJSO, Beach Services and for emergency operations.

Program Improvements: There are no improvements scheduled at this time.

SECTION 3: STANDARD SEA TURTLE MONITORING PROTOCOL

Applicable ITP Condition - G.2.i.

- i. Standardization of Sea Turtle Monitoring. “Within (12) months of the effective date of this Permit, the Permittee shall develop, in coordination with State of Florida Primary Permit Holders, a Sea Turtle Nest Monitoring Plan and submit such plan to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for review and approval. The Permittee shall implement the Sea Turtle Nest Monitoring Plan no later than the second full nesting season following U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval (beginning on May 1). The approved Sea Turtle Nesting Monitoring Plan may be subsequently amended both prior to and after its implementation upon review and approval of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”*

Implementation: The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Imperiled Species Management Section is responsible for issuing Marine Turtle Permits (MTPs) through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) under Section 6 of the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA). According to their permits a MTP is obligated to follow FWC Standard Conservation Guidelines, and to coordinate with SJC to implement a Standard Sea Turtle Monitoring Protocol (SSTMP). The procedures and protocols are laid out in these documents, and give responsibility to the volunteers of the State to collect and report data as it relates to sea turtle nesting and conservation. This citizen-based reporting system allows for both the State and County to evaluate nesting trends, make management decisions based on the evaluation and to implement the HCP and other regulatory plans that are associated with sea turtle conservation.

Standard Sea Turtle Monitoring Protocol (SSTMP)

The SSTMP was developed to create a standardized way of monitoring and conspicuously marking sea turtle nests in the Plan Area and to spatially separate sea turtle nests from vehicular, horseback, special 4x4 permitted activities, commercial fishing, coastal construction, and pedestrian activities. St. Johns County has worked closely with the MTPs, FWC and USFWS to create a protocol that accommodates the needs of the plan, the volunteers, and the conservation of our beaches.

The SSTMP provides guidance and standards to the MTPs and their volunteers on how to carry out habitat conservation practices in order to fully implement the HCP/ITP, while also establishing the link to their daily activities on the beach. The goal is to cover all aspects of the SSTMP, while providing updates on the management of the beach.

Survey Method

Each beach exhibits various levels of development, beach access, shore type, and beach user groups. Every nest on SJC beaches is marked with stakes, flagging, and a yellow FWC – issued sign. Nests that are observed by sea turtle patrol are staked with either three or four stakes depending on the level of risk (Table 3).

Table 3. Staking Methods Criteria

Sea Turtle Nesting Threat Criteria	Sea Turtle Nesting Protection (At a Minimum)	Additional Protection Actions Taken as needed
<p>High Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - South Ponte Vedra Beach - North Beach - Vilano Beach - St. Augustine Beach - Crescent Beach <p>Vehicles, Development, Horseback Riding, Multiple Public Beach Access Points</p>	<p>4 stakes, coded, bright fluorescent flagging and 1 yellow FWC placard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Driving beaches; reflective numbers placed on stakes by County staff, green flagging placed by volunteers at 45 days of incubation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-releasing grids (only after predation and if permitted) - Nest located in driving lanes barricaded with bright green cones on day of event - Dummy nest perimeter staking, only after poaching indicated consult with FWC and HCP for direction
<p>Medium Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ponte Vedra Beach - Summer Haven <p>Development, Horseback Riding, Limited Public Access</p>	<p>3 stakes, coded, bright fluorescent flagging and 1 yellow FWC placard</p>	<p>Self-releasing grids (only after predation, if permitted)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dummy nest perimeter staking, only after poaching indicated consult with FWC and HCP for direction
<p>Low Risk</p> <p>*GTMNERR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anastasia State Park <p>Emergency and State Vehicle use, limited development, limited public access</p>	<p>3 stakes, coded, bright fluorescent flagging and 1 yellow FWC placard</p>	<p>Self-releasing grids (only after predation, if permitted)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dummy nest perimeter staking, only after poaching indicated consult with FWC and HCP for direction

* Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve

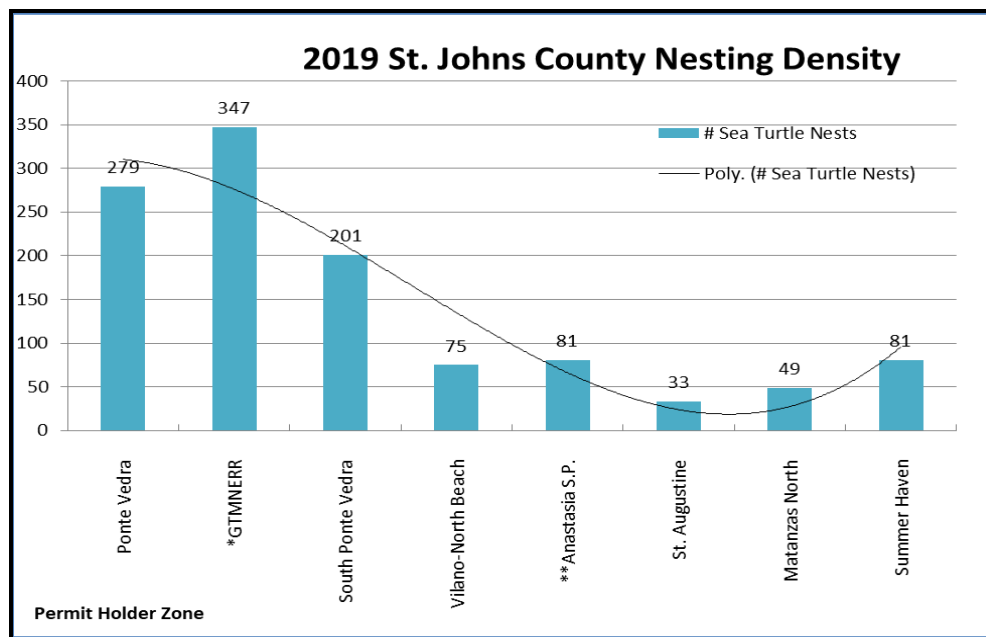
Data Collection

The implementation of the HCP allows for a more formal approach to data collection, while maintaining its citizen-based scientific program collectively known as the volunteers of FWC. MTPs can report weekly nesting data through an online submittal system or in the form of a spreadsheet. This weekly summary includes number of nests, false crawl counts, nesting dates, species, estimated incubation periods, and GPS locations. Continuous communication regarding nesting and false crawls is important to the County, so that protective and adaptive management decisions for coastal permitting, beach lighting, and beach access can be made. These combined efforts demonstrate the various methods it takes to manage the beaches, as well the nesting trends and density differences throughout the County.

Survey Areas

St. Johns County beaches are divided by two inlets that pour into the Intracoastal Waterway separating into three barrier islands from the mainland of Florida. The St. Augustine Inlet divides the northern barrier land mass from the middle, thus leaving the middle barrier island, which is named Anastasia Island and Matanzas Inlet separates Anastasia Island from the most southern barrier isle. Each island is comprised of its own sand types, levels of erosion and accretion, seawalls, slope-angle, and beach re-nourishment projects. Although the nesting numbers fluctuate they exhibit similar annual nesting pattern (Graph 2). Fort Matanzas National Monument is not included in the HCP/ITP; therefore, they carry out their own surveys through coordination with FWC.

Graph 2. St. Johns County Nesting Density for 2018 Nesting Season ($n = 1,146$)



*GTMNERR – Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve

**ASP – Anastasia State Park

Detailed Survey Description (From North to South) Survey boundaries and driving measurements are approximate.

Ponte Vedra Beach: FWC Permit #074 Ponte Vedra North and Beach Club Drive North. From the Duval County line South to Corona Road and Corona Road to Sawgrass - 4.28 miles (6.85 kilometers). This survey area is a St. Johns County beach located in the Ponte Vedra Municipal Service District that consists primarily of single family homes but also has condominiums, three ocean front resorts, and multiple public walkovers. Monitoring efforts are coordinated and carried out by sea turtle patrol volunteers.

Ponte Vedra Beach: FWC Permit #029 Beach Club Drive South. Sawgrass Beach Club South to Old Ponte Vedra Condos - 3.5 miles (5.6 kilometers). This Ponte Vedra beach primarily

consists of single family homes and condominiums, and has one major public access point with amenities. Monitoring efforts are coordinated and carried out by sea turtle patrol volunteers.

Ponte Vedra Beach: FWC Permit #074 Old Ponte Vedra Condominiums. Old Ponte Vedra Condominiums South to the northern boundary of GTMNERR - 1.13 miles (1.81 kilometers). This Ponte Vedra beach primarily consists of single family homes and condominiums with public accesses. Monitoring efforts are coordinated and carried out by sea turtle patrol volunteers.

Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve (GTMNERR): FWC Permit #140 GTMNERR and South Guana River. Northern boundary of GTMNERR South to southern boundary of GTMNERR at Gate gas station - 7.26 miles (11.6 kilometers). This area consists primarily of single family homes, periodic stretches with no development, and four public access points with parking and minor amenities. Beaches are managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as State Reserve Lands. Monitoring efforts are carried out by sea turtle patrol volunteers.

South Ponte Vedra: FWC Permit #056 Ponte Vedra South. Southern boundary of GTMNERR at Gate gas station South to Usina boat ramp - 5.15 miles (8.29 kilometers). This area consists primarily of single family homes, multiple public access points, and one major condominium resort development. There is 3.31 miles (5.33 kilometers) of non-driving beach and 1.65 miles (2.65 kilometers) of restricted driving. Monitoring efforts are coordinated and carried out by sea turtle patrol volunteers.

Vilano Beach: FWC Permit #023 Vilano Beach. Usina boat ramp South to St. Augustine Inlet - 2.73 miles (4.39 kilometers). This area consists primarily of single family homes, multiple public access points with parking and minor amenities and without parking easily accessed by neighborhoods, and a redevelopment area near the inlet with hotels and beach driving access ramps. The beach consists of 0.28 miles (0.45 kilometers) of driving beach, and 2.55 miles (4.10 kilometers) of restricted driving beach. Monitoring efforts are coordinated and carried out by sea turtle patrol volunteers.

Anastasia State Park: FWC Permit #147-01 Anastasia State Park. St. Augustine Inlet South to Pope Road beach access - 4.03 miles (6.48 kilometers). This area has no development with beach driving occurring along entire stretch only by official vehicles working for both the State of Florida and St. Johns County. Major erosion has occurred on the inlet side of the park with periodic re-nourishment projects occurring on the southern end of the park. Monitoring efforts are coordinated and carried out by the Department of Environmental Protection Florida State Park Rangers.

St. Augustine Beach: FWC Permit #090 St. Augustine Beach. Pope Road South to Crescent Beach Access Ramp - 6.1 miles (9.81 kilometers). This area is within the boundaries of the City of St. Augustine Beach with multiple beach front hotels, condominiums, and single family homes. This area consists of 0.9 miles (1.44 kilometers) of non-driving beach with 5.2 miles (8.36 kilometers) of driving beach starting at A Street beach access ramp and continuing South to Crescent Beach Access Ramp, with a total of 6 beach access points. Northern part of this beach

near the pier has erosion challenges and receives periodic re-nourishment. Monitoring efforts are coordinated and carried out by sea turtle patrol volunteers.

St. Augustine Beach: FWC Permit #101 Matanzas North. Crescent Beach Access Ramp South to Fort Matanzas Beach Access Ramp - 3.87 miles (6.22 kilometers) of driving beach, multiple condominiums, single family homes, and a 5 year cycle re-nourishment project. Monitoring efforts are coordinated and carried out by sea turtle patrol volunteers.

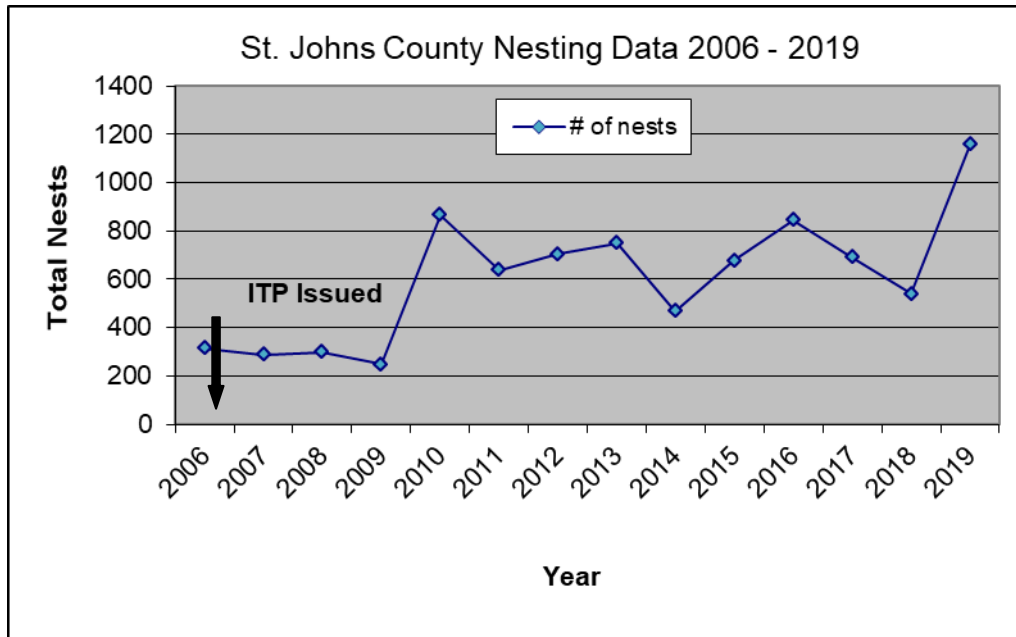
Summer Haven: FWC Permit #046 Matanzas South. This beach as it is commonly referred to as Summer Haven starts at Matanzas inlet south to the St. Johns and Flagler County line. Within this area are 2.56 miles (4.11 kilometers) of single family homes and multiple construction projects such as a sand berm and sand placement projects. Monitoring efforts are coordinated and carried out by sea turtle patrol volunteers.

Assessment: Per the SSTMP the County offered HCP annual training in the form of online training. Throughout the season weekly nesting data was submitted online or in the form of a spreadsheet. MTPs and their volunteers additionally coordinated with County staff regarding nesting activities, disorientations, access, HCP and Beach Code violations. More importantly leading up to and following storm events the County and MTPs communicate regarding beach closures and assistance needed for storm recovery in terms of nesting activity.

Nesting Summary

With multiple fluctuations in sea turtle nesting it should be noted that nesting numbers do not represent the population as a whole and overall their numbers could be declining (S.A. Ceriani, P. Casale, M. Brost, E.H. Leone, B.E. Witherington, 2019). A variety of conservation measures aimed at recovering the species has been implemented since the approval of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1978. Protection measures include protecting nesting habitat, reducing nest depredation, reducing beachfront lighting, and modifying fishing gears to reduce bycatch. The St. Johns County HCP affords protection of five species of sea turtles implying that all listed species may nest on County beaches, however based on historical data four species of sea turtles have been documented with two outlier nesting events by Kemp's Ridley in 2015 and again in 2017. The east coast of Florida yet again experienced a significant weather event when Hurricane Dorian swept through on September 4th. Collectively each documented species produced 1,146 nests; a 122% increase from the previous year of 540 nests. While the hatchling success rate of 87.4% is a slight increase from last year's 84% the total number of hatchlings produced of 80,967 is a positive outcome. Annual nesting has remained at a steady level in comparison from 2006 to 2019 (Graph 3). The loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) sea turtle continues to account for the largest distribution of nests with 1,068 nests, followed by the green (*Chelonia mydas*) with 74 nests, and naturally the leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) demonstrating a low year with 4 nests.

Graph 3. St. Johns County Nesting Data 2006-2019

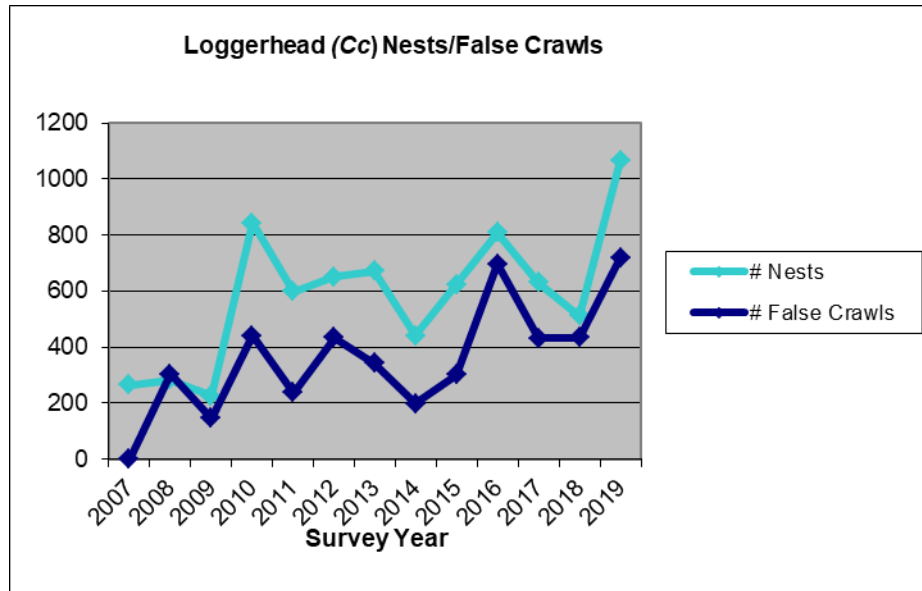


Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*)

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute from 1989 to 2019 a complex pattern with three distinct phases has been demonstrated: increase (1989 – 1998), decrease (1998-2007) and increase (2007 – 2019) of the loggerhead species (FWRI, 2019). St. Johns County annual nest counts continue to be in line with the long term analysis of statewide nesting (Graph 4) with 1068 nests.

- 1,068 nests recorded
- 793 nests hatched
- 137 washed out
- 127 clutches not found
- 70,473 hatchlings emerged
- Overall mean clutch of 83 eggs
- Range of 12 to 186 eggs
- 74% nesting success rate
- 87% hatchling success rate
- 56 days average incubation
- 720 false crawls

Graph 4. Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) Nests/False Crawls

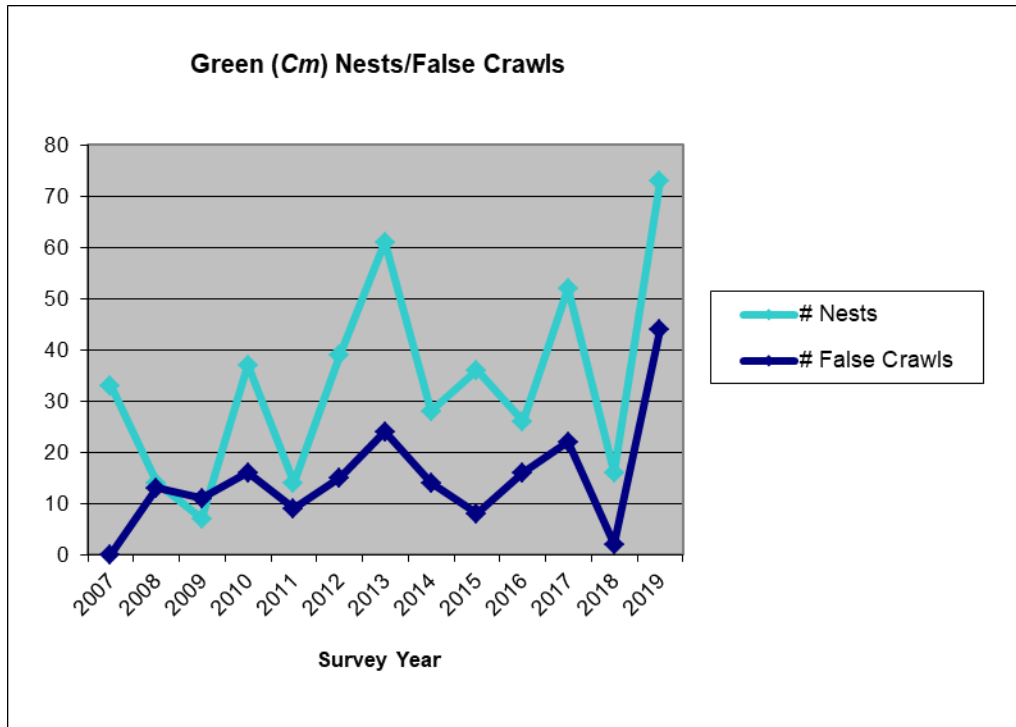


Green (*Chelonia mydas*)

Archie Carr of the Sea Turtle Conservancy first reported that nesting green sea turtles demonstrate a common trend of alternating between high and low nesting numbers (Seaturtle.org). This over-all trend continues with wide fluctuations throughout the state (FWRI, 2019) and is also evident on the beaches of St. Johns County with 73 nests (Graph 5) compared to last year with 16 nests.

- 73 nests recorded
- 44 nests hatched
- 9 washed out
- 20 clutches not found
- 4,045 hatchlings emerged
- Overall mean clutch of 65 eggs
- Range of 35 to 160 eggs
- 60% nesting success rate
- 90% hatchling success rate
- 55 days average incubation
- 40 false crawls

Graph 5. Green (*Chelonia mydas*) Nests/False Crawls

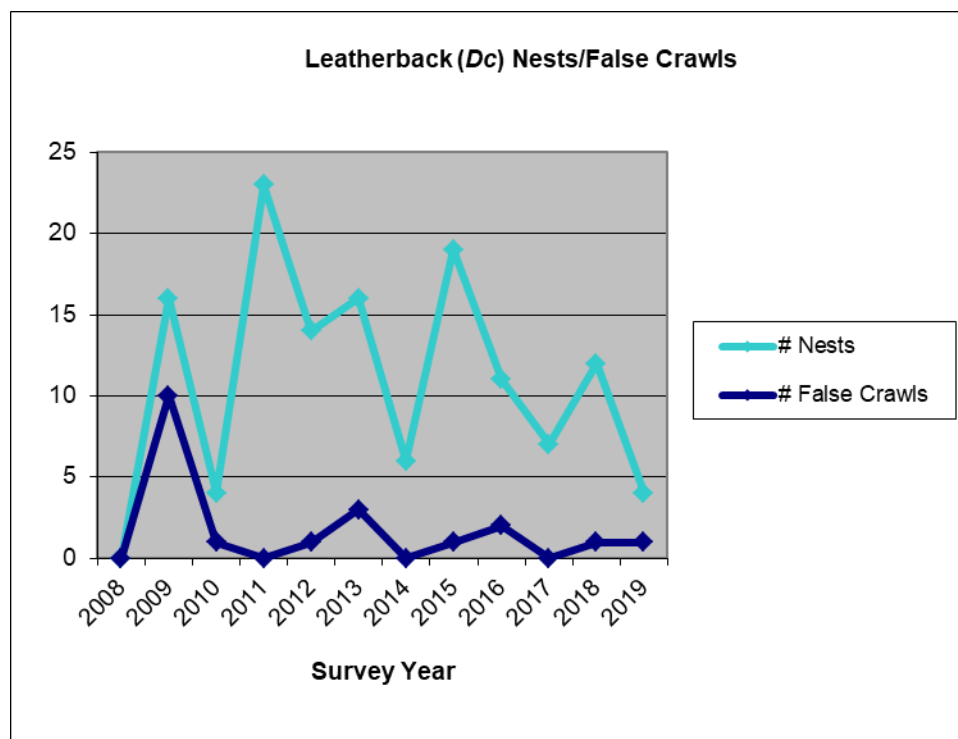


Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

Leatherbacks nest almost exclusively on the east coast of Florida (FWRI, n.d.), however, since 2007 volunteers have recorded zero to 23 nests on St. Johns County beaches. Leatherbacks also exhibit a fluctuation in nesting from each year as demonstrated in Graph 6 below.

- 4 nests recorded
- 2 nests hatched
- 0 washed out
- 1 clutch not found
- 113 hatchlings emerged
- Overall mean clutch of 16 eggs
- Range of 31 to 126 eggs
- 50% nesting success rate
- 70% hatchling success rate
- 71 days average incubation
- 1 false crawl

Graph 6. Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) Nests/False Crawls



For a more comprehensive representation of nesting that demonstrates levels of density refer to Map Figures 2 and 3.

Incubation Periods and Hatching Success

Several environmental factors like air temperature and rain can either increase or decrease the time in which a clutch incubates. The summer of 2019 from May through August had varying temperature ranges that were not as extreme in terms of heat as in years past plus multiple rain events helped with decreasing the time of incubation from 60 days to 55 days.

The northern barrier island demonstrated an incubation period of 54 days while Anastasia Island demonstrated an average incubation period of 59 days. Lastly, the southern barrier island commonly referred to as Summer Haven was recorded at an average of 58 days of incubation.

Relocated Nests

Although 1,145 nests were naturally deposited only 3% of the nests were relocated due to reasons that may have prevented a successful period of incubation. Meaning they were either below the recent high tide line (26 nests) were in front of an escarpment (2) or were being washed out (4 nests) and the response was to relocate bringing the total to 32 nests.

Other Disturbances

Volunteers also recorded other events that are known to have negative impacts to nests such as predation and over wash events.

- **Predation**

Volunteers applied protection methods of self-releasing cages and screens on 42 of nests. Even so 70 (6%) of the total nests reported were affected by predation events:

- 2 Dog
- 6 Ant
- 1 Raccoon
- 50 Crab

- **Tidal Inundation/Washout**

Tidal inundation and washout events are common throughout the season and more especially during storm events. Hurricane Dorian swept the east coast of Florida in early September brushing the county coastline on September 4th. Although not every washout is from this event the majority of the 124 were specifically indicated as being swept away by Hurricane Dorian.

Obstacles Encountered

Obstacles encountered during nesting events are documented under two categories; anthropogenic (human) and other natural obstacles (Graphs 7 & 8). Additionally, when an obstacle is encountered FWC requires MTPs to record the impact and outcome. This information is entered to a statewide system and tracked by FWC biologist.

Graph 7. Human obstacles encountered during nesting events

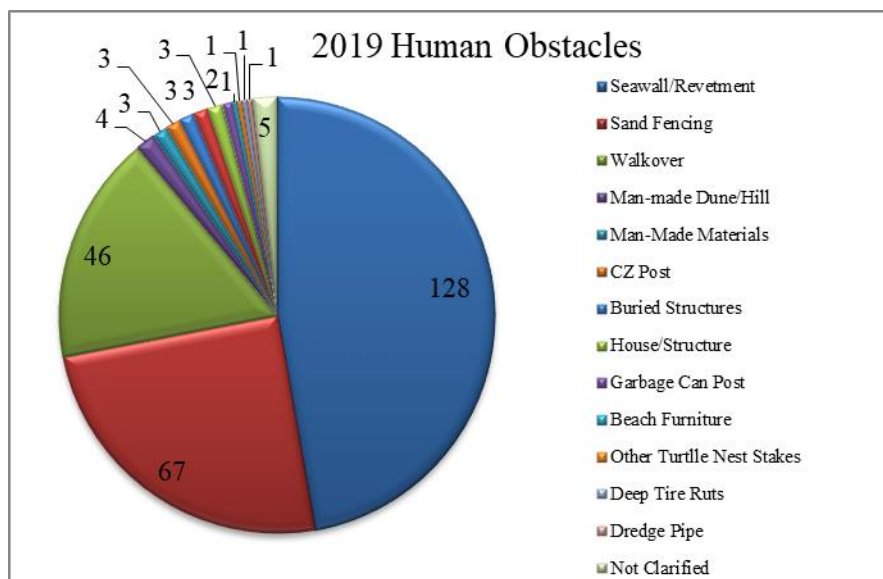


Table 4. Human Nesting Obstacles

Human Nesting Obstacles	Number
Seawall/Revetment	128
Sand Fencing	67
Walkover	46
Man-made Dune/Hill	4
Man-Made Materials	3
CZ Post	3
Buried Structures	3
Construction Debris/ Concrete	3
House/Structure	3
Garbage Can Post	2
Beach Furniture	1
Other Turtle Nest Stakes	1
Deep Tire Ruts	1
Dredge Pipe	1
Not Clarified	5
Total	271

Graph 8. Natural obstacles encountered during nesting events

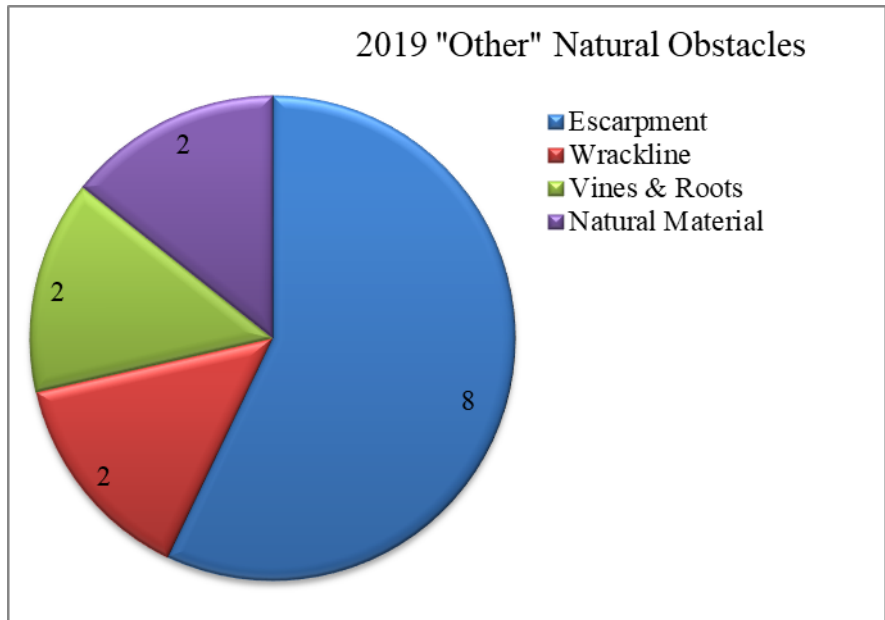


Table 5. “Other” Natural Nesting Obstacles

"Other" Natural Nesting Obstacles	Number
Escarpment	8
Wrackline	2
Vines & Roots	2
Natural Material	2
Total	14

Spatial Patterns

Spatial patterns discussed in this section include nests deposited in relation to driving and non-driving beach areas, relationship of nesting to the Conservation Zone (CZ) and the link between nesting and type of beach. Nests deposited on driving beaches accounted for 87 nests (8%), 934 nests (82%) on non-driving beaches and 124 nests (11%) on restricted driving beaches (Table 6).

Table 6. Driving/Non-driving beaches percentage distribution of nests

Beach Type	Mileage	Nest	%Distribution of County Beach	%Distribution of nest
Driving	10.6	87	26%	8%
Non-driving	24.8	934	60%	82%
Restricted	5.7	124	14%	11%
Total	41.1	1145	100%	100%

Per Condition G.1.a. and d. G.2.c of the ITP a 15 foot CZ is established seaward of the base of the dune. Part of its purpose is to protect and establish suitable habitat for potential nesting events. Therefore, it’s optimistic to understand that more than half of overall documented nests were recorded within the CZ with 656 nests (57%), 240 nests (21%) were located outside of the CZ, and 17 nests (1.5%) within the driving lane and 232 nests (203%) were documented with not having a CZ present. It is important to note that every mile of the beaches has CZ signage and the signage can sometimes be placed at high use beaches where no driving occurs. Improvements to properly documenting a nest within a CZ versus no CZ would benefit the program.

As previously laid out the beaches of St. Johns County consists of multiple shore types that include dune, escarpment, rock revetment and seawalls. As such it was confirmed that 969 nests (85%) were deposited on beaches with a dune, 14 nests (1%) were deposited in front of an escarpment, 156 nests (14%) in front of sea wall, and 6 nests (0.5%) deposited in front of a rock revetment.

Temporal Patterns

Nesting began as early as April 14th when a leatherback nest was reported by beachgoers on St. Augustine Beach. Additionally, another pre-season nest was recorded on April 25th by sea turtle patrol on St. Augustine Beach yet this was a loggerhead. As in years past green nesting did not begin until June when the first nests was recorded on June 15th in Ponte Vedra. More information can be found in Table 7 below.

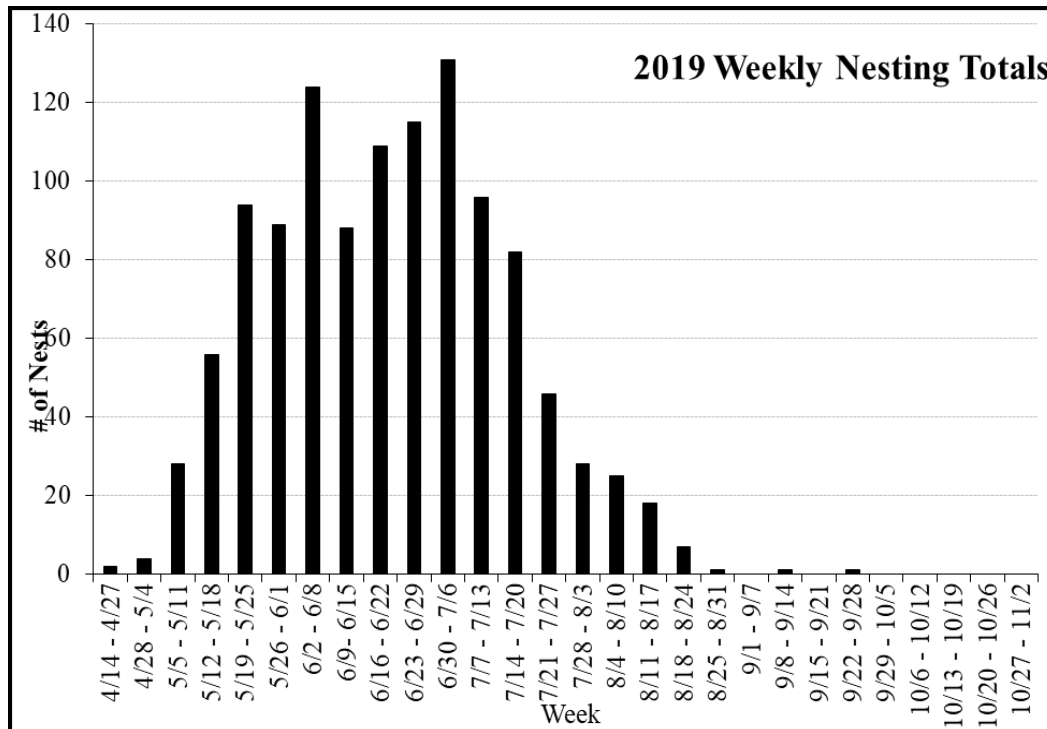
Table 7. Temporal patterns of nesting

Species	Date	Location
Cc (Earliest)	4/25/2019	St. Augustine Beach
Cc (Latest)	8/22/2019	Anastasia State Park
Cm (Earliest)	6/2/2019	Summer Haven
Cm (Latest)	9/26/2019	GTMNERR
Dc (Earliest)	4/14/2019	St. Augustine Beach
Dc (Latest)	6/7/2019	Anastasia State Park

*Cc (*Caretta caretta*) Loggerhead | Cm (*Chelonia mydas*) Green | Dc (*Dermochelys coriacea*) Leatherback

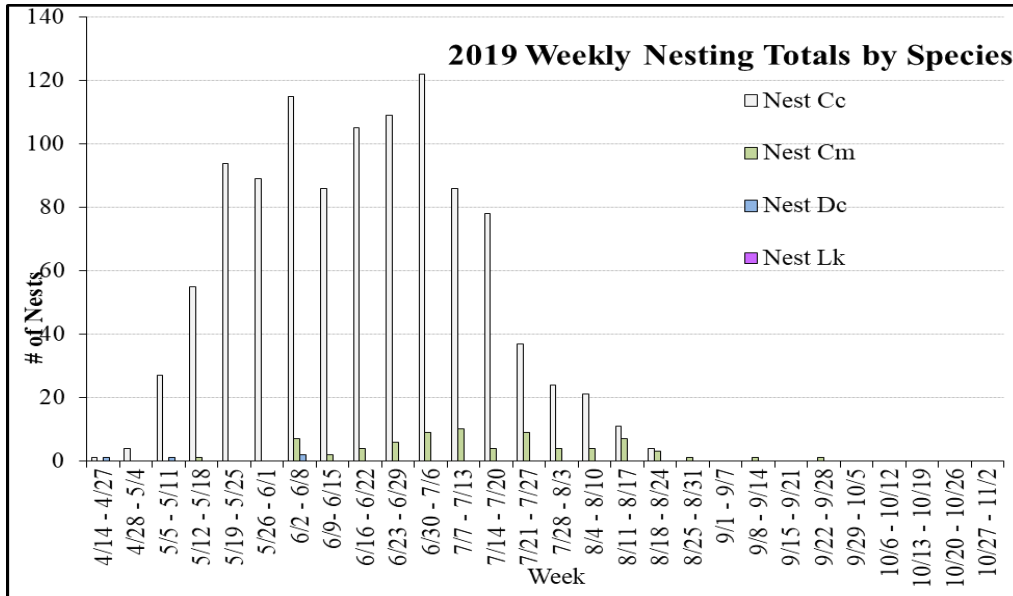
The pattern of nesting remains consistent with slight fluctuations over the months of May, June and July. The highest week of nesting shifted placement from recent seasons of occurring in mid-June while this year the highest week occurred in early July. Graph 9 below has additional information.

Graph 9. Weekly Nesting Totals ($n = 1,145$)



Naturally loggerhead nesting maintained a steady pace from May to the end of July, while Green nesting revealed irregular nesting from June to September. Leatherback nesting was rather inconsistent as well starting in early April and ending in early June (Graph 10).

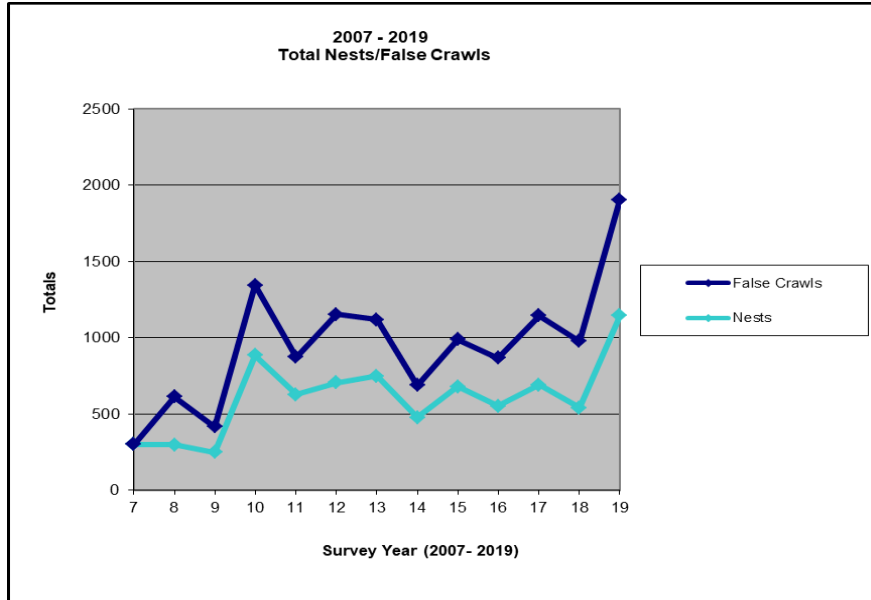
Graph 10. Weekly Nesting Totals by Species (*n* = 1,145)



False Crawl Summary

The number of false crawls had historically maintained a 50% rate in comparison to that of nesting. However, the past three nesting seasons have demonstrated a consistent pattern of false crawls crossing over this threshold as volunteers recorded 761 false crawls making up for 65% of the 1,145 nests documented. Additionally, 74 were on driving beaches, 78 on restricted driving beaches, and 597 recorded on non-driving beaches.

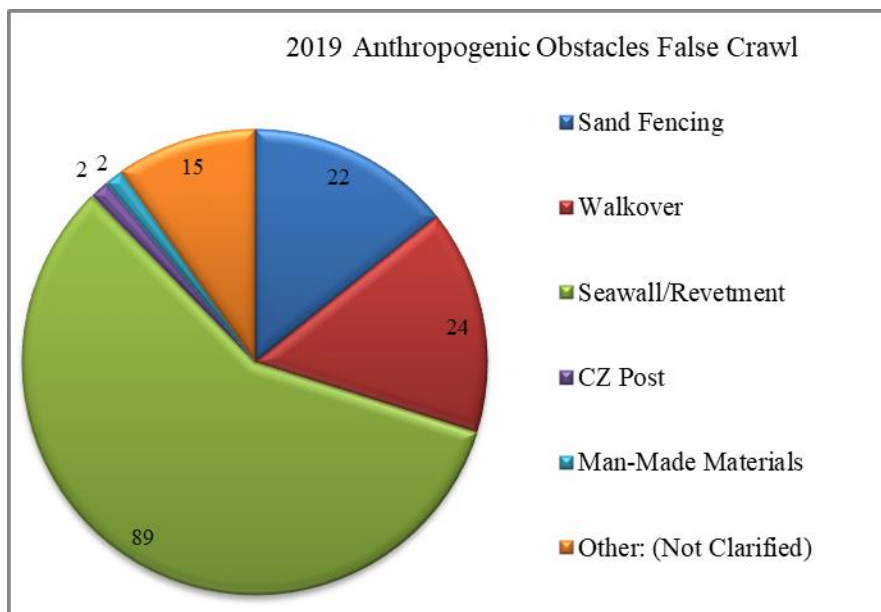
Graph 11. 2007-2019 Total nests and false crawls



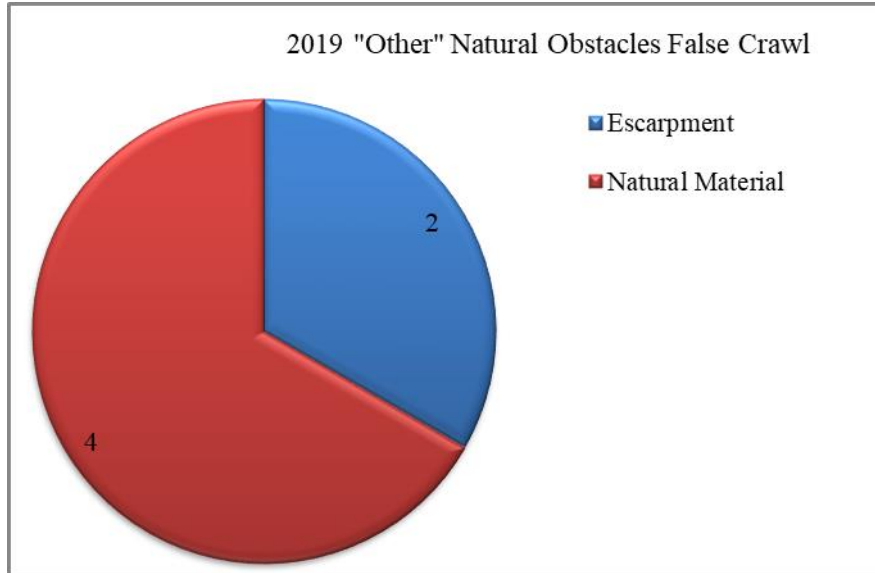
When documenting a false crawl volunteers also record shore type, location or apex of the crawl, and any obstacles encountered.

Just like nesting obstacles encountered during false crawl events are documented under two categories; anthropogenic (human) and other natural obstacles. See Graphs 12 and 13 below.

Graph 12. Human obstacles encountered during false crawl events



Graph 13. Natural obstacles encountered during false crawl events



Disorientations

A total of 18 disorientation reports (Table 8) were sent to the beach lighting officer in 2019. Good compliance and positive reactions to conversations about lighting concerns this season were also more frequent and often. An increase in single female disorientations was seen this year.

When beach use by visitors is at its peak in July and August, the nests began to hatch more rapidly and more disorientations occurred during these months. This pattern is indicative of years past and aggressive education is necessary during these times to limit the amount of human impacts on hatching nests.

As in years past if a disorientation does happen, the County asks volunteers to report the disorientation on the day of the event so that a follow up investigation can be completed that nightfall. Follow up investigations were completed the next nightfall after the disorientation was reported to give the best chance of finding the possible reason for a disorientation to occur. Of the 18 reported disorientations, 8 were found to have violating lights in a nearby capacity on the night that the follow up report was performed. One report was not received until after the nest had been evaluated and/or removed from the beach which makes it hard to correct a light that could be involved in a disorientation. Additionally, 14 disorientation events were mentioned in comments section sent to our data team, but no reports were given to the beach lighting officer. For more information regarding the Beach Lighting Management Plan and how it is implemented refer to Section 10.

Table 8. Disorientation Summary

Date	Zone	Location	Direction of Travel	Number	Moon Phase	Light Source
5/9/19	10	9183 Old A1A	NW	1	Waxing Crescent 25.7%	No lights present
6/4/19	10	8860 Old A1A	N	1	Waxing Crescent 14.8%	Exterior lighting violation at 8860 Old A1A
6/5/19	8	978 A1A Beach Blvd.	S	1	Waxing Crescent 7.5%	Exterior lighting violation at 616 Ocean Palm Way, flashlights
6/5/19	10	9273 Old A1A	W	1	Waxing Crescent 7.5%	Exterior lighting violation at 9273 Old A1A
6/15/19	8	50 Cubbedge Rd	N	1	Waning Gibbous 99.6%	No lights present, Was told female has human interaction at dusk
6/23/19	10	9277 Old A1A	N		Waning Gibbous 54.6%	No lights present, A1A traffic headlights visible
7/5/19	10	9183 Old A1A	S	1	Waxing Crescent 21.5%	No lights present
7/9/19	4	9320-9440 Old A1A	S	1	Waxing Gibbous 66.2%	Interior lighting violation at 9401 Old A1A
7/15/19	5	4370 Coastal Highway	S	Unknown	Waning Gibbous 100%	Cumulative lighting violation at 4370 Coastal Highway
7/17/19	10	In front of Old A1A entrance	Unknown	Unknown	Waxing Gibbous 99.1%	No lights present
7/22/19	9	7900 A1A S	N and S	2-10	Waning Gibbous 69.2%	Hatchlings traveled in tire ruts
7/23/19	8	11 th St	W	11-50	Waning Gibbous 69.2%	Exterior @ 2 11 th St

Table 8. Disorientation Summary

Date	Zone	Location	Direction of Travel	Number	Moon Phase	Light Source
7/23/19	9	7424 A1A S	S	1	Waning Gibbous 59.9%	No lights present, FC that hatched traveled in tire ruts
7/25/19	1	715 PVB	SW	2-10	Waning Gibbous 40%	Exterior lighting violation at 707 PVB
7/26/19	7	ASP	Unknown	Unknown	Waning Gibbous 31%	No lighting violations
8/1/19	5	2773 S PVB	NW	11-50	Waxing Crescent 6.2%	Interior lighting violation at 2767 SPVB, contractor working in evening at 2773 S PVB
8/23/19	1	713 PVB	N	11-50	Waning Crescent 48.5%	No lights present
8/26/19	5	3083 S PVB	N and S	11-50	Waning Crescent 16.2%	Received report post-season

Table 9. Zone Descriptions

Zone #	Zone/Boundaries
1	Duval/St. Johns County Line to Sawgrass Beach Club North
2	Sawgrass Beach Club South to Old Ponte Vedra Condos
3	Old Ponte Vedra Condos to North Boundary GTMNERR
4	GTMNERR North Boundary to Exxon Gas Station (2700 S. Ponte Vedra Blvd.)
5	Exxon Station (2700 S. Ponte Vedra Blvd.) to Reef Restaurant (4100 Coastal Hwy.)
6	Reef Restaurant (4100 Coastal Hwy) to Vilano Beach Jetties
7	Anastasia State Park to Pope Rd.
8	St. Augustine Beach; Pope Rd. to Crescent Beach Ramp
9	Crescent Beach Ramp to Ft. Matanzas Ramp
10	South Matanzas Inlet to St. Johns/Flagler County Line

Refer to Map Figures 4 and 5 for more information regarding densities of false crawls on County beaches. Additionally, Map Figures 6 (a-i) identifies each zone and reflects all nesting, false crawls and AOVs.

Program Improvements: The County will continue to improve on its data recording as well as carry on with researching ways to develop additional statistical evaluations. This will improve the County’s ability to make proper management decisions for the protection of listed species.

SECTION 4: TIRE TRACKS AND RUT REMOVAL PROTOCOL

Applicable ITP Condition- G.2.j.

- j. Tire Tracks/Rut Removal Plan. “Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this Permit, the Permittee shall submit for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service review and approval a Tire Track/Rut Removal Plan as further described in Chapter 7 of the HCP. The Permittee shall implement such Plan during the first full nesting season following U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval (beginning on May 1). The approved Tire Track/Rut Removal Plan may be subsequently amended prior to and after its implementation upon review and approval of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”*

Implementation: The tire tracks and rut removal plan is carried out according to the policies and procedures as outlined in the Tire Tracks and Rut Removal Plan and the SSTMP. Based on this protocol MTPs submit weekly nesting data to County staff to develop and oversee the procedures required by rut removal staff. Weekly rut removal spreadsheets are created and distributed to nighttime staff that identifies which nests are in need of rut removal. The data sheet also records if an emergence took place, if the nests received or did not receive rut removal and as to why (i.e. storm, could not locate, etc.). Rut removal is conducted using an ATV or UTV equipped with a heavy duty drag harrow attached to the rear of the vehicles and using large light-weight aluminum ball field rakes. Nightly efforts also include filling in holes, applying HCP stickers to beach gear, and moving obstructions out of the way that could potentially impede adult and/or hatchling sea turtles. On the 45th day of incubation rut removal procedures commence continuing until the nest is either evaluated and/or reported by the MTP that the stakes have been removed.

Assessment: Rut removal was conducted on all south beach nests where daily beach driving occurs. Vilano beach north of the St. Augustine inlet has historically been a restricted driving beach where special 4x4 permits are required and permittees are responsible for “self-policing” their activities on the beach. However, following the events of both hurricanes in 2016 (Hurricane Matthew) and 2017 (Hurricane Irma) and the impacts on the beach rut removal procedures were carried out in a “spot checking” method.

Vilano/North Beach

The area extending North between Vilano Ramp and Usina Ramp in North Beach is a productive area for nesting with 75 nests recorded. The area has been closed since fall of 2016 to regular access but was re-open in August causing a shift in scheduling. The North Beach permittees were required to stay below the high tide line therefore decreasing any ruts in front of nests. Since law enforcement and marine rescue frequent the area staff continued with “spot checking. To better understand the program refer to Section 9: Four Wheel Driving Training Program.

St. Augustine/Crescent Beach

Three HCP technicians are designated for the South Beaches to compensate for the other assigned nightly duties required by the HCP technicians. During times of little rainfall and small trade wind swell, certain areas of the beach will have 4x4 only restrictions. For this reason, deeper ruts can be present requiring more time to adequately remove ruts from the beach. The

zone from Pope Road to Crescent Beach ramp required rut removal on 34 nests while the zone south of this extending to Fort Matanzas ramp had 49 nests.

Seasonal Break-Down

Rut removal was achieved on approximately 12.25 miles of drivable beach beginning at the Usina Ramp in North Beach extending south to the St. Augustine Inlet, and from the Pier extending south to the Fort Matanzas National Monument ramp. Rut removal procedures began on July 2nd and concluded on November 13th for 134 days on 109 nests of which 88 were confirmed as successfully hatched nests. The longest period in which rut removal staff spent removing ruts on a nest was 46 days and the shortest amount of time was 1 day. Table 10 below represents additional information as collected and reported by seasonal HCP field technicians:

Table 10. Rut Removal Summary

Beach	Start Date	End Date	Length (days)	Total Nests	*Average Days
Vilano	6/15/19	9/29/19	106	75	10
St. Augustine	6/13/19	10/24/19	133	34	20
Crescent	6/19/19	10/30/19	133	49	17

*Average evenings spent conducting rut removal at nest site per zone (approximation).

Program Improvements: St. Johns County will improve its level of communicating the proper procedures for all beaches so that the elimination of ruts occurs on non driving beaches. Furthermore, County staff will continue to receive rigorous levels of training to ensure that proper details of the procedures are carried out.

SECTION 5: IMPLEMENTATION

Applicable ITP Conditions - G.1.f, G.2.e., G.2. f., H.2

- 1.f. HCP Management Activities.** *“Official vehicle access necessary to monitor and enforce the terms of this Permit and implementation of the conditions of the HCP is not limited, including access within the Conservation Zone.”*
- 2.e. Increased Enforcement Staffing.** *“By May 1 of the first full nesting season following the issuance of this Permit, the Permittee shall provide funding for and fill no less than four (4) full time Beach Ranger positions and/or two (2) full-time Deputy Sheriffs, whose responsibilities will lie only in enforcement of beach-related local ordinances and codes and in lifesaving activities. The Permittee shall also provide funding for and fill one full-time (1) Beach Lighting Officer position whose responsibility shall be enforcement of the Beach Lighting Management Plan described in Condition 11.G.2k.”*
- 2.f. HCP Implementation Staff.** *“By May 1 of the first full nesting season following the issuance date of this permit, the Permittee shall fund and fill one (1) full-time position dedicated entirely to ensuring effective implementation of the HCP and conditions of this Permit.”*
- H.2. Implementation Measures.** *The following measures will be employed by the Permittee to ensure that the terms and conditions of this Permit and provisions of the HCP are implemented.*
- 1. Staffing.** *The Permittee shall maintain staffing as described in Chapter 9 of the HCP to ensure implementation and enforcement of the terms of this Permit and the effective administration of the HCP.*
 - 2. Data and Records Management.** *The Permittee shall ensure that appropriate staff collect, analyze, maintain, and report data and records as defined and described in Chapter 9 of the HCP.*
 - 3. Enforcement and Coordination of Enforcement.** *The Permittee, by accepting this Permit agrees to abide by the terms and conditions of the Permit and agrees to sufficiently and adequately enforce and implement such terms and conditions to ensure that the performance standards listed in this Permit are implemented and the biological goals of the HCP are achieved.*

HCP Management Activities

Implementation: Annually all personnel, including HCP support staff, Beach Maintenance, Marine Rescue, St. Johns County Sheriff’s Deputies, and City of St. Augustine Beach Police Officers who are involved with implementation and coordination of the HCP participate in HCP and Protected Species Training. The workshop provides the framework in which the HCP is to be implemented, management of the beaches as a natural resource for the benefit of all user groups, and the need to demonstrate our efforts in a positive manner. The workshops also cover

the need for County staff to participate in implementation by informing beach management of access after hours, entrance into non-driving zones, reporting of protected species daytime events and incidents as well as the benefit of constant communication between departments.

Assessment: Occasionally public safety vehicles must enter the beaches after hours. They are asked to provide this information to County staff so that any impacts made overnight could be resolved the next day therefore decreasing any potential impacts to nesting sea turtles. No incidents occurred on non-driving beaches by public safety vehicles.

On April 26th 12 employees from law enforcement, beach staff, and HCP support staff participated in HCP and protected species training. An additional training on May 23rd was attended by the Environmental Supervisor to meet with seasonal staff of marine rescue to provide helpful information on beach management.

Program Improvements: Annual trainings and consistent levels of communication with other County departments will continue to occur and include updates as necessary.

Implementation Measures: Increased Enforcement Staffing

Implementation: The implementation and enforcement of the Beach Code is done so in a professional manner by the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office Beach Supervisor, deputy staff and through the cooperation of the City of St. Augustine Beach Police Department with one St. Augustine Beach officer assigned to the beach. Their responsibility is to implement, enforce, and educate individuals on the rules and regulations of the Beach Code, HCP and the enforcement of other applicable laws as necessary. Benefitting from the geographical split of the beaches with the St. Augustine inlet as the dividing factor the enforcement of the beaches is split into North and South Beaches. Each region is assigned beach enforcement staff that are anywhere from one to two NRDs depending on the time of year as well as additional overtime deputies, and Public Service Assistants. March 1st through Labor Day weekend full time deputies are augmented by a varied number of trained over time Sheriff's Deputies. The standard for the combined full time and overtime deputies ranges from 3 to 6 deputies depending on the day of the week and crowd conditions due to holidays or spring break periods.

Documentation of the types of violations occurring on the beaches is done so through the completion of a standard Law Enforcement Daily Data Sheet at the end of each shift. This allows HCP implementation staff to summarize verbal warnings, written warnings, citations, HCP and wildlife emergencies, and the geographic location of such records.

The Environmental Division employs a full time year round Environmental Specialist whose duties include enforcement of the Beach Lighting Management Plan year round and as HCP support staff outside of the nesting season. An additional part time Beach Lighting Officer is retained to ensure that surveys are conducted 7 nights a week. A more detailed report of such activity can be found in Section 10: Beach Lighting Management Plan.

Assessment: County Beach Patrol staff dedicated to the beach included a sergeant which is the coordinating supervisor, two full time beach deputies, three full time NRDs, PSAs, and supplemental overtime personnel.

Law enforcement views the implementation of the rules and regulations as an opportunity to educate the public through verbal and written warnings. Repeat or blatant offenders were issued a citation or provided a date to appear in court. From January 1st to December 31st Beach Patrol recorded 2,685 verbal warnings, 1,115 written warnings and 191 County citations with a grand total of 3,991 recorded violations (Table 11).

Table 11. St. Johns County Law Enforcement Statistics

HCP Violations			
Violation	VW	WW	CC
Horseback (HB) Riding w/o Permit Sec 3.02(b)	1	0	0
Removal of Beach Sand/Coquina Sec 3.12	1	0	0
HB Riding South Surfside Sec 3.02(b)	0	0	0
HB Riding South Beach Date Restrictions Sec 3.01(b)	0	0	0
Beach Special Events w/o Permit Sec. 4.02	0	0	0
Parking/Driving after hours Sec.5.03 (c); 5.05	1	1	2
Commercial Fishermen Sec.5.05	0	0	0
Conservation Zone Encroachment Sec. 7.01(b)	359	95	3
Disturbance/Removal of CZ Vegetation Sec. 7.01(c)	0	1	0
Driving in restricted area Sec 5.02(b)	0	0	0
Driving on North Beach without Permit	0	0	0
Entering North Beach 4x4 permitted area Sec 5.02(b)	0	0	0
Mickler's HB Riding Date Restrictions 2009-60 Sec1	0	0	0
Section Total	362	97	5
Beach Code Violations			
Violation	VW	WW	CC
Conduct Sec. 3.00	1,087	353	86
Animals Sec.3.02(c)	0	0	0
Leash Law 2001-19 Sec.4.00	519	89	1
Litter Sec.3.09(a)	2	0	0
Tents, Chairs, Catamarans etc. Sec.3.09(b)	0	0	0
Fireworks/Explosives Sec.3.13	8	0	0
Vehicles Sec. 5.00	707	576	99
Section Total	2,323	1,018	186
Totals	2,685	1,115	191
Grand Total	3,991		

In addition to their routine tasks law enforcement also responds to other events on the beach that involve permitting activities and wildlife response (Table 12 below).

Table 12. St. Johns County HCP non-citation responses

HCP Non-Citation Responses	
Stranded Turtle Response	22
Injured Bird Response	28
Bird Nesting Area Patrol	0
Gopher Tortoise Response	14
Beached Marine Mammal	1
NB Permit Check	0
HB Permit Check	3
CCA Permit Check	3
CF &/or Net Fishing Check	0
Event Permit Check	0
*NRD assist FWC	2
Total	73

*NRD: Natural Resource Deputy

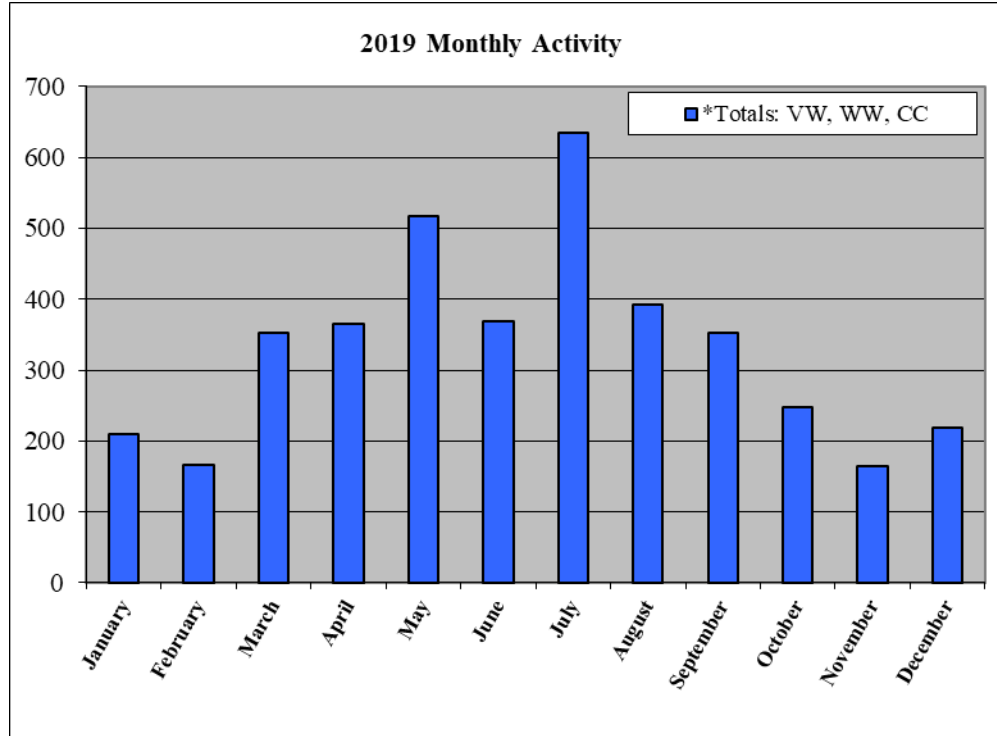
HCP Field Assistants were solely responsible for gate closures Mondays through Thursdays but had the ability to call on law enforcement if needed. While law enforcement was tasked with Friday, Saturday, and Sunday evening gate closures. Beach gate closures are done so in the following format:

- A Street gate closed at 5:00 pm by toll operators
- All other gates ‘entrance’ side of gate closed
- Beach patrons informed of beach gates closed by 7:30 p.m.
 - o Direct communication to beach driver or flyer placed on vehicle (if person not present)
- Communication between staff via radios of clearing procedures
- Beach patrons locked on the beach after hours are instructed to contact law enforcement by signage attached to the back of locked beach gates

According to daily logs recorded by staff 17 vehicles were locked on the beach. It is at the discretion of the responding law enforcement officer to issue a verbal, written warning or citation. Vehicles locked on the beaches during weekend gate closures are not recorded by law enforcement; however, issued citations are reflected in the law enforcement daily reports.

Throughout the spring and summer months, and as demonstrated in Graph 14 below, the level of interaction with the public increases as the number of visitors increases. The months of March and April mark the periods in which spring break for surrounding counties and colleges takes place. Extra law enforcement personnel are brought in from these geographic regions to assist with crowd control and enforcement activity. In addition, throughout July and during the July 4th festivities the number of violations increase, principally due to the recorded number of fireworks and explosives violations. This time of year is also where our beaches see an increase in nesting. To gain a better understanding of sea turtle nesting activity refer to Section 3: Standard Sea Turtle Monitoring Protocol.

Graph 14. Monthly Law Enforcement Activity



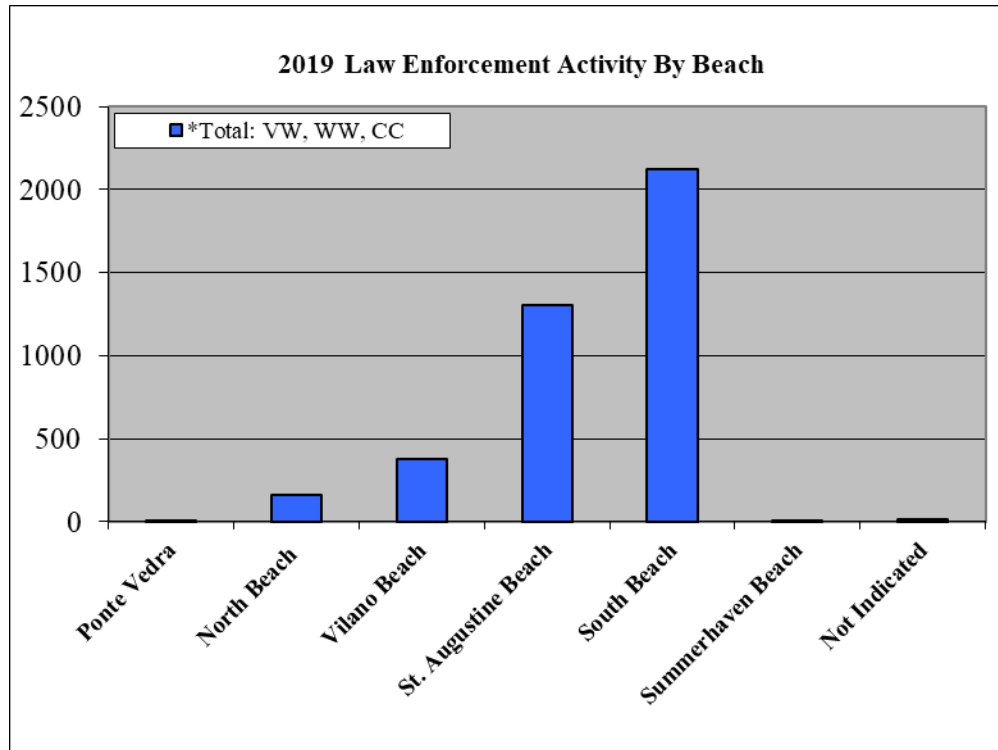
*VW = Verbal Warning WW = Written Warning CC = County Citation

Daily recordings of violations are further broken down into geographic regions excluding the GTMNERR as this stretch of beach receives law enforcement on an as needed basis. The access at each beach varies from walking to horseback riding to driving access. Below is a break down of those accesses and beaches:

- ◆ **Ponte Vedra:** South from the Duval County line area includes South Ponte Vedra extending South to North Beach, has multiple beach access points with walking paths, walkovers, and horseback riding access at Mickler’s Beachfront Park.
- ◆ **North Beach:** Stretch of beach includes multiple beach access points with walking paths, walkovers, horseback riding and North Beach 4x4 vehicle permit access at Surfside Beachfront Park.
- ◆ **Vilano Beach:** Located just south of North Beach, access can be obtained on Vilano Road and Genoa Road also known as Porpoise Point.
- ◆ **St. Augustine Beach:** Beach starts at Pope Road access extending south to Dondanville beach access ramps, multiple public accesses with walkovers and sand paths, and beach driving begins at A Street.
- ◆ **South Beach:** Stretch of beach starts at Dondanville extends south to the Fort Matanzas National Monument and picks back up again south of the inlet, includes Summer Haven ending at Flagler County line in the Town of Marineland. Area includes multiple beach front parks, walkovers, beach driving access and horseback riding access at Crescent Beach.

Each beach has its share of use by multiple groups and numerous recreational opportunities. Therefore the level of use is increased when more options for beach accessibility are available. This is evident in the amount of citations for the geographic regions of the beach.

Graph 15. Law Enforcement Activity by Beach



*VW = Verbal Warning WW = Written Warning CC = County Citation

Program Improvements: St. Johns County recognizes the need to maintain an enforcement presence for the purpose of applying rules and regulations, documenting, and analyzing law enforcement activity. St. Johns County will continue to improve on the level of training and the information collected for Beach Patrol personnel involved in HCP education and enforcement.

Implementation Measures: Staffing

Implementation: The Habitat Conservation Section is a component of the Environmental Division and is managed by the Environmental Supervisor. The Section also includes two Environmental Specialists and one part time seasonal employee serving as the Assistant Beach Lighting Officer as well as six part time HCP field assistants. The Environmental Supervisor works under the direction of the Environmental Division Manager and in coordination with the Beach Services Superintendent and the Parks and Recreation Assistant Director. The Environmental Division and its Manager provides administrative and fiscal support while Beach Services, a division of the County Recreation and Parks Department, provides administrative, logistical and fiscal support. Below is a breakdown of duties:

- Environmental Supervisor (HCP/ITP management) responsibilities include:
 - o Implementation and management of day to day operations of the HCP

- Coordination with marine turtle permit holders
- Overseeing data collection
- Management and coordination of full-time and part-time staff
- Coordinating County intra-departmental activities
- Liaison between Federal, State and County officials.
- Environmental Specialist (data management) responsibilities include:
 - Data management of all sea turtle nesting activities
 - HCP permitting (Horseback riding, 4x4 permits, commercial fishing)
 - Management of law enforcement data
 - Daily HCP support
- Environmental Specialist (lighting management) responsibilities include:
 - Beach Lighting Officer duties throughout the sea turtle nesting season
 - Nighttime building inspections year round
 - Daily HCP support
 - Nighttime management of seasonal Assistant Beach Lighting Officer and HCP Field Technicians
 - Assistance with beach gate closures and rut removal procedures
- HCP Field Technician responsibilities include:
 - Beach gate closures
 - Routine patrols of beach to educate public
 - Removal of debris and ruts at and near sea turtle nests
 - Application of stickers to beach gear

Assessment: The purpose of the Environmental Supervisor is to provide professional leadership to all aspects of sea turtle and AIBM management of County beaches. A large part of the daily implementation of the HCP depends on positive and daily working relationships with all levels of staff. Effective communication is critical to daily implementation.

Environmental and beach management staff work closely together to accomplish daily task and to fully implement the HCP. The working relationship between Environmental and Beach Services staff is crucial for the success of beach management and the HCP. Daily communication remains a crucial part of the daily activities.

Program Improvements: Over the years the HCP has reached a level of consistency and symmetry. Program improvements include additional training for the implementation of the HCP as well as more precise record keeping.

Implementation Measures: Data and Records Management

Implementation: The Environmental Supervisor, Environmental Specialists, Beach Services Superintendent, HCP Field Technicians, and Law Enforcement personnel collect data on daily log sheets that document HCP activities thus allowing the County to evaluate its HCP performance. MTPs and their volunteers record nesting data on daily nesting sheets as provided by the County and nesting activity is provided weekly through an online reporting program. Additionally, sea turtle patrol reports Beach Code and HCP violations via phone, text or email messaging.

Assessment: Each nesting season data collection is done so at many different levels and inputted into extensive spreadsheets. As each season passes the continued evaluation and analysis of the data allows for modifications and improvements over each subsequent nesting season.

Program Improvements: As management of data continues to improve so will the response to management of beach and HCP related activities. St. Johns County continues to find ways to stream line data collection.

Implementation Measures: Enforcement and Coordination of Enforcement

Implementation: The Environmental Supervisor works closely with the Beach Services Superintendent and the Sheriff's Department Beach Law Enforcement Coordinator and supporting staff to achieve compliance with the HCP and ITP. Additionally supplemental staff provides an increase in the education and enforcement capabilities of the HCP and ITP. Part time HCP Field Technicians conduct routine visits to problem areas where law enforcement are not available for regular patrols. If during these visits compliance could not be achieved then law enforcement is requested to assist.

Assessment: The enforcement of the HCP and ITP, although challenging due to the length of the beach and the volume of visitors, is in a stable state. Consistent levels of enforcement are due to reliable team efforts. Thus, allowing the Habitat Conservation Section to identify problem areas to target for additional education and enforcement. This is accomplished by conducting routine patrols of area beaches on mules or ATVs for the purpose of educating and removing debris from the beaches.

Program Improvements: The Environmental Supervisor will continue to work with the Beach Services Superintendent and the Sheriff's Office to maintain compliance with the HCP and ITP. The consistent law enforcement presence will continue to improve the amount of information received in relation to the HCP and ITP. St. Johns County will also continue to find new ways to stream line data collection for the different levels of staff.

SECTION 6: PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAM

Applicable 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."

Implementation: In April of each year a press release is created to provide members of the public information regarding the upcoming sea turtle nesting season. This information is sent by the County Public Relations Officer in the form of a Public Service Announcement that is distributed to multiple media outlet including the St. Johns County website (<http://www.sjcfll.us>), social media outlets and on the Reach the Beach application offered by the County. The website has a whole stream of information that provides citizens and visitors with an understanding of the role of the HCP as well as detailed information regarding beach access, permitting, special events, beach lighting management, as well as protected species and their habitat.

Each beach access has varying types of educational signage installed throughout St. Johns County. Each sign is either made of custom text and photos developed by staff or taken from posters offered by state and federal agencies. Their location is so that they capture the beach goer as they enter the beach while their purpose is to provide necessary education material that relates to natural resource protection.

The Division of Beach Services is responsible for implementing a special event permitting process. The purpose behind this permitting authorization is to ensure that special event permittees are following the rules based on the Beach Code and HCP. Through this process they are provided with a rules and regulations informational sheet and special conditions are written into their permit based on the type of event that is being requested.

To further compliment the HCP and its public outreach program staff and Natural Resource Deputies from the Sheriff's Department attend and conduct workshops throughout the year. They are mostly done so at the request of clubs and organizations but allow the County to provide important information on coastal conservation, sea turtle nesting activities and other important information.

Assessment: Information regarding the HCP, Endangered Species Protection Program, volunteering, beach lighting, and Beach Services available on the County Web Page at <http://www.co.stjohns.fl.us/Environmental/HCP.aspx>. From this link users can visit other pages that pertain to the beach. It 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.

Brochures/Pamphlets

Beach Lighting Officers distributed multiple types of education material to local restaurants, hotels, resorts, property management groups and other interested organizations throughout the month of April and intermittently throughout the season. Staff successfully distributed 6,662 brochures, 36 magnets, 216 table tents, 425 flyers, 685 stickers, and 92 pieces of education material from the Sea Turtle Conservancy. These materials are specific to the HCP and coastal wildlife conservation efforts.

Education Programs

Education tables are set up at various festivals throughout the year, including but not limited to, Arbor Day Festival, Full Circle Festival, Bartram Bash, Ocean City Kids Day, Libraries, St Johns County Head Start programs and the St. Johns County Science Technology Engineering Mechanical (STEM) Fairs. It is estimated that approximately 5,000 visitors visited the HCP educational table at these events.

Beach Access Signs

Additionally, signage was used this past season that ranged from sharing the seaside, sea turtle season, beach lighting, North Atlantic right whale, wrack line, and wildlife viewing signs. Each season signage was switched out to reflect coastal wildlife and their habitat.

Special Events

Upon approval of a special event each applicant received a beach etiquette flyer and permit conditions that reflect HCP and Beach Code regulations. A breakdown of the events is located below:

- Total events: 434
 - 428 Minor/ 6 Major

- Special requests before 8 am on driving beaches:
 - 11 Minor/ 0 Major

- Special requests before 9 am on non-driving beaches:
 - 13 Minor/ 0 Major

- Total CSAB: 127
 - 126 Minor/ 1 Major

*Major impact events (200 persons or more) **Minor impact events (199 or less)

Program Improvements: New materials and information are constantly being scheduled and reviewed for updates and improved locations.

SECTION 7: ELEVATING TRASH RECEPTACLES

Applicable ITP Condition - G.2.b.

- b. Elevating Trash Receptacles. “By May 1 of the first full nesting season following the issuance date of this Permit, the Permittee shall locate all County-placed trash receptacles within the Plan Area on elevated posts at the seaward boundary of the Conservation Zone throughout the Plan Area, except from the north jetty of St. Augustine Inlet south and west to the Tolomato River (commonly known as Porpoise Point area) where the trash receptacle posts and associated Conservation Zone signage shall be no closer than 30 feet from vegetated dunes or coastal structures.”*

Implementation: County trash receptacles located on Anastasia Island and north of the St. Augustine Inlet extending north to Ponte Vedra beach are elevated on posts in the locations as mentioned above. High use areas have been installed with a combination system of both a trash and recycling can elevated on one post. Conservation Zone (CZ) signs are installed on the wooden post between the cans and are maintained throughout the season.

Assessment: The existing trash can system continues to be a successful method in decreasing the amount of trash left on the beach. This system has been extended for use near all public walkovers, some private and more highly used walkovers, and most of the beach front parks where AIBM have historically been documented or are suspected to have populations. Those parks include Spyglass parking area, Crescent Beach Park, Frank Butler Park East, Gloria Avenue parking, and Pope Road beach access parking lot which is located directly adjacent to the entrance of Anastasia State Park where substantial AIBM habitat has been documented. In addition, all trash cans that were located on the ground at each beach access ramp on Anastasia Island have been removed to discourage AIBM from entering outside of their habitat boundaries and possibly into residential and disturbed areas.

Program Improvements: No improvements are scheduled at this time.

SECTION 8: CONSERVATION ZONE

Applicable 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.”*

Implementation: Where regular beach driving occurs outside of the restricted driving areas the Conservation Zone (CZ) line is adjusted based on the accreting and eroding dunes. The CZ boundary is established by measuring the distance from the seaward edge of permanent line of dune vegetation, toe of dune or armoring structure (i.e. seawall, revetment, etc.) to the required length. As specified in the condition above the width of the CZ varies depending on the beach location:

North and South Beaches

On the northern beaches CZ posts start approximately 100 feet north of the Vilano Road beach access ramp and approximately 15 feet seaward extending south to the Vilano jetties.

South beaches are significantly broader in terms of management due to the length and vastness of the shore line as well as the extremity of tidal fluctuations. CZ posts are increased with an increased number of posts immediately North and South of each vehicular access ramp and in areas where congestion frequently occurs. The CZ line begins in the City of St. Augustine Beach at A Street vehicular access and extends south to Fort Matanzas National Monument vehicular access ramp.

Porpoise Point

Porpoise Point is the only beach in St. Johns County that has a 30 foot CZ requirement as all other beaches have a 15 foot CZ. This CZ is assumed to run from the Vilano jetties and extends south and west to the Tolomato River. Due to the extremely dynamic nature of the area it changes with each tide and storm event causing the sands to shift, loss of signage, inland areas to periodically become inundated with water.

Assessment: Conservation zone alignment is assessed throughout the winter and spring months. As conditions change the CZ line is adjusted accordingly with periodic re-alignment, new posts, and signage.

North Beaches

Since the impacts of Hurricane Matthew (2016) then Hurricane Irma (2017) and most recently Hurricane Dorian (2019) Vilano and Porpoise Point have fluctuated frequently with available width of beach. More especially Porpoise Point has experienced severe erosion, accretion, tidal inundations, and severe flooding. Thus, eliminating beach driving access on a temporary basis until the area restores to a suitable and legal width for driving. Vilano was reopened to driving on November 24th allowing for regular access. Prior to opening the CZ was re-aligned to help with management of the vegetation and driving.

Porpoise Point

The images below paint the picture of the variability with continuous fluctuations in accretion, erosion, uncertain tidal variabilities, and engineered events the County continues to have difficulty in maintaining a required 30 foot CZ. During these variations in beach driving conditions whether unintentional or intentional illegal activity occurs in the supposed 30 foot CZ area. The management of the CZ under these circumstances has the potential to risk public safety as soft sand conditions and flooded areas cause the loss of CZ signage and portions of vegetation washing to the ocean.

Image 1. Porpoise Point (February 13, 2012)



*Sheriff's department helicopter imagery

Image 2. Porpoise Point (August 29, 2018)



*Sheriff's department helicopter imagery

Image 3. Porpoise Point (September 11, 2019)



South Beaches

Following the impacts of each storm event including both hurricanes and Nor'easters the CZ is reviewed and re-aligned according to the vegetation line as necessary. In the spring of each year prior to the sea turtle nesting season and after the large wind events have subsided the CZ is supplemented with additional signage any unnecessary gaps and prevent unintended illegal access.

Program Improvements: Adjustments to the CZ line are critical to accommodate protection of the vegetation, a legal driving lane and space for parking. County staff will continue with moving, realigning and documenting as necessary to ensure full implementation.

SECTION 9: FOUR WHEEL DRIVE TRAINING PROGRAM

Relevant ITP Conditions - G.2.h. and G.2.o

- 2.h. *Four-Wheel Drive Training Program.*** *The Permittee shall ensure members of the public seeking a County North Beach Vehicle Access Permit to drive north of the Vilano Road beach ramp complete training specified in Condition 11.G.2.o prior to the issuance of such permit.*
- 2.o. *HCP and Protected Species Training.*** *Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this Permit, the Permittee shall develop and provide for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service review and approval a training program. Such program shall provide information regarding applicable HCP conditions and Permit terms and local ordinances necessary to assist individual members of the public in understanding beach driving restrictions provided pursuant to this Permit. The Permittee shall implement use of the HCP and Protected Species Training Program within two (2) months of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval. The Permittee may amend such program both prior to and after its implementation upon review and approval of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*

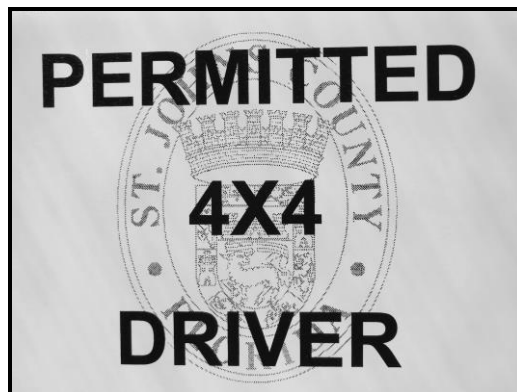
Implementation: North beach four-wheel drive permittees are required to complete an online HCP and Protected Species training, an application, as well as display a current annual pass on their vehicle windshield. Upon completion of the training, staff conducts a vehicle inspection to verify the applicant's vehicle make/model/color, tag number, windshield-affixed annual pass number, and confirm the four-wheel drive vehicle. Permittees receive an orange permit that must be hung from the permitted vehicle's rearview mirror and two yellow magnetic placards to be adhered to the permitted vehicle's sides when driving the beach, the inspector's business card (gate lock combination on back), and a map of the driving area boundaries. The inspector verbally reiterates the potential challenges that may be encountered in the driving area and stresses the sensitivity of the driving conditions related to tides. The completed hangtag permit displays a signature from the Environmental Supervisor, permit number, tag number, and expiration date; the backside of the hangtag displays HCP rules/regulations and the Sheriff's Non-Emergency number to dispatch Natural Resource Deputies in the event of observed violations or animals in distress.

Assessment: There is currently no fee for the permit; the permit is valid for a single calendar year from the date of the training. Recreational access was re-established August 2019. Permits were issued for the 2019 calendar year (Table 13).

Table 13. North Beach Permit Summary

Year	Total Permits Issued	Vehicle Inspections	Renewed Permits
2007	40	39	1
2008	63	48	15
2009	101	48	53
2010	147	78	69
2011	161	76	85
2012	117	58	59
2013	100	64	36
2014	81	46	27
2015	107	64	43
2016	93	56	37
2017	0	0	0
2018	0	0	0
2019	9	9	0

Image 4. Yellow Magnetic Placard



Program Improvements: The permit application was updated to require initial acknowledgement of all permit conditions; notably access at high-tide or mid-high tides are prohibited, all vehicles must remain below the high tide line at all times, and access terminates at the Southern Boundary of the Serenata Beach Club. The Protected Species online training PowerPoint presentation was updated to reflect the aforementioned changes and was made printable for individuals without computer proficiency. There are no other improvements scheduled at this time.

SECTION 10: BEACH LIGHTING

Relevant ITP Condition - G.2.k.

k. Beach Lighting Management Plan. “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 comprehensive Beach Lighting Management Plan that unifies local and county codes regarding management of beach-front lighting in accordance with actions described in Chapter 7 of the HCP. Beginning May 1 during the first full nesting season following the issuance date of this Permit, the Permittee shall implement such Plan. The Permittee may amend the approved Beach Lighting Management Plan both prior to and after its implementation upon review and approval of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”

Implementation: The Beach Lighting Management Plan is located in the St. Johns County Land Development Code, Article IV. Routine enforcement and education of the Beach Lighting Management Plan is done so by a year round Beach Lighting Officer and one part time assistant employed by the Environmental Division. The Beach Lighting Officer follows a routine approach each year by informing coastal residents, property management companies, resorts, hotels, beach front businesses and visitors that sea turtle season is approaching and lighting rules and regulations are in effect. This is done so through routine education efforts, routine nightly surveys, and home inspections.

Community Education Effort

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| April | An informational post card is sent to all beachfront property owners, managers and representatives providing information on the sea turtle nesting season. Additional literature such as brochures, table tents, magnets, door hang tags, flyers, window decals and light switch stickers are hand delivered by the Beach Lighting Officer to hotels, resorts and property management companies. |
| April | Florida Power and Light (FPL) is contacted regarding street lights that need to be brought into compliance by May 1 st . |
| April | Public Service announcements sent to Government TV and area Media Outlets regarding sea turtle nesting season and the Beach Lighting Management Plan. |
| May – Oct | Beach Lighting Officer(s) conduct nightly surveys of coastal properties, issuing Alert of Violations (AOV) for any non-compliant lights. Included with each AOV are recommendations to bring offending lights into compliance. Throughout the season there is continued contact with FPL discussing issues arising with customer complaints and any additional FPL lights that may have during the course of the season become a problem due to new construction, beach profile changes or landscape changes. |

Formal Education Programs

Education tables are set up at various festivals and workshops throughout the year, including but not limited to, Arbor Day Festival, Full Circle Festival, Ocean City Kids Day, St Johns County Head Start programs and the St. Johns County Science Technology Engineering Mechanical (STEM) Fairs. A traveling display with sea turtle friendly lighting is used to demonstrate examples and modifications for coastal properties as well as information on how to identify sea turtle nesting activities. It is estimated that approximately 5,000 visitors visited the HCP educational table at these events. These events also allow for the distribution of educational material for people to take home. Over 8,000 different types of educational material were given out during the events to local condominiums, hotels, and resorts (see Section 6: Public Awareness Program).

This season continued with an expansion of the environmental education program through summer camp, after school, field trips, and new partnerships. Newly added programs included two one-week summer camps, after-school programming, in-school visits, and continued partnerships with Fort Matanzas National Park, St Johns County Parks and Recreation as well as a new partnership with Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network (FYCCN).

- Habitat Conservation along with Parks and Recreation provided two one-week Environmental Summer Camps
- Expansion of the summer camp programming through continued education in after school programs
- Multiple beach clean ups throughout the year
- Sea turtles and ocean plastics program for 400 head start students
- Formed new partnership with FYCCN to provide fishing poles and tackle to 50 kids who attended the Environmental Summer Camps

New Construction

All properties must pass a nighttime lighting inspection prior to receiving a Certificate of Occupancy (CO). The Building Department reviews permit applications and building plans for new construction. If through this process they find that a property is subject to the sea turtle lighting requirements a “hold” is placed on the property thereby alerting the permittee that a lighting inspection will need to take place prior to the approval. The permittee is then responsible for contacting the beach lighting officer to obtain approval of any proposed lighting prior to its installation. The beach lighting officer then works with the contractor or property owner throughout the construction phase by conducting site visits and offering guidance of compliant lighting. At the conclusion of installation a final nighttime inspection is required after sunset and from the surface of the beach. If the property is in compliance the beach lighting officer approves the property through an online tracking method allowing the property to receive a CO from the Building Department. If the property is not in compliance and has resulted in a “failed” inspection the CO is withheld until the property is re-inspected and determined to be in full compliance.

Existing Construction

During the months of March and April the beach lighting officer gathers information relative to non-compliant FPL Street Lights. Nighttime surveys begin each May and continue nightly during the sea turtle nesting season and until the last nest has been evaluated. Properties not in compliance with the ordinance are documented on an “Alert of Violation” (AOV). The AOV is posted at the property with instructions to turn off or disable all non-compliant lights and to contact the Habitat Conservation Section within 24 hours. Typically the offending property owner or manager will contact the officer the very next day to report that their property is in compliance. Failure to comply after the issuance of a second AOV, results in a “Letter of Non-Compliance.” The Letter is sent to the property owner as Certified Return Receipt and includes copies of the AOV’s. Failure to respond within the time specified results in a “Written Warning” sent to the property owner. If the property owner has not corrected the violation by the time specified results in a Uniform Code Citation pursuant to Sec. 162.21 F.S. Additional site inspections occur following each correspondence until the property is brought into compliance.

Complaint and Investigation Log

Complaints concerning potential lighting violations received from the public are recorded in a complaint and investigation log. The complaints are investigated within 24 hours of receipt. All findings regarding compliance or non-compliance are documented in the log and provided to the complainant at their request. Any violations noted are addressed in the same manner as previously indicated.

Assessment: Prior to the season, the beach lighting officer(s) spent quality time visiting with property managers and condo association leaders hand delivering brochures, pamphlets and flyers to resorts, hotels and condos. As in past years these individuals are very receptive to information and willing to pass out information to guests in the respective units.

As the season progressed and lighting concerns were being treated, an increase in flashlights and beach patrons on the beach at night became evident. This is much like seasons pasts as tourism increases throughout the summer months. Signage was placed at high use public walkovers and handed out to hotels to be placed where visiting people could see them to assist with public outreach and awareness.

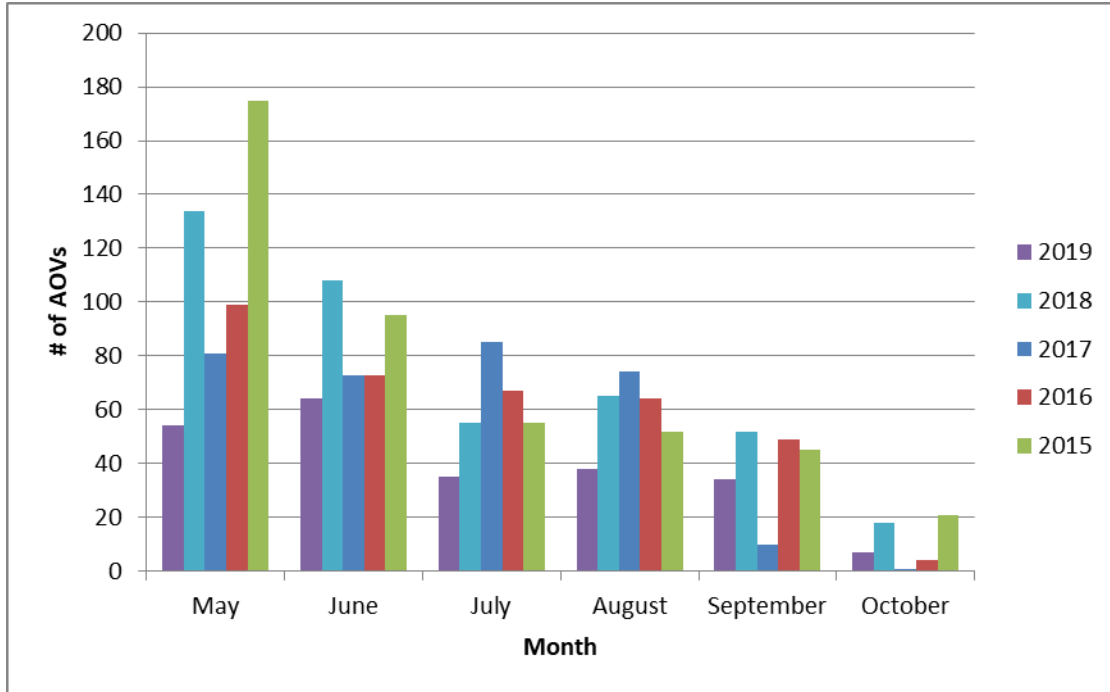
New Construction

A total of 23 nighttime inspections were conducted during the calendar year of 2019 by the Beach Lighting Officer.

Existing Construction

AOVs were hand delivered to the front door of residents and placed on the doorknob or gate entrance of each violating home by the Beach Lighting Officer. A total of 232 AOVs were issued and hand-delivered during the 2019 season (Graph 16).

Graph 16. Alert of Violations Summary



The distribution of AOVs fluctuated depending on the level of development and accessibility (Table 14 and Graph 16).

Table 14. Beach Lighting Percent Distribution

Zone	%	Beginning	End	Km	# of Violations
Zone 1	7%	49 Ponte Vedra Blvd.	Sawgrass Beach Club	5	16
Zone 2	6%	Sawgrass Beach Club	Old Ponte Vedra Condominiums	5.6	14
Zone 3	1%	Old Ponte Vedra Condominiums	GTMNERR	1.81	2
Zone 4	7%	2343 S. Ponte Vedra Blvd.	2683 S. Ponte Vedra Blvd.	6	17
Zone 5	12%	2700 S. Ponte Vedra Blvd. (Exxon Station)	4100 Coastal Hwy (Reef)	8.29	28
Zone 6	14%	4100 Coastal Hwy. (Reef Restaurant)	2 Viejo Rd. (Porpoise Point)	4.39	32
Zone 7	0%	Anastasia State Park	Anastasia State Park		0
Zone 8	29%	300 A1A Beach Blvd.	Crescent Beach Ramp	9.81	67
Zone 9	15%	Crescent Beach Ramp	Matanzas ramp North	6.22	34
Zone 10	9%	Summer Haven	9443 Old A1A	4.11	22
Total	100%			51.23	232

Program Improvements: The educational program has been expanding and will continue to do so with efforts from the beach lighting officer and natural resource deputies working together in the community to help educate our citizens and visitors. The continuation of data collection is being reviewed so that improvements can be made. The goal is to improve how the County educates property owners and if our means of communication is effective. Summer camps and going to the local schools for further education will be key factors moving forward. Further techniques to help with educating the tourist will be continued to be explored.

SECTION 11: BEACH DRIVING AT SUMMER HAVEN

Relevant ITP Condition - G.2.n.

n. Management of Beach Driving at Summer Haven. “The Permittee shall continue to maintain and manage a locked gate barricade along old U.S. A1A immediately south of the terminus of the existing rock revetment along the Atlantic Ocean coastline in the town of Summer Haven. Ingress and egress through such barricade shall only be authorized for owners and/or residents of homes along old U.S. A1A.”

Implementation: The barricade no longer exists as a breach in the dune system occurred on October 10, 2008, forming a new inlet which eventually filled with sand and created a thriving dune system where Least terns and gopher tortoises took up residence. The summer haven river has since been dredged before and after several storms creating a shaped dune that attaches to the existing rock revetment on the northern end. A new barricade has not been established since and the area is not accessible.

Assessment: Hurricane Matthew (2016) swept away any remnants of the roadway formally known as Old A1A. During Hurricane Irma (2017) which wiped out all of the installed sand fencing post Mathew and driving surface proved to help in delineating the driving surface from the beach. The existing sand fencing was installed again in April of 2018 (Images 5 and 6) and remained intact throughout the nesting season until the impacts of Hurricane Dorian which washed out portions sweeping sand fencing into ones front yard or in to the surrounding marsh. Residents of Summer Haven continue to gain access to their homes from the south entrance of Old A1A where the driving surface is delineated by the intermittent sand fencing and the imaginary line of the public right of way. The thin stretch of sand along Summer Haven hosts all three species of sea turtle nesting which is also butted up against the assumed driving surface. The amount of available nesting habitat in which nesting female sea turtles has can make the depositing of eggs challenging at best.

Image 5. Old A1A facing north (April 2019)



Image 5. Old A1A facing south (April 2019)



Program Improvements: St. Johns County will continue to work with other departments and agencies to create the best alternative to delineate the beach from the driving surface. This will ensure safe driving and suitable habitat for the protected species.

SECTION 12: HORSEBACK RIDING MONITORING PLAN

Relevant ITP Conditions - G.2.d., l. and o.

- d. Local Ordinance Amendments. “Within twelve (12) months of the effective date of this Permit, the Permittee shall amend applicable local ordinances as described in Chapter 7 of the HCP to ensure effective implementation of the HCP and terms of this Permit.”*
- l. Horseback Riding Monitoring Plan. “Within twelve (12) months of the effective date of this Permit, the Permittee shall develop and submit for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service review and approval a Horseback Riding Monitoring Plan as described in Chapter 7 of the HCP. Beginning no later than May 1 during the second full nesting season following the issuance date of this Permit, the Permittee shall implement such Plan. The Permittee shall ensure that each person, or in the case of a company providing horseback riding services, a representative of the company, complete training specified in Condition 11.G..2.o. The Permittee may amend the approved Horseback Riding Monitoring Plan both prior to and after is implementation upon review and approval of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”*
- o. HCP and Protected Species Training. “Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this Permit, the Permittee shall develop and provide for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service review and approval a training program. Such program shall provide information regarding applicable HCP conditions and Permit terms and local ordinances necessary to assist individual members of the public in understanding beach driving restrictions provided pursuant to this Permit. The Permittee shall implement use of the HCP and Protected Species Training Program within two (2) months of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval. The Permittee may amend such program both prior to and after its implementation upon review and approval of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”*

Implementation: In September 2006, a Horseback Riding Monitoring Plan, the proposed Ordinance amendments (Section 19: Local Ordinance Amendments) was approved. Each document introduced new horseback riding rules, and provided a tool in which the County was able to monitor the number of riders. The Horseback Riding Plan provides three different categories for permits; a Master Beach Equestrian Guide, a General Beach Equestrian Guide Class I and a General Beach Equestrian Guide Class II.

Training is available on an as-needed basis, either through a classroom training session or online. All Master Equestrian Beach Guide permit requests require approval by the Assistant County Administrator. Applicants shall provide documentation of their extensive riding experience on St. Johns County Beaches. Once approved, permittees are sent a small laminated permit that must be affixed to the external portion of their saddle bags and Master Guides are also provided two laminated day passes that can be issued to their guests.

The Board of County Commissioners adopted Ordinance 2009-60 on December 15, 2009 allowing horseback riding from the northern border of the GTMNERR to the Duval County line between April 15th and September 15th of each year, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, Sunday, and Federal holidays. The Ordinance is effective in separating the

horseback riders from the sunbathers. Among other regulations, the most effective is the requirement of horseback riders to remain below the high tide line.

Education and Outreach: The annual in-classroom training was conducted at the St. Johns County Horse Council for their members, held in June of 2019. There were 30 attendees, and 25 who received permits from the event; members were able to dialogue about how to navigate the beach responsibly with their horses while respecting other beach-goers and sensitive habitat.

Access: Three access points are available for permitted equestrians to access the beach: Mickler's Landing, Surfside Park, and Frank Butler Park East.

North of St. Augustine Inlet Beaches

Mickler's Landing Access 1109 ½ Ponte Vedra Blvd.

- November 1 – April 14
Ride 7 days a week. No time restriction.
- April 15 – April 30
Monday-Friday: No time restriction.
Saturday, Sundays & Federal Holidays: Ride before 9am & after 5pm
(tides permitting)
- May 1 – September 15
Monday-Friday: 8am-7:30pm
Saturday, Sundays & Federal Holidays: Ride between 8am-9am or 5pm-7:30pm
(tides permitting)
- September 16 – October 31
Ride 7 days a week, 8am-7:30pm

Surfside Park Access 3070 Coastal Hwy.

- May 1 – October 31
Ride 8am-7:30pm
- November 1 – April 30
Ride 7 days a week. No time restriction

South of St. Augustine Inlet Beaches

Frank Butler Park East 5860 A1A S. / Overflow Parking at 5780 Gloria Ave.

- Open for Rides: November 1 to Designated Spring Break (Usually mid-March; changes annually).
- Closed for Rides: Designated Spring Break to October 31

Sea Turtle Nesting: Sea turtle patrol volunteers are responsible to document when horse tracks are present on the beach in front of a nest on the morning of a nesting event as well as when the nest hatches. Out of the 1145 nests documented, no emergence event was reported to have had interaction with horse tracks present (note: not all indications of the presence of horse tracks were marked on nesting data sheets). When horse track information is not provided, the County is not able to evaluate the impacts of horseback riding.

Assessment: For calendar year of 2019 a total of 104 General Equestrian and no new Master Equestrian permits were issued (Table 15). Additionally, and upon request by the equestrian permit holders, the County will replace a permit for various reasons such as lost or damaged permits.

Table 15. Horseback Riding Permit Summary

Year	General	Master	Total
2007	111	30	141
2008	6	80	86
2009	102	5	107
2010	100	0	100
2011	81	0	81
2012	82	0	82
2013	92	0	92
2014	85	0	85
2015	142	0	142
2016	104	0	104
2017	114	0	114
2018	115	0	115
2019	104	0	104

Program Improvements: The St. Johns County Beach Code 2007-19 continues to be under review for formal updates.

SECTION 13: DAYTIME NESTING & HATCHING EVENTS

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.”

Implementation: In September 2006 a Daytime Nesting and Hatching Events Protocol was approved by the USFWS.

Assessment: Although 2019 was a record breaking year for nesting with 1,145 nests there were no daytime nesting or hatching events recorded.

Daytime Nesting Events: None to report

Daytime Hatching Event: None to report

Program Improvements: Communication between the MTPs, beach management, and the Sheriff’s department will continue to be an important part of the daily routine.

SECTION 14: COASTAL CONSTRUCTION

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.”*

Implementation: The Environmental Division and Beach Services works with the County Engineering, Planning and Building Departments, 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 coastal construction for their homes the above mentioned agencies have the opportunity to comment or contribute by applying conditions that are meant to reduce impacts to the natural resource. From the County, a building permit must be applied for. If coastal construction access is preferred by the contractor to complete the work an HCP coastal construction access permit must be obtained from the Habitat Conservation Section. This is approved after the completion of HCP and Protected Species Training which can be done online or in a class room setting.

Contractors are required to provide a completed St. Johns County permit and provide the following information:

- Contractors name/company and contact information
- Construction address
- Requested location for access
- Type of equipment
- Type of construction
- Construction dates
- Copy of DEP permit

Permit conditions include the following:

- Driving below high tide line
- Removal of ruts left from equipment
- Leaving beach in clean condition
- Non-disturbance of coastal wildlife and the habitat

- Coordination with FWC MTP if conducted during sea turtle season as permitted based on an emergency
- Authorized location for access to the beach
- If County access is requested a user agreement is required
- Expiration date

Assessment: Coastal construction access permits were issued for the installation of seawalls, repairs to stairs, surveys for future re-nourishment projects,, installation of sand fencing and geotubes. As in years past there had been request for coastal construction access during sea turtle season based on emergency conditions. However, this past season all construction projects were completed prior or picked back up post season. Throughout this time a total of 23 coastal construction access permits were issued. Refer to Appendix A for a complete list of coastal construction access permits.

Program Improvements: The County will continue to communicate with the County Engineering, Planning, and Building Departments as well as the DEP, FWC, USFWS to collaborate on coastal projects.

SECTION 15: SANITATION COLLECTION

Relevant ITP Condition - G.1.h.

***h. Sanitation Collection.** “From May 1 to October 31, each year, trash collection shall be authorized only after completion of daily sea turtle nest surveys on beaches containing trash receptacles and until 8:00 p.m. Between November 1 and April 30, each year, access is not limited. The Permittee shall require that any sanitation collection vehicle driver complete training specified in Condition 11.G.2.o.”*

Implementation: The County employs the services of a local trash collecting business, Beachcombers, that has been in a contractual agreement since the inception of the HCP. These years of experience on both driving and non-driving beaches demonstrates a seamless effort to operate under the rules of the HCP while carrying out the required duties. Operators of the sanitation vehicles are prohibited from entering the beaches May 1st - October 31st prior to 8:00 a.m. or before sea turtle patrol has finished their morning surveys which ever occurs last. Furthermore, they are prohibited from entering the Conservation Zone while conducting their daily duties on the beach. The trash contractor uses one truck to collect the trash from cans on driving beaches and is allowed access to Mickler’s beach through the sandy entrance that is also used by Marine Rescue and horseback riders. In addition, ATVs are used to collect debris on both driving and non-driving beaches.

Assessment: St. Johns County retains a trash removal company through a contractual agreement since the inception of the HCP in 2006. Trash collection continued as it has in years past with minor challenges.

Program Improvements: No formal changes to trash collection management are proposed for 2019.

SECTION 16: RAMP GRADING

Relevant ITP Condition - G.1.i.

- i. Ramp Grading. "From May 1 to October 31, each year, the Permittee may authorize access for ramp grading equipment only after completion of daily nesting surveys on beaches where ramps exist and until 8:00 p .m. From November 1 through April 30, each year, the Permittee may authorize access for ramp grading equipment at any time."*

Implementation: Beach Services employs two heavy equipment operators who conducts ramp grading on eight vehicular access ramps. During the sea turtle season ramp grading is conducted every weekend on six South Beach Ramps and several times throughout the week in the afternoon hours. The northern beach access ramps located at Vilano Road and Genoa Road are done so very rarely throughout the year as they do not experience quite the erosion issue as the other ramps do. Ramp grading during sea turtle season occurs only after 8:00 a.m. and is typically completed by early afternoon thus not posing a threat to unmarked sea turtle nests or interfering with rut removal.

Assessment: No reports regarding negative impacts by the ramp grader were reported during the 2019 nesting season.

Program Improvements: No formal changes to ramp grading are proposed for 2019.

SECTION 17: PORPOISE POINT VEHICULAR DRIVING

Relevant ITP Condition – 7.3.3

7.3.3 *Redirecting Porpoise Point vehicular driving to allow re-establishment of natural dune features.* “*St. Johns County will barricade the interdunal driving lanes radiating from Porpoise Point Ramp and maintain a single traffic corridor from the ramp to the St. Augustine Inlet. Additionally, the County will place and maintain vehicular barricades and appropriate signage at the previous entrances to each interdunal driving lane. The barricades will be monitored and maintained by County staff until dune vegetation/windblown sand covers former driving lanes, and the barricades are deemed unnecessary. St. Johns County will mark the landward side of the driving area around Porpoise Point from the Vilano Ramp to the southwestern tip of Porpoise Point (with appropriate space for parking seaward of the 30-ft wide CZ). This traffic area will connect to the Porpoise Point Ramp. If a 30-ft wide CZ cannot be maintained around Porpoise Point due to high tides, storm surge, or other unusual event, public driving will be temporarily prohibited in this region. The Sheriff’s Department (in cooperation with Beach Rangers, if appropriate) will be responsible for enforcing these beach driving regulations.*”

Implementation: The HCP set a 30 foot CZ for the Porpoise Point area to address, “a potential AIBM [Anastasia Island beach mouse] and bird nesting habitat” (see HCP, Chapter 7, Section 7.2.8), therefore, Porpoise Point is the only area in St. Johns County that has a 30 foot CZ as all the other County beaches maintain a 15 foot CZ. The previously existing and radiating interdunal driving lanes were closed off completely by the summer of 2007 allowing for the vegetation and dune system to restore. Access to this stretch of beach parallels the St. Augustine inlet and sometimes can be obtained from both Vilano and Porpoise Point vehicular access ramps depending on the level of exposure on the jetties.

Assessment: During high tide or extreme weather events the area often becomes inundated with water due to fluctuating elevations in sand allowing water to enter the inland area flooding the Porpoise Point vehicular access ramp. Over the course of the last several years these dramatic differences in levels of tidal inundation have caused parts of porpoise point to be shut down completely to beach driving. When these events occur access becomes challenging to beach drivers and are sometimes forced to enter the indistinguishable 30 foot CZ. Additionally any established vegetation on the perimeter of the inland area is sometimes washed out almost completely. These combined conditions have proven to be difficult for the County to maintain a 30 foot CZ without risking public safety, losing CZ signs to the ocean or having unintentional activity to occur in the 30 foot CZ area (see Section 8: Conservation Zone and Section 20: Unforeseen Circumstances for more information).

Program Improvements: The County will continue to work closely with representatives from FWC and USFWS to improve management of protected species in this area. Potential change and a management plan for access to the beach and prohibition into the CZ are necessary to the area (see Section 20: Unforeseen Circumstances).

SECTION 18: HCP AND PROTECTED SPECIES TRAINING

Relevant ITP Condition - G.2.o.

- o. HCP and Protected Species Training. “Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this Permit, the Permittee shall develop and provide for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service review and approval a training program. Such program shall provide information regarding applicable HCP conditions and Permit terms and local ordinances necessary to assist individual members of the public in understanding beach driving restrictions provided pursuant to the Permit. The Permittee shall implement use of the HCP and Protected Species Training Program within two (2) months of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval. The Permittee may amend upon review and approval of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”*

Implementation: In September 2007 St. Johns County submitted to USFWS the required HCP and Protected Species Training procedure. The approved workshops include training for the MTPs, horseback riders, north beach 4x4 drivers and commercial fisherman. Training is completed through group workshops or online programming. Horseback riders, North beach 4x4 drivers, coastal construction and sea turtle patrol volunteers primarily use the online program while commercial fishermen typically attend class training. Washback volunteers are required to complete an online orientation program while also attending beach training. Any training attended by staff are done so in a classroom setting. Each program provides details of the HCP/ITP, how to identify protected species including other listed species not covered on the permit, policy and procedure, as well as completing a quiz at the conclusion of the training.

Assessment: Table 16 below outlines each of the attendees for 2018 HCP and Protected Species Training.

Table 16. Attendance for 2019 HCP and Protected Species Training Need Jades Info

Date	Source	Group	# of Participants
Multiple Dates	Online	Equestrian	104
Multiple Dates	Online	Coastal Construction	23
Not Available	Online	Marine Turtle Volunteers	24
2/20/2019	Classroom	Toll Operators	45
5/2/2019	Classroom	Marine Rescue	25
8/7/2019	Classroom	Commercial Fishing	7
Multiple Dates	Online/Classroom	Washback	200
Total			428

Program Improvements: The County will continue to update training as needed and as it pertains to the adaptive management style of the beaches. Furthermore, training will continue to be provided in all forms available for what best fits the stakeholder.

SECTION 19: LOCAL ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS

Relevant ITP Condition - G.2.d.

d. Local Ordinance Amendments. “Within twelve (12) months of the effective date of this Permit, the Permittee shall amend applicable local ordinances as described in Chapter 7 of the HCP to ensure effective implementation of the HCP and terms of the Permit.”

Implementation: In September 2006, the County submitted to USFWS proposed Ordinance amendments for approval. The St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners adopted a unified Beach Code Ordinance 2007-19, on March 27, 2007.

Additionally, St. Johns County updated its Beach Lighting Management Plan and incorporated the changes into the existing lighting requirements in the Land Development Code Article IV Section 4.019.

Assessment: Ordinance amendments to the Beach Code have allowed County staff, City Police and the Sheriff’s Department the authority to enforce HCP/ITP rules and regulations.

Program Improvements: The County will continue with public outreach programs to properly inform the public of policies and procedures of the Beach Code and HCP/ITP rules and regulations.

SECTION 20: UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES

Relevant ITP Condition – J.

J. Unforeseen Circumstances. *“Unforeseen and/or changed circumstances may become apparent either to the Permittee, the Permittee’s authorized agents, or to personnel of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For purposes of implementation of this condition unforeseen circumstances are defined as changes in circumstances affecting a species or geographic area covered by the HCP which could not reasonably have been anticipated by the HCP developers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the time of the HCP’s negotiation and development and that result in a substantial and adverse change in the status of the covered species. Changed circumstances are defined as changes in circumstances affecting a species or geographic area covered by the HCP that can reasonably be anticipated by HCP developers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and that can be planned for.*

“The Permittee and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acknowledge that even with the above detailed provisions for mitigating and/or minimizing impacts, circumstances could arise which were not fully anticipated by this Permit and which are considered unforeseen. Such circumstances may become apparent either to the Permittee or to personnel of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For purposes of implementation of this condition, unforeseen circumstances are defined as any significant unanticipated adverse change in the status of species, any significant, unanticipated adverse change in impacts of the activity or in other factors upon which the HCP and Permit are based, or any other significant new information relevant to the Permit and activity that was unforeseen by the Permittee and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that could give rise to the need to review the Permittee’s conservation program.”

Implementation: In 2012 St. Johns County submitted to USFWS a request for an “Unforeseen Circumstance” to revise the required 30 foot CZ (Section 8: Conservation Zone) to a 15 foot CZ which would be consistent with all other County beaches. At the time the combination of previous dredging activities of the St. Augustine inlet and the various levels of tides and storm activity has proven difficult if not impossible for the County to maintain a 30 foot Conservation Zone (CZ) without risk of public safety, losing CZ signs to the ocean or having unintentional activity occur in the 30 foot CZ area.

Assessment: As mentioned in previous Annual Reports the County still maintains its position to request modification of the CZ at Porpoise Point to a 15 foot CZ as it falls within the definition of minor and is consistent with the protection established for all of the beaches in the County, as it does not cause “new or significantly” different operations or effects and does not cause any additional “take”. The HCP set a 30 foot CZ for the Porpoise Point area to address, “a potential Anastasia Island Beach Mouse (AIBM) and bird nesting habitat.” The original analysis included in the HCP for the 30 foot CZ is no longer applicable as protection for AIBM is an unknown circumstance and can qualify within the 15 foot CZ the County continues to implement protections for the nesting birds that far exceed the idea of a 30 foot CZ. Additionally, on December 3rd, 2019 SJC staff with a representative of USFWS to discuss the necessity behind the installation of a CZ. It was collectively determined that the installation of a CZ is not necessary as its original intent was to protect sea turtle nesting habitat and since the area is

devoid of vegetation and dunes there is no nesting habitat to protect. It was agreed that the County would not be placing a CZ at Porpoise Point and that Beach Management signs would be used instead. Please refer to Appendix B to review the letter written to USFWS by SJC to confirm these findings.

Program Improvements: St. Johns County will continue with the active management of Porpoise Point based on the existing dynamic conditions such as tide heights and predicted storm events.

SECTION 21: FUNDING & FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

Relevant ITP Condition– N.

***Funding and Financial Commitment.** “The Permittee shall commit funds necessary to implement the terms and conditions of this Permit and provisions of the HCP. By March 31st of each year this Permit is in effect, the Permittee shall submit an HCP Operational Budget to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for review and approval. The HCP Operational Budget shall provide an itemized financial commitment sufficient to fund all terms and conditions of this Permit and provisions of the HCP.”*

Implementation: Money dedicated to implementation of the HCP/ITP is approved annually through a budget approval process at the requests of each County department. The fiscal year begins on October 1st and extends to September 30th of the following year but information provided in this report is done so on a calendar year basis. The HCP and ITP are currently funded through both the Environmental Division, which provides salaries for the Environmental Supervisor, Environmental Specialist and Technician, two seasonal staff and a limited amount of operating funds. The Beach Services Division provides funding for law enforcement personnel, additional salaries, and the bulk of the operational costs.

Assessment: The Beach Services Superintendent is tasked with the management of the Beach Services budget monies and works closely with the Environmental Supervisor to ensure compliance with the HCP and ITP. Direct support of the HCP/ITP is evident in the salaries of the Environmental Supervisor, Environmental Specialist, Environmental Technician(s), and HCP Field Assistants as well as partial salary support from the Beach Services Superintendent. Accessory support and operational costs are demonstrated in both Tables 17, 18 and 19. All funds expended to implement the conditions of the HCP/ITP have been included in current operational budgets of the Environmental and Beach Services Divisions.

Table 17. HCP/ITP Support Staff

Position	Duties	Department	Revenue Source	*Salary	% Contribution	% Actual Funds
Environmental Division Manager	Provides Administrative Support	Growth Management, Environmental Division	General Fund	\$135,905	5%	\$6,795.25
Beach Services Superintendent	Manages Beaches/Special Projects	Recreation & Parks	General Fund/Toll Revenue	\$85,325	50%	\$42,662.50
Beach Maintenance	2 full time	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$132,654	75%	\$99,490.50
City Police Beach Patrol	City Beach Patrol	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$55,867	100%	\$55,867.00
SJC Beach Patrol Natural Resource Deputies (NRDs)	County Beach Patrol	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$551,674	100%	\$551,674.00
Total						\$756,489

***Salary includes entire cost to county including contributions.**

Table 18. HCP/ITP Staff

Position	Duties	Department	Revenue Source	*Salary
Environmental Supervisor Full Time	Implements HCP/ITP	Growth Management, Environmental Division	General Fund	\$95,702
Environmental Specialist Full Time	HCP Support Staff	Growth Management, Environmental Division	General Fund	\$83,261
Environmental Technician Full Time	HCP Support Staff	Growth Management, Environmental Division	General Fund	\$86,116
Environmental Technician /Volunteer Coordinator Part Time	HCP Support Staff	Growth Management, Environmental Division	General Fund	\$11,000
HCP Field Assistants	Gates/Rut Removal	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$25,398
TOTAL				\$301,477

***Salary includes entire cost to county including contributions.**

Table 19. Operational Costs

Type	Department	Revenue Source	Funds
Communications	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$7,197
Insurance	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$6,956
HCP Maintenance	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$1,229
Equipment Purchase	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$0
Equipment Purchase	Tourist Development Council	*Category 3	\$5,699
HCP Maintenance	Tourist Development Council	*Category 3	\$11,476
Gas, Oil, Lubricants	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$31,901
Vehicle Maintenance	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$24,248
Total			\$88,706

Program Improvements: The current method of sharing funds and staffing is expected to continue. Therefore, no substantive changes to the budget or budgeting process are being discussed for 2019.

SECTION 22: ADDITIONAL CONSERVATION MEASURES

Shorebird Nesting Sites

The County responds annually to the possibility of shorebird nesting by monitoring Porpoise Point and Summer Haven 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 sometimes pre-posted to allow for safe arrival of nesting least terns (*Sternula antillarum*) or other shorebird species such as the Wilson's plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*). This protection of the area includes prohibiting vehicles and pedestrians, and dogs off leashes from entering the posted area to prevent any disturbance.

Porpoise Point

Posting at Porpoise Point has exemplified consistent management challenges because of the constant relocation of sand from high tide and storm events in relation with heavy vehicle use. These factors including the historic information that Least Terns had not nested at Porpoise Point for the past 4 years gave validity to not pre-post the area as in years past. No Least Terns were recorded at Porpoise Point as resting or nesting.

Summer Haven

Summer haven has experienced extreme changes from dredging of the summer haven river to consistent washouts following storms, accretion and erosion in various locations. Least terns and Wilson's plovers have utilized this area for seasonal nesting activity for the last six years. Pre-posting occurred with little nesting activity. St. Johns County routinely patrolled the area documenting nesting and resting birds but no confirmation of chicks. Volunteers from Audubon and staff from FWC made routine visits to conduct surveys and bird stewarding. Additionally, NRDs made routine visits to ensure that dogs off leashes and persons entering the nesting site were decreased.

Washback Program

The Washback program is designed to respond to post-hatchling sea turtle events in an effort to recover and rehabilitate before further negative impacts can occur. The beaches are broken down into individual zones and organized by volunteer coordinator, a designated zone captain and corresponding volunteers. Zone captains are responsible for contacting the volunteers that are available and providing the equipment needed to perform successful surveys. This program is much different from the sea turtle patrol program in that these volunteers are approved through the St. Johns County personnel department and have no set patrolling schedule as it is based on an as needed basis. FWC still provides the permits in which they are allowed to conduct such surveys. They are also required to attend annual training to effectively implement the approved protocol and to be qualified to handle and transport washbacks. Washback volunteers are invited to a general orientation meeting and required to participate in one mandatory training session on the beach. They are additionally trained on the biological importance of the organic wrack line

and natural debris as well as provided information on marine debris and its origin. Their surveys include not only surveying the wrack but to also collect and report marine debris.

Informational meetings and training dates

Mandatory Beach Scenario Trainings - Volunteers completed mock surveys on the beach and trained to process a Washback sea turtle.

- August 14th, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.
 - Surfside Beachfront Park, 3070 Coastal Highway.
- August 23rd, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.
 - Butler Beachfront Park, 5860 A1A South.
- August 28th, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.
 - South Ponte Vedra Recreation Area, 2993 S. Ponte Vedra Blvd.

Survey Summary

This year's washback season proved to be exciting and well attended with 200 dedicated volunteers both returning and new. Over the course of the season which concludes on November 30th washback volunteers completed 197 surveys recovering 21 live and 10 deceased washbacks from the beaches. The University of Florida Whitney Laboratory Sea Turtle Hospital in Marineland reported a total of 198 washbacks that were recovered from St Johns County beaches and a total of 359 overall were rehabilitated. While conducting surveys volunteers also removed an estimated 1,600 pounds of trash and just over 2,200 cigarette butts. They also recorded picking up other small pieces of small debris like bottle caps (1,840), glass & plastic bottles (260), Styrofoam pieces (301), and food wrappers (191). We are thankful for their time and dedication.

Program Improvements: There are no improvements scheduled for the 2020 season.

References

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Appendices

Appendix A: Coastal Construction Access Permits

SJC Permit Number	DEP Permit #	DEP Exp. Date	Contractor	Construction Address	Type of Construction	Authorized Access Point	Equipment Type	HCP Training Date	Start Date	Exp Date
CA19-001	8040063	4/30/2019	Hayward Construction Group, LLC	6970 A1A South	Replacement of 7 support posts on walkover	Crescent Beach Access	Crane Truck, E35, and dually truck with trailer	11/19/2018	1/10/2019	1/31/19
CA19-002	SJ 1492	7/19/2021	Yelton Construction Co, Inc.	3260 Coastal Hwy	Seawall construction	Surfside Beach Access	Excavator, yellow	1/1/2019	1/21/2019	4/1/19
CA19-003	SJ 1349	3/21/2021	Xtreme Builders, Inc	3121 S PVB	Seawall construction	3125 SPVB	Excavator, skid steer, mini excavator	11/20/2018	1/29/2019	3/29/19
CA19-004	SJ 1445	4/6/2021	Xtreme Builders, Inc	3123 SPVB	Seawall construction	3125 SPVB	Excavator, skid steer, mini excavator	11/20/2018	1/29/2019	3/29/19
CA19-005	SJ 1445	4/6/2012	Xtreme Builders, Inc	3125 SPVB	Seawall construction	3125 SPVB	Excavator, skid steer, mini excavator	11/20/2018	1/29/2019	3/29/19
CA19-006	SJ 1422	NA	Xtreme Builders, Inc	3127 SPVB	Seawall construction	3125 SPVB	Excavator, skid steer, mini excavator	11/20/2018	1/29/2019	3/29/19
CA19-007	SJ 1533 SJ 1308	4/16/2021	Hayward Construction Group, LLC	4412/4418 CHWY	Seawall construction	4412 CHWY	Trackhoe, Backhoe, Skidsteer, Truck Cran	11/19/2018	2/11/2019	4/30/19
CA19-008	SJ 1533 SJ 1308	4/16/2021	Hayward Construction Group, LLC	4412/4418 CHWY	Seawall construction	4412 CHWY	Trackhoe, Backhoe, Skidsteer, Truck Cran	11/19/2018	2/11/2019	4/30/19
CA19-009	SJ 1533 SJ 1308	4/16/2021	Hayward Construction Group, LLC	4412/4418 CHWY	Seawall construction	4412 CHWY	Trackhoe, Backhoe, Skidsteer, Truck Cran	11/19/2018	2/11/2019	4/30/19
CA19-010	SJ 1405	4/10/2021	Yelton Construction Co, Inc.	4100, 4124, 4106, 4092, 4080	Seawall construction	Usina Access Ramp	Excavator, skid steer, mini excavator	1/1/2019	4/3/2019	4/30/19
CA19-011	0295429-002-JC	9/26/2026	Aquatic Plants of Florida	16th Street - Sea Colony	Sea oat planting	A Street, 16th Street	Mules, hand held augers, and carts	3/6/2019	3/19/2019	3/22/19
CA19-012	SJ 1545	NA	Hayward Construction Group, LLC	4388 & 4400 CHWY	Seawall construction	4412 CHWY	Trackhoe, Backhoe, Skidsteer, Truck Cran	11/19/2018	3/12/2019	4/30/19

CA19-013	SJ 1593	2/20/2022	Kollar Bros., Inc.	2923 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	Seawall construction	Exxon and SPVB Rec area	Backhoe, skidsteer	3/14/2019	3/15/2019	4/30/19
CA19-014	SJ 1599	3/8/2022	Kollar Bros., Inc.	3043 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	Seawall construction	Exxon and SPVB Rec area	Backhoe, skidsteer	3/14/2019	3/21/2019	4/30/19
CA19-015	SJ 1445	4/6/2021	Extreme Homebuilders	3125 SPVB	Cleanup of construction materials	3125 SPVB	JCB excavator 131	11/20/2018	4/18/2019	4/30/19
CA19-016	SJ 1607	4/9/2020	Extreme Homebuilders	965 PVB	cleanup of construction materials	965 PVB	Skidsteer	11/20/2018	4/18/2019	4/30/19
CA19-017	SJ 1545 SJ 1533 SJ 1308	N/A	Hayward Construction Group, LLC	4388,4400,4418 ,4412 CHWY	Seawall construction/leveling dirt in front of seawall	Usina Access Ramp	Trackhoe and skidsteer	11/19/2018	4/28/2019	4/30/19
CA19-018	NA	NA	Surv Tech Solutions	Beach Surveys	Beach Surveys	Usina, Surfside, Vilano, St. Augustine Beach accesses	ATV	9/13/2019	9/14/2019	9/22/19
CA19-019	SJ 1551 SJ 1554 SJ 1556	NA	Kevin Worley	925, 929, 939, 941, 1001, 1025, 1029, 1065 - 1085 PV Blvd.	Geotube installation	Micklers	Bulldozer, excavator, trucks, trailers, booster pump, support equipment (ATV)	10/30/2019	11/1/2019	12/31/19
	SJ 1551 SJ 1554 SJ 1556	NA	Fish Tec Inc.		Geotube installation	Micklers	See above	10/30/2019	11/1/2019	12/31/19
CA19-020	SJ 1405	4/10/2019	Yelton Construction Co, Inc.	4100, 10th st., Euclid, NB Avenue	Seawall construction	Usina - per user agreement	Excavator, skid steer	1/1/2019	11/4/2019	2/28/2020
CA19-021	NA	NA	FDEP, Water Resources	DEP R-Monuments R-1 - R-76 and R-157 - R-209	Topographic surveys	Mickler's, ASP, South Beach ramps	ATV/Mules	11/4/2019	11/19/2019	12/6/19
CA19-022	NA	NA	Arc Surveying & Mapping	NA	Beach Surveys	Mickler's, ASP, South Beach ramps	ATV/Mules	12/2/2019	12/3/2019	12/31/19
CA19-023	SJ 1314	3/10/2020	LaConte Marine Construction	2975 SPVB	Seawall construction	2975 SPVB	Excavator	11/19/2019	12/13/2019	1/15/2020

Appendix B: Letter to USFWS regarding Porpoise Point Conservation Zone



St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

Growth Management Department

December 10, 2019

Mr. Jay Herrington
Field Office Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
7915 Baymeadows Way, Suite 200
Jacksonville, Florida 32256-7517

Re: Porpoise Point Conservation Zone, St. Johns County

Dear Mr. Herrington:

St. Johns County is experiencing an ongoing loss of habitat at Porpoise Point that makes it increasingly difficult for the County to maintain a Conservation Zone (CZ). Porpoise Point has been and continues to be negatively impacted by numerous events. In 2012, the Army Corps of Engineers removed sand from tidal and sub-tidal habitats along the shore at Porpoise Point in order to re-nourish the beach within the City of St. Augustine Beach. Additionally, Porpoise Point was impacted with a series of major weather events including Hurricane Matthew in 2016, Hurricane Irma in 2017, and Hurricane Dorian in 2019, and is impacted annually with nor'easters all of which has resulted in the total loss of dunes, a reduced amount of beach area and the bulkheading of the private properties. Due to these impacts and altered condition of the beach, the County contends the original rationale for establishing a CZ at Porpoise Point is no longer applicable and is requesting that the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and Incidental Take Permit (ITP) be amended to remove the requirement for the CZ at Porpoise Point.

ITP, Section K, HCP and Permit Amendment Criteria, reads, in part:

The Permittee and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agree that modification and amendments to the Permittee's HCP and this Permit may occur through its effective term. Either the Permittee or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may propose modifications and/or amendments to the HCP or this Permit by providing written notice. Absent any objection from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the Permittee, and provided such proposed modification or amendment does not fall within the limits of Condition 11.K.2, the proposed modification and/or amendment will be determined as minor and shall become effective upon written approval by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the Permittee.

4040 Lewis Speedway, St. Augustine, FL 32084 | P: 904.209.0579 | F: 904.209.0580

www.sjcfll.us

Mr. Jay Herrington

Condition 11.K.2 provides that only modifications that will not result in adverse effects on the environment that are new or significantly different from those analyzed in connection with the HCP or cause additional take of the covered species will be approved.

As set forth in the HCP, the purpose for the CZ at Porpoise Point was to address potential Anastasia Island Beach Mouse (AIBM) and shorebird nesting habitat (see HCP, Chapter 7, Section 7.2.8). AIBM are present on Anastasia Island but from, “2006 forward no mice have been captured on public lands north of the St. Augustine Inlet, although the mice may persist in very low numbers” (USFWS. 2011. Statewide Programmatic Biological Opinion for Shore Protection Activities along the Coast of Florida). The unfortunate reality is that the AIBM are not present at Porpoise Point as there are no dunes or suitable habitat remaining and tidal events regularly reach the bulkheaded properties making future dune formation remote. As well, as evidenced from the information in the 2011 report cited above, the existence of a population of AIBM north of St. Augustine Inlet that could contribute individuals to naturally repopulate Porpoise Point is not likely.

Further regarding shorebird nesting, the County responds each season to the possibility of shorebird nesting at Porpoise Point by pre-posting any viable location and monitoring for any indications of pre-nesting behavior. If there are indications that shorebirds are selecting Porpoise Point, the posted nesting habitat area is closed throughout the nesting season. This protection includes prohibiting vehicles and pedestrians for a large area of the beach that includes a portion of the beach going from the water’s edge and proceeding toward the CZ. It is the County’s observation that this expansion of a protected area beyond the CZ to accommodate nesting shorebirds is a more protective and effective approach than having the CZ.

Finally, as required by the HCP/ITP, Porpoise Point is surveyed throughout the sea turtle nesting season to protect any sea turtle nests laid in the area. Over the course of the thirteen years that the County has implemented the HCP/ITP, volunteers have documented only six sea turtle nests at Porpoise Point of which none were laid in the CV. Porpoise Point does not have traditional driving lanes such as those of the south beaches, therefore driving occurs on all portions of the beach outside of the CZ. In order to avoid impact to a nest, each nest was treated as an individual nesting event with the installation of several marking stakes and flagging tape around the nest site and then placing traffic safety cones outside and around the originally marked nest site making the site highly visible to passing vehicles and pedestrians. This same effort would continue, as it has in the past, treating each nest as its own event for its protection.

December 10, 2019
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It is the County's position that the request to modify the CZ at Porpoise Point falls within the definition of minor, as it does not cause new or significantly different operations or effects, and does not cause any additional take. St. Johns County is requesting that the HCP/ITP be amended to remove the requirement for the Conservation Zone at Porpoise Point and to continue with the operations described above as they have proved to be an effective protective method to prevent take of a protected species.

With approval of this request, the County will continue to monitor the conditions at Porpoise Point to promptly respond to any condition that may merit future consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Thank you for consideration of this request and if you need additional information please contact Jan Brewer at 904/209-0617 or jbrewer@sjcfl.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Michael J. Roberson".

Michael J. Roberson, Interim Growth Management Director
St. Johns County

Cc: Darrell Locklear, Assistant County Administrator

End of 2019 Annual Compliance Report