



**ST. JOHNS COUNTY
HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN
2022 ANNUAL COMPLIANCE REPORT
ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA**



Photo Credit: St. Johns County

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 Principal Permit Holders
NRDs	Natural Resource Deputies
RS	Restricted Species
PSAs	Public Service Assistants
SJC	St. Johns County
SJSO	St. Johns County Sheriff's Office
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. In its 16th year of compliance the HCP continues to provide 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 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, an 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 14th year of implementation.

The Annual Report was prepared by the environmental supervisor in conjunction with data obtained by the Marine Turtle Principal Permit Holders (MTPs), beach lighting officer, beach enforcement specialist, and other support staff. 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. This report summarizes programs, policies and procedures implemented by St. Johns County during 2022 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.

The nesting season of 2022 was a record-breaking with a recorded total of 1,235 nests; 1,149 loggerheads (*Caretta caretta*), 65 greens (*Chelonia mydas*), 15 leatherback nests (*Dermochelys coriacea*) and a special nesting event by a Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*). The executive summary refers to total number of nests (1,235) from county line to county line. However, with in the body of the report the nesting totals will refer to the summary of nests deposited on HCP managed beaches (1,230 nests) excluding Fort Matanzas National Monument from this total (unless otherwise noted). North East Florida experienced two tropical storms late in the season which fortunately did not impact the nesting nearly as bad as in years past. As a result, 70 nests were washed out and 83 of the in-situ clutches were not found. Both nesting and hatchling success rates are consistent with last year's percentages leading to an 87% nesting success rate and an 85% hatchling success frequency. With such an increase in overall nesting 69,329 hatchlings emerged from the sand of St. Johns County beaches.

Nests deposited on driving beaches accounted for 95 nests (8%), 1,079 nests (88%) on non-driving beaches and 56 nests (5%) on restricted driving beaches, with percentages representing the overall distribution of nesting. For the second year in a row, disorientations increased significantly this past season with a record year of 79 recorded observations.

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 total revenue increased from \$886,912 to \$1,292,074 throughout the 2022 toll season.

St. Johns County sea turtle patrol is coordinated by nine different permit holders and based solely on volunteer efforts with the exception of park rangers in Anastasia State Park. This is exclusive of any sand placement projects that require monitoring and additional permitting requirements. 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 other 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

St. Johns County HCP Background

Staff of St. Johns County annually prepare a 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 services supervisor, and the environmental specialists responsible for data management and management of the lighting program. The geographical information systems department in conjunction with data obtained from other county departments, and the MTPs also provided valuable data which are helpful in summarizing the activities and programs conducted on SJC beaches during the 2022 season.

Enforcement

Through a partnership with the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office (SJSO), 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 trainings that include information on HCP implementation, shorebird/seabird identification, marine mammal response, and sea turtle stranding training.

Marine Turtle Permit Program

A Section 6 agreement with the USFWS through the Endangered Species Act gives authority to the FWC in providing special authorizations to 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. The 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. Condition G.2.i. of the ITP outlines that a Standard Sea Turtle Monitoring Protocol (SSTMP) be 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

Beach access fees are collected from March 1st to Labor Day (weather permitting) where nine of the ten vehicular access ramps are manned by toll booth operators. Surfside Avenue beach access ramp is an unmanned ramp, secured with a combination lock, and is only accessed by a special use permit, law enforcement, and county staff. Use and conduct signs are located at the entrance of each beach access ramp. While at the conclusion of each toll collecting day, additional signage is placed by toll operators notifying visitors of times and dates for beach gate closures.

July 4th Event

From 8:00 a.m., July 4th until 1:00 a.m., July 5th, NRDs and additional 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

Authorized commercial fishermen are permitted to enter the beaches at designated vehicular access ramps if driving conditions allow for access. Permittees must complete HCP training, provide proof of FWC commercial fishing permit with a Restricted Species (RS) endorsement, as

well as provide a 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

The HCP necessitates that sea turtle patrol volunteers complete annual HCP training which is provided online. Training outlines the requirements of other user groups and the procedures of implementation of the HCP. Additionally, volunteer groups that drive to complete their daily surveys must obtain a special use permit. The permit application includes completion of protected species training, a copy of their FWC marine turtle monitoring permit, and a vehicle description. Permittees located on driving beaches are provided a beach gate key to access beaches before 8 a.m. when gates are officially opened by County staff.

Assessment: The beach is managed based on the legal framework outlined in the Beach Code and the stipulations provided in both the HCP and ITP.

Public Driving

Ten vehicular access ramps are depicted on Map Figure 1 with varying degrees of accessibility due to erosion and legal requirements for driving and parking. North beaches have been experiencing erosion for several years with intermittent closing of driving beaches. North beach 4x4 access now concludes at the Usina access, adjacent to the Reef Restaurant Parking Lot – 4100 Coastal Hwy and south to Surfside access decreasing the linear driving space from 5.7 to 2.1 miles. Vilano was closed to beach driving during in October 2022 due to lack of space for driving, parking, and a conservation zone. Porpoise Point continued to be opened and closed intermittently from accretion and erosion.

Vehicles continue to be allowed from A Street, Ocean Trace Road, Dondanville Road, Matanzas Avenue, Mary Street, Cubbedge Road (Crescent Beach access). While the ramp at Fort Matanzas National Monument is an exit only ramp with two-way traffic to and from Crescent.

Currently beach passes are sold as annual and daily passes with varying fees that relate to resident, non-resident, and handicap. Daily passes are sold at a flat fee of \$10 but at a discounted rate of \$5 for handicap. While annual passes are sold at a flat fee of \$50 for resident, \$100 for non-resident, and \$40 for handicap.

Table 1. Summary of Beach Passes Sold

Year	Total Daily Passes Sold	Total Annual Passes	Total 3 Day Passes	Twilight and Military	Total Amount	Vehicles entered
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	NA
2020	53,815	10,839	NA	NA	\$1,079,478	NA
2021	67,250	4,721	NA	NA	\$886,912	NA
2022	65,617	12,862	NA	NA	\$1,292,074	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.

Gate Openings

Vehicle access ramps were staffed with toll collectors from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm beginning on May 1 until mid-September.

Nighttime Gate Closures

Seasonal staff and law enforcement officers are tasked with closing beach gates. On weekends from Friday through Sunday, and on Federal Holidays, SJSO deputies were responsible for clearing the beaches. Deputies 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

The historic event of setting off fireworks from the downtown area of the City of St. Augustine allowed for visitors to remain on the beach until the conclusion of the fireworks display. At which point SJSO deputies cleared and secured the beach.

Commercial Fishermen

For the 2022 season, 11 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 2022 season. Due to technical challenges with the online portal it is unknown how many of the volunteers from each zone completed the training. Out of the twelve zones monitored by sea turtle patrol volunteers, eight of the organized groups obtained permits to drive and park on the beach for the purpose of surveying the beaches.

Program Improvements: The county will continue to work closely with all parties 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, chain and locks thus meeting Condition 11.G.1.b and c. They are locked during hazardous 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 deputies. Surfside Avenue is the only vehicle access ramp that is locked year-round.

Assessment: A new barricade was installed at the northern end of summer haven to allow residents on the north to access their homes when tides were too high for southern access.

Besides the occasional report of a gate found open upon arrival prior to 8:00 a.m. there were no reports of vandalized gates for the 2022 season.

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 an 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.

Survey Method

Per the SSTMP all nests on SJC beaches are 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 2).

Table 2. 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

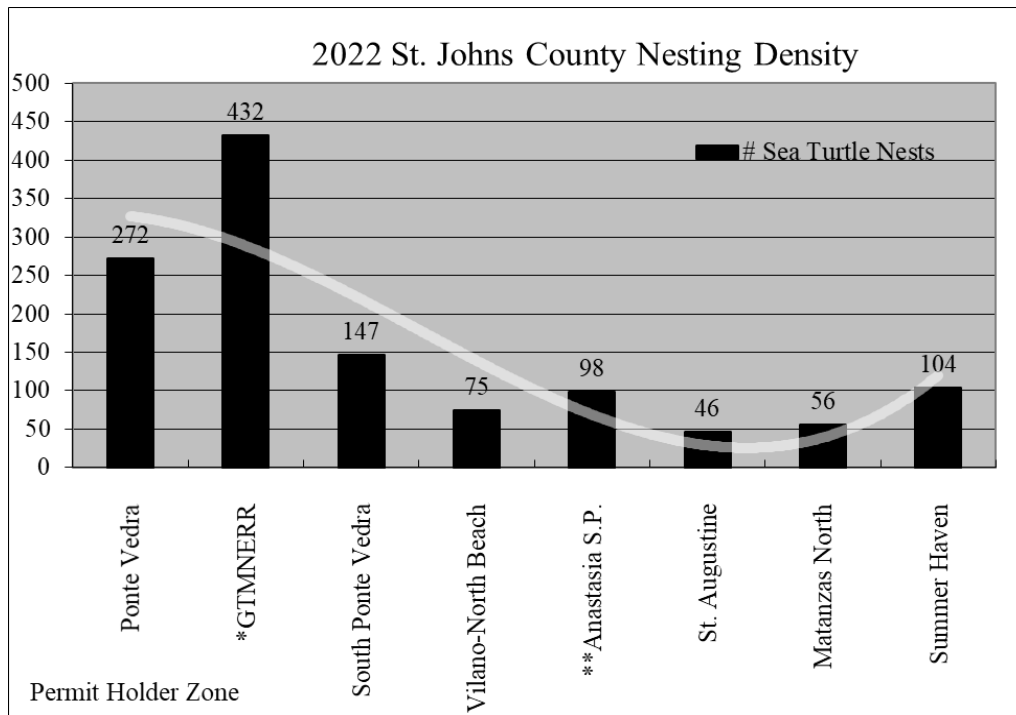
While maintaining the citizen-based scientific program collectively known as the volunteers of FWC the implementation of the HCP allows for a more formal approach to data collection. The county has been able to develop an online submittal system or volunteers may submit data in the form of a spreadsheet. This weekly summary includes number of nests, false crawl counts, nesting dates, species, estimated incubation periods, and GPS locations. Daily management of the beaches calls for consistent and continuous communication regarding nesting activity. This allows for protective decisions surrounding coastal permitting, beach lighting, and beach access. These combined efforts demonstrate the various methods it takes to manage the beaches, as well 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. While 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 sand placement projects. Although the nesting numbers fluctuate they exhibit similar annual nesting pattern (Graph 1). Fort Matanzas National Monument is not included in the HCP/ITP; therefore, they carry out their own surveys and data collection through coordination with FWC.

Graph 1. St. Johns County Nesting Density for 2021 Season ($n = 1,235$)

*Number includes Fort Matanzas National Monument



*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 beach access 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.

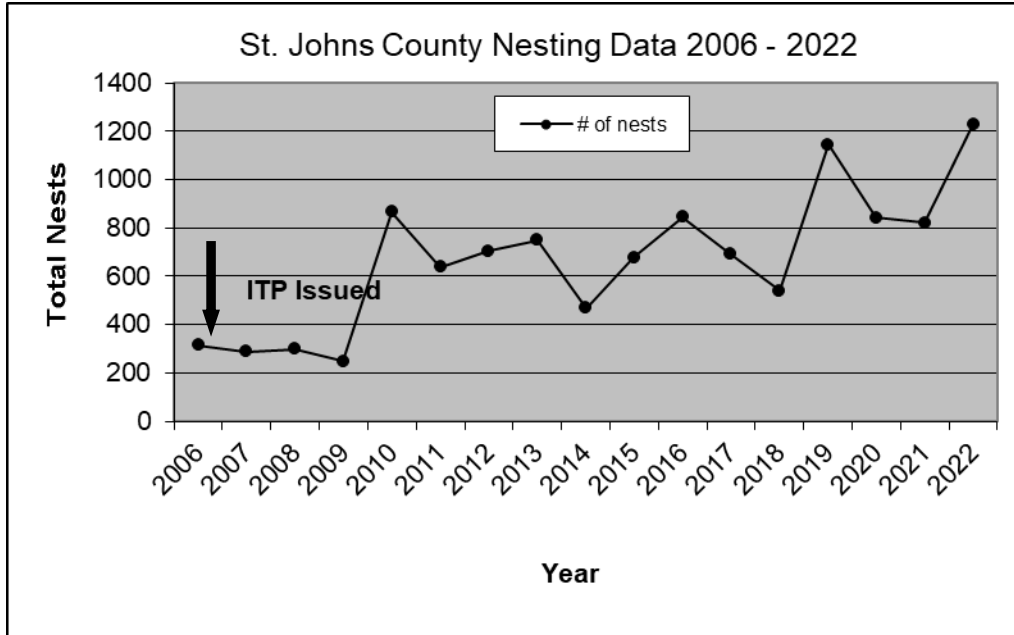
Summer Haven: FWC Permit #046 Matanzas South. This beach as it is commonly referred to as Summer Haven starts at Matanzas inlet south to the St. Johns and Flagler County line. Within this area are 2.56 miles (4.11 kilometers) of single-family homes and multiple construction projects such as a sand berm 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. 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, decreasing beachfront lighting, and modifying fishing gear to reduce bycatch. Collectively each documented sea turtle nesting species produced 1,230 nests. Both nesting and hatchling success rates are consistent with last year's percentages leading to an 87% nesting success rate and an 85% hatchling success frequency. With such an increase in overall nesting 69,329 hatchlings emerged from the sand of St. Johns County beaches. The loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) sea turtle continues to account for the largest distribution of nests with 1,149 nests, followed by the green (*Chelonia mydas*) with 65 nests. The leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) exhibited an average year with 15 nests and lastly a Kemp's Ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*) nest was reported this year. Annual nesting has remained at a steady level in comparison from 2006 to 2022 (Graph 2).

Graph 2. St. Johns County Nesting Data 2006-2022

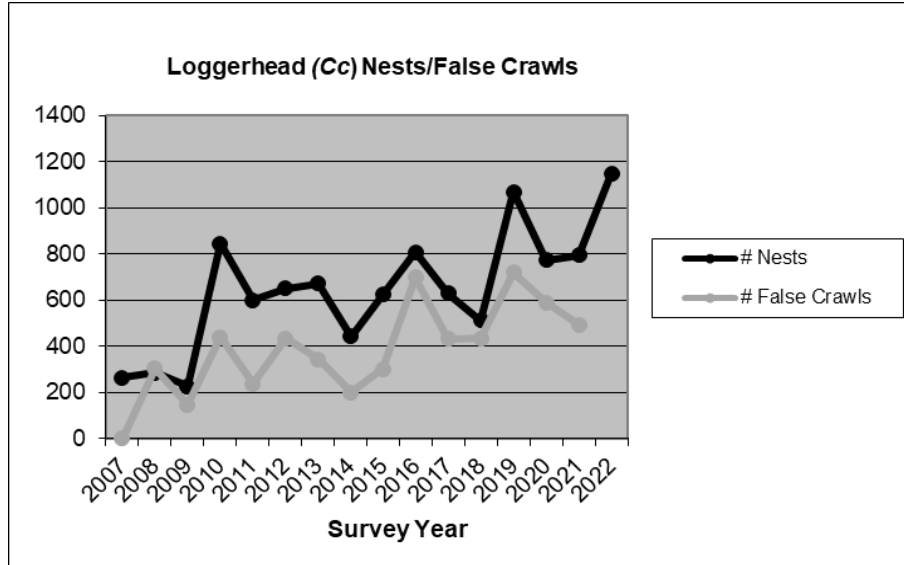


Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*)

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute from 1989 to 2022 a complex pattern with three distinct phases has been demonstrated: increase (1989 – 1998), decrease (1998-2007) and increase (2007 – 2022) of the loggerhead species (FWRI, 2021). St. Johns County annual nest counts continue to be in line with the long-term analysis of statewide nesting (Graph 3) with 1,149 nests.

- 1,149 nests recorded
- 1,010 nests hatched
- 52 washed out
- 75 clutches not found
- 104 relocated
- 86,164 hatchlings emerged
- Overall mean clutch of 93 eggs
- Range of 25 to 158 eggs
- 88% nesting success rate
- 85% hatchling success rate
- 54 days average incubation
- 1,077 false crawls

Graph 3. Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) Nests/False Crawls

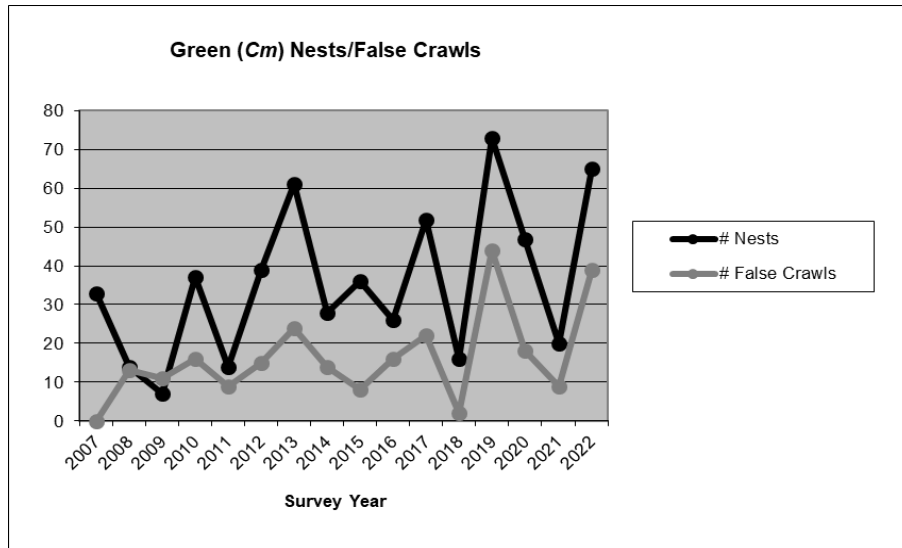


Green (*Chelonia mydas*)

As noted on the Sea Turtle Conservancy web page, 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 ([Archie Carr Refuge: Nesting Trends – Sea Turtle Conservancy \(conserveturtles.org\)](http://conserveturtles.org)). This over-all trend continues with wide fluctuations throughout the state (FWRI, 2021) and is also evident on the beaches of St. Johns County with 65 nests (Graph 4) compared to last year with 20 nests.

- 65 nests recorded
- 44 nests hatched
- 17 washed out
- 4 clutches not found
- 15 relocated
- 4,103 hatchlings emerged
- Overall mean clutch of 77 eggs
- Range of 42 to 178 eggs
- 68% nesting success rate
- 91% hatchling success rate
- 54 days average incubation
- 39 false crawls

Graph 4. Green (*Chelonia mydas*) Nests/False Crawls

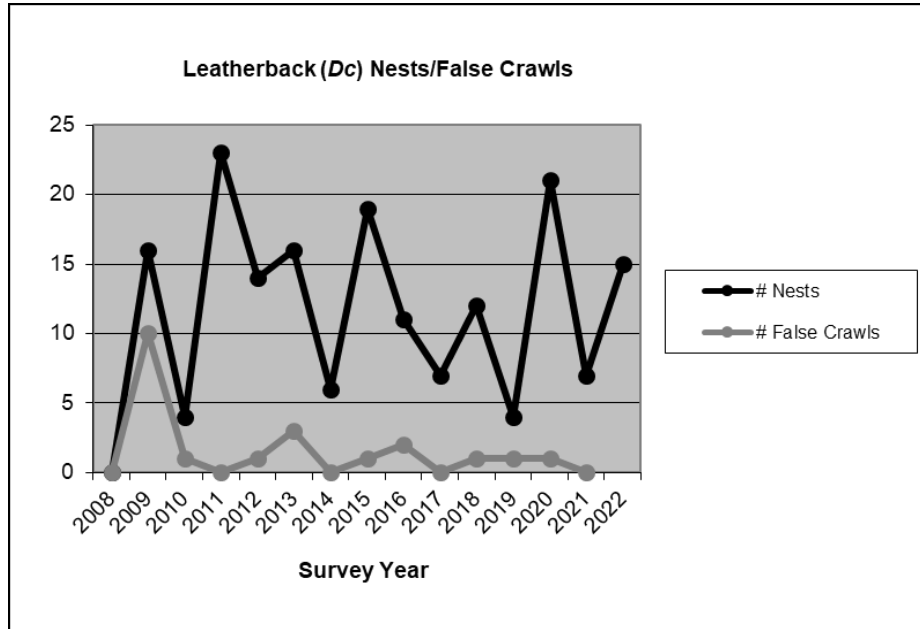


Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

Leatherbacks also exhibit a fluctuation in nesting from each year as demonstrated in Graph 5 below. This over-all trend continues with wide fluctuations throughout the state (FWRI, 2021) and is also evident on the beaches of St. Johns County with 15 nests (Graph 5) compared to last year with 7 nests.

- 15 nests recorded
- 10 nests hatched
- 1 washed out
- 4 clutches not found
- 2 nests relocated
- 380 hatchlings emerged
- Overall mean clutch of 39 eggs
- Range of 58 to 129 eggs
- 67% nesting success rate
- 65% hatchling success rate
- 73 days average incubation
- 1 false crawl

Graph 5. Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) Nests/False Crawls



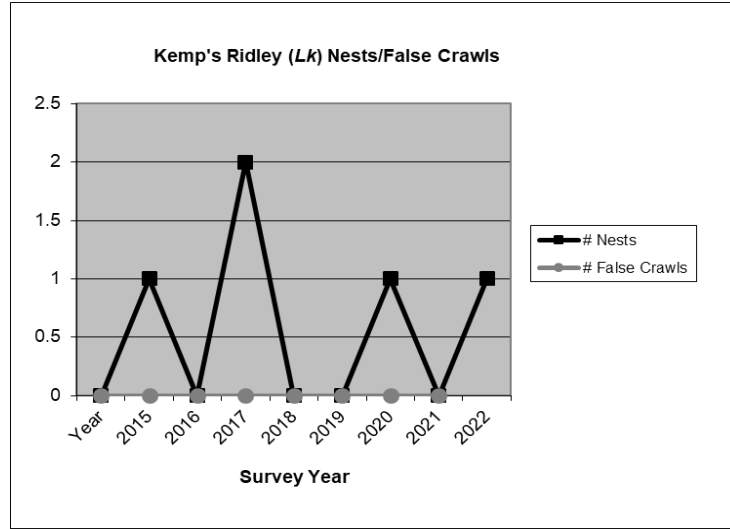
For a more comprehensive representation of nesting that demonstrates levels of density refer to Map Figures 2 and 3.

Kemp's Ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*)

Although Kemp's Ridley sea turtles are primarily found in the Gulf of Mexico they have also been documented nesting on Atlantic Ocean beaches. The first recorded nesting event occurred in 2015 and since then have had nesting events almost every other year including this year with one nest (Graph 6 below).

- 1 nest recorded
- 1 nest hatched
- 113 hatchlings emerged
- 121 total eggs
- 100% nesting success rate
- 96% hatchling success rate
- 49 days average incubation

Graph 6. Kemp's Ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*) Nests/False Crawls



Incubation Periods and Hatching Success

The northern barrier island demonstrated an incubation period of 53 days while Anastasia Island demonstrated an average incubation period of 58 days. Lastly, the southern barrier island commonly referred to as Summer Haven was recorded at an average of 55 days of incubation.

Relocated Nests

Nests are relocated for various reasons and documented according to the circumstance. Although 1,230 nests were naturally deposited, 111 nests were relocated to other beaches because of sand placement projects. In response to a washout event 7 nests were relocated and 3 nests were relocated for unknown reasons. Therefore, a total of 121 nests were recorded as relocated.

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 like self-releasing cages, screens to prevent negative effects like predators impacting the nests. With a higher than average nesting year only (119) 10% of the recorded nests were impacted by predation:

- 22 Fox
- 4 Dog
- 16 Ant
- 1 Raccoon
- 75 Crab
- 1 Unknown

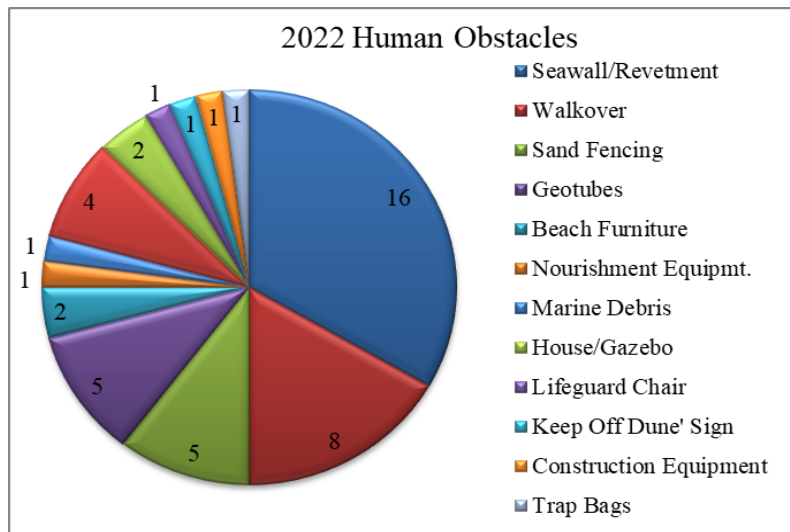
Tidal Inundation/Washout

Tidal inundation and washout events are common throughout the season and more especially during storm events. Fortunately for NE Florida we had late impacts from storms impacting a total of 70 nests from washout events.

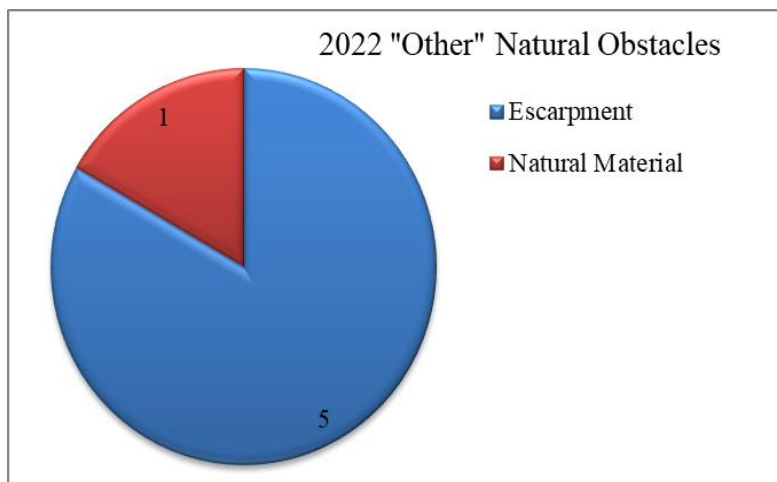
Obstacles Encountered

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



Graph 8. Natural obstacles encountered during nesting events



Spatial Patterns

Spatial patterns discussed in this section include nests deposited in relation to driving and non-driving beaches, relationship of nesting to the CZ and the link between nesting and type of beach. They are consistent with the % distribution of county beach as in years past. Nests deposited on driving beaches accounted for 95 nests (8%), 1,079 nests (88%) on non-driving beaches and 56 nests (5%) on restricted driving beaches (Table 3).

Table 3. Driving/Non-driving beaches percentage distribution of nests

Beach Type	Mileage	Nests	%Distribution of County Beach	% Distribution of nests
Driving	9.8	95	24%	8%
Non-driving	29.2	1,079	71%	88%
Restricted	2.1	56	5%	5%
Total	41.1	1,230	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. However, with each storm season the shoreline is moving westward leaving less space for nesting activity. It is optimistic to understand that just under half of the overall documented nests were recorded within the CZ with 537 nests (44%), 420 nests (34%) were located outside of the CZ, and 12 nests (1%) within the driving lane, 258 nests (21%) were documented with not having a CZ present and 3 nests (.2%) were recorded along the St. Augustine Inlet.

As previously explained the beaches of St. Johns County consists of multiple shore types that include dune, escarpment, rock revetment and seawalls. Even with observed erosion it was confirmed that 1,098 nests (89%) were deposited on beaches with a dune present, 24 nests (2%) were deposited in front of an escarpment, 91 nests (7%) in front of sea wall, and 17 nests (1.4%) in front of installed geotubes on Ponte Vedra beach and no nest were record this season to have been observed in front of a rock revetment

Temporal Patterns

The 2023 nesting season began earlier than the official start date of May 1 with a leatherback nest observed on the GTMNERR April 27th. This was followed up with a loggerhead nest near the County line on April 29th. The first green sea turtle nest of the season was documented on June 10th and continued until August 26th. More information can be found in Table 4 below.

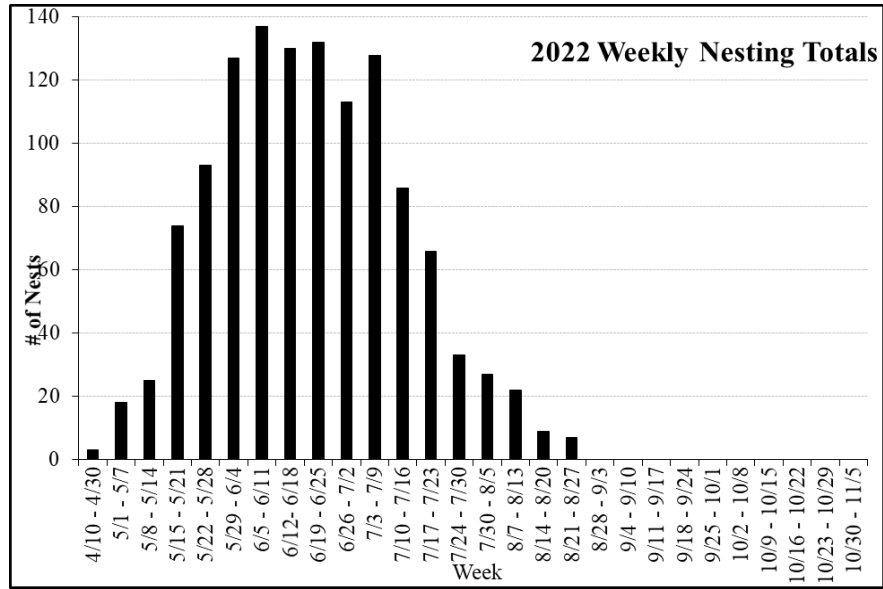
Table 4. Temporal patterns of nesting

Species	Date	Location
Cc (Earliest)	4/29/2022	County line to Corona Rd.
Cc (Latest)	8/24/2022	GTMNERR North
Cm (Earliest)	6/10/2022	Mickler South
Cm (Latest)	8/26/2022	GTMNERR North
Dc (Earliest)	4/27/2022	Corona Rd South
Dc (Latest)	7/19/2022	GTMNERR South

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

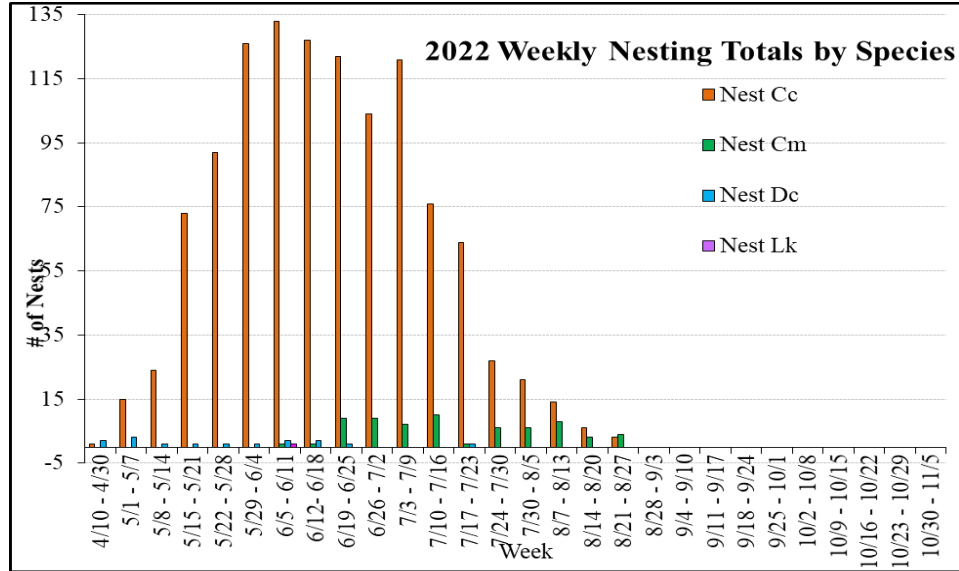
The pattern of nesting remains consistent with slight fluctuations over the months of May, June and July. The highest week of nesting occurred in mid-June to early July. Graph 9 below has additional information.

Graph 9. Weekly Nesting Totals (n = 1,230)



Naturally loggerhead nesting maintained a steady pace from May to mid-August, while green and leatherback nesting events revealed irregular nesting throughout the summer (Graph 10).

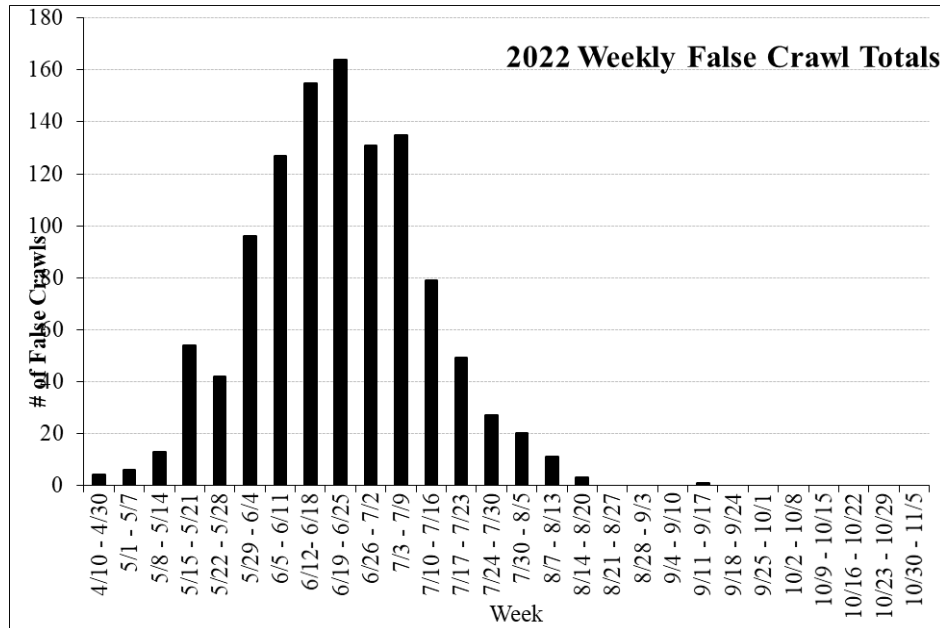
Graph 10. Weekly Nesting Totals by Species (n = 1,230)



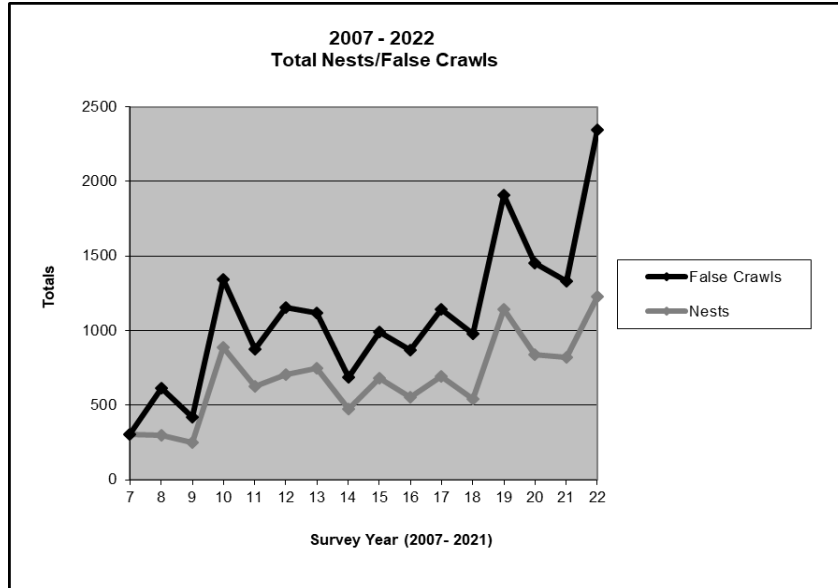
False Crawl Summary

False crawls and nesting events somewhat maintain the same pattern throughout the summer with peaks and valleys (Graph 11). In summary, 73 were on recorded on driving beaches, 45 on restricted driving beaches, and 999 recorded on non-driving beaches.

Graph 11. Weekly False Crawl Totals (n = 1,117)



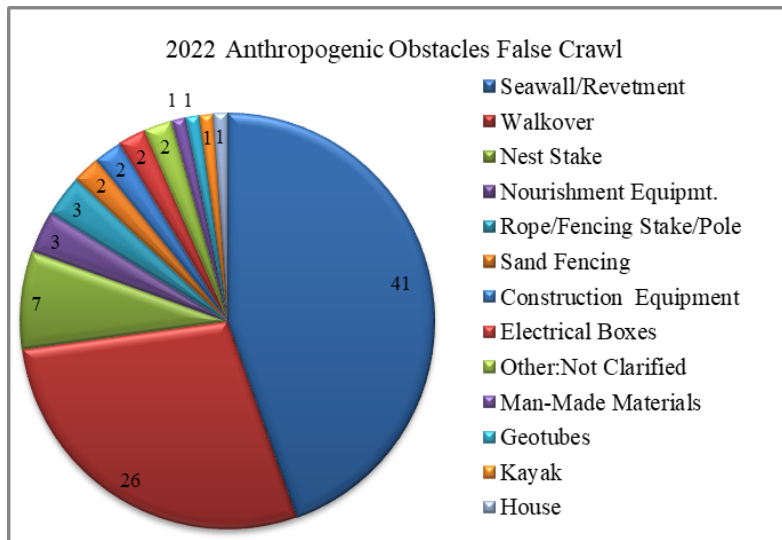
Graph 12. 2007-2020 Total nests and false crawls



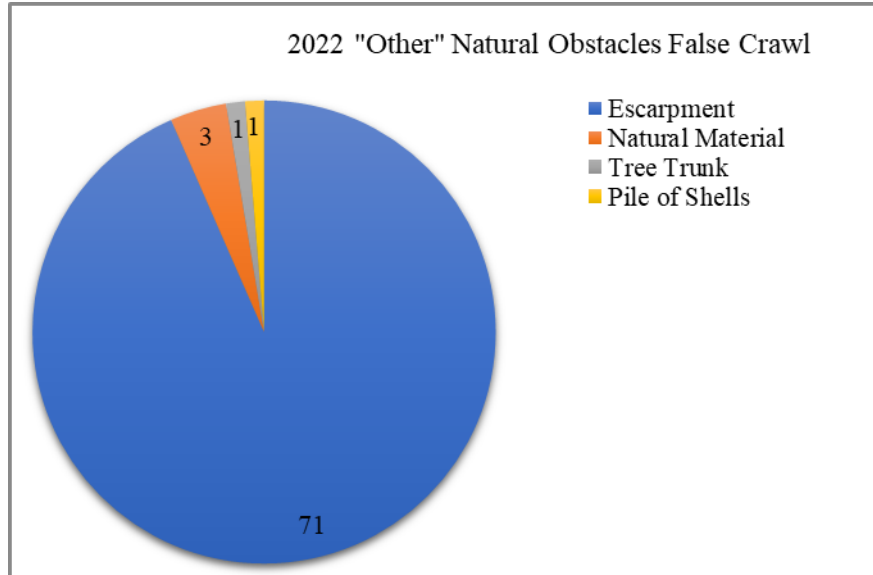
When documenting a false crawl volunteers also record shore type, location or apex of the crawl, and any obstacles encountered.

Just like nesting obstacles encountered during false crawl events are documented under two categories; anthropogenic (human) and other natural obstacles. See Graphs 13 and 14 below.

Graph 13. Human obstacles encountered during false crawl events



Graph 14. Natural obstacles encountered during false crawl events



Disorientations

This year, the county observed a record number of disorientations. A total of 79 disorientation reports (Table 5) were either reported to the beach lighting officer or discovered on the FWC reporting platform of Survey123. Disorientations accounted for 6% of the overall 1,230 nests within St. Johns County beaches, and 18 (23%) that occurred within the South Ponte Vedra re-nourishment project. Important factors that could have contributed to this surge of events are an increase in storms and extreme weather, the growth of vacation rentals throughout the county, and three separate beach re-nourishment projects.

Compliance was met with mostly positive responses surrounding conversations about lighting violations. The peak hatching season on St. Johns County beaches is typically July and August,. Therefore, and as in years past the number of hatchling disorientation events tends to escalate at this time of year as well.

When a disorientation occurs, the county requests that volunteers report the disorientation on the day the event. This way a follow up investigation can be completed by nightfall on the day of the original event. This process gave the county the best chance of finding the possible reason for a disorientation to ensue. Of the 79 disorientations, 41 were found to have violating exterior or interior lights in a close proximity on the night that the follow report was completed. Within each of the three renourishment projects 42 of these violations were recorded. For more information regarding the Beach Lighting Management Plan and how it is implemented refer to Section 10.

Graph 15. Disorientations Per Zone

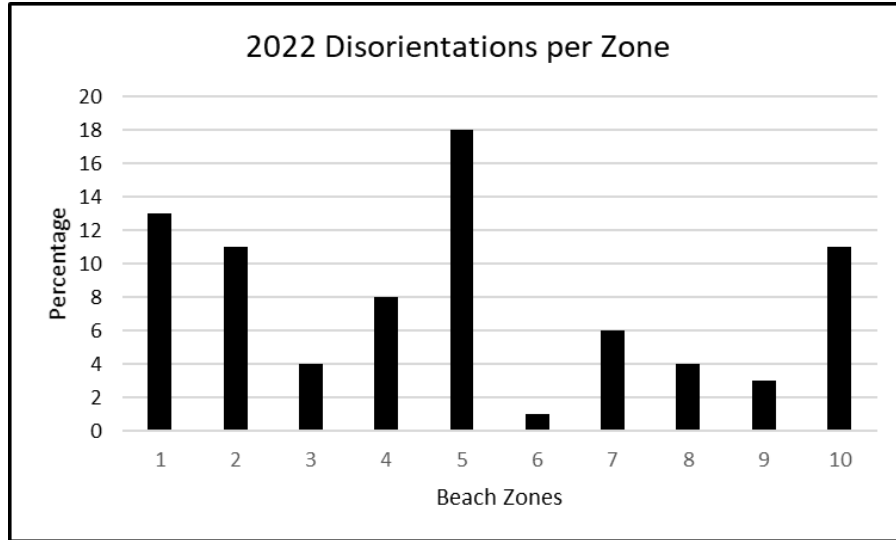


Table 5. Disorientation Summary

Zone	Location	Direction of Travel	# of Turtles	# Dead	Light Source
1	200 Ponte Vedra Blvd	North	1	0	Ponte Vedra Inn & Club lights and Jacksonville Sky glow
5	4418 Coastal Hwy	Ascended south and looped three times before nesting, then crawled NE	1	0	Construction lights from beach re-nourishment
3	1299 Ponte Vedra Blvd	North, looped, and then parallel south	1	0	1299 PVB had a spot light north of home
1	165 Ponte Vedra Blvd	Several small turns returning to ocean	1	0	Possible flash lights or Jacksonville sky glow
3	1411 Ponte Vedra Blvd	No information provided on report	1	0	Unknown
1	545 Ponte Vedra Blvd	Coming in turned north, large loop after nesting, then west and back into the ocean	1	0	Unshielded spot light directed toward the beach at 545 PVB
2	1041 Ponte Vedra Beach	Northeast	1	0	Unknown
2	Sea Hammock Condo	North	1	0	Several unshielded fixtures with white light bulbs
1	553 Ponte Vedra Blvd	Crawled over the dune, turned around and crawled then parallel until opening	1	0	Turtle lost the horizon of the ocean water
2	2 Ocean Ridge Court	Circled west east and then gradually northeast	1	0	Sky glow and/or spot light at 843 PVB
2	3 Ocean Ridge Court	Circle after nesting and then gradually crawled north east	1	0	Sky glow and/or spot light at 843 PVB
1	657 Ponte Vedra Blvd	Encountered walk over and slid down embankment	1	0	Walk over
7	Anastasia State Park	North	1	0	Unknown
7	Anastasia State Park	North	1	0	Unknown
10	9273 Old A1A	At the water's edge, looped, travelled west and then southeast	1	0	Flash lights
10	9474 Old A1A	Crawled under sand fence and travelled north 79 meters until opening	1	0	Sand Fencing
10	9297 Old A1A	All directions	50 +	Unk	Unknown
10	9183 Old A1A	Adult False crawl under a home	1	0	Home pilings

Zone	Location	Direction of Travel	# of Turtles	# Dead	Light Source
3	1313 Ponte Vedra Blvd	North	50+	0	Unknown. Exterior lights at 1275 SPVB
4	2457 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West (2457 SPVB) and southwest (2459 SPVB)	50 +	0	Exterior lights
1	155 Ponte Vedra Blvd	West toward the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club	2 > 50	0	Facility lights- several violations
8	Sea Colony	North	11 > 50	0	Flash lights
5	2815 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	Northwest (2815 PVB) and southwest (2813 PVB)	11 > 50	0	Unshielded fixture with amber bulb
10	9437 Old A1A	North (9441 Old A1A) and south (9429 Old A1A)	11 > 50	0	Unknown
4	2593 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West	11~50	0	Interior lights
4	2633 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West	50+	0	Interior lights
2	1205 Ponte Vedra Blvd	North and west toward 1205 PVB	2~10	0	Jax Beach Glow and Interior lights at 1205 PVB
1	Ponte Vedra Lodge & Club	West toward the Ponte Vedra Lodge & Club door north of facility	11 ~ 50	0	Interior lights
6	Villages of Vilano Condo	West	50+	25	Boardwalk unshielded light fixtures
8	C Street	Toward C street	50+	0	Unknown. Possible flash lights
7	Anastasia State Park	North 1 mile from the inlet	1	0	Possible flash lights and/or sky glow
4	2609 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West	>50	0	2607 S PVB left exterior lights on
9	8200 A1A South	2 went north and disappeared	2 > 11	0	Tire ruts
5	2809 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West (2809 S PVB) & Southwest (2811 S PVB)	2 ~ 10	0	Interior lights from 2809 SPVB and exterior glow from 2811 SPVB
4	2477 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West	11~50	0	Unknown
1	313 Ponte Vedra Blvd	West	11 >50	0	Interior lights left on from construction
7	Anastasia State Park	North and west toward the pavilion	2~10	3	Light at pavilion in state park
7	Anastasia State Park	North and west toward the pavilion	2~10	1	Light at Pavilion in state park
10	North of 9273 Old A1A	West toward river	50 +	2	Possible car head lights or reflection of the moon on the river water surface
5	2841 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West (2841 S PVB) and northwest (2839 SPVB)	11 ~ 50	0	Interior Lights
1	200 Ponte Vedra Blvd	West	11~50	0	Ponte Vedra inn and Club Lights
4	2471 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West	>50	0	Interior lights
5	2809 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West (2809 SPV) and southwest (2811 SPVB)	2 ~ 10	0	Unable to follow up on disorientation
8	14th street	All directions	>50	0	Flashlights and heavy traffic
2	1123 Ponte Vedra Blvd	North	11~50	0	Jax beach glow and/or Flash lights
8	14th street	All directions	2 ~ 10	0	Flash lights
2	1137 Ponte Vedra Blvd	North	11~50	0	Jax beach glow and/or Flash lights
2	1135 Ponte Vedra Blvd	North	2~10	0	Jax beach glow and/or Flash lights

Zone	Location	Direction of Travel	# of Turtles	# Dead	Light Source
5	2719 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	Gas station	11 ~ 50	0	Gas Station Light Glow or fishers with flashlights
5	2773 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West (2773 SPVB) & southwest (2775 S PVB)	> 50	0	Interior lights from 2945 SPVB and 2775 SPVB
1	145 Ponte Vedra Blvd	West	11~50	0	Ponte Vedra inn and Club Lights
1	301 Ponte Vedra Blvd	Northwest toward Ponte Vedra Inn & Club	2~10	0	Pool lights at Ponte Vedra Inn & Club
5	2945 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	Southwest (2947 S PVB) and northwest (2940 SPVB)	11 ~ 50	0	Landscape light glow from 2947 SPVB and Interior lights from 2940 S PVB
2	1197 Ponte Vedra Blvd	North	2~10	0	Jax beach glow or Flash lights
1	645 Ponte Vedra Blvd	West	1	0	Interior lights from condos
5	2755 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	Southwest (2757 S PVB) & northwest (2753 S PVB)	2 ~ 10	0	Car Port light from 2757 SPVB and possible interior from 2753 SPVB
5	3011 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	Southwest (3015 S PVB)	2 ~ 10	0	Interior lights
5	2735 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West (2733 S PVB)	11 ~ 50	0	Interior Garage light
9	7820 A1A South	West	2 ~ 10	0	Condo Glow and Possible flashlights
2	1169 Ponte Vedra Blvd	West	11~50	0	Unable to follow up on disorientation
5	2937 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West (2937 SPVB) & NW (2935 S PVB)	2 ~ 10	0	Unable to follow up on disorientation
5	2775 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West (2773 S PVB) & SW (2775 SPVB)	11 ~ 50	0	Unable to follow up on disorientation
10	9281 Old A1A	West (9281 S PVB) & North to (9273 S PVB)	50 +	0	Unknown
5	3039 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West (3039 S PVB) & SW (3041 S PVB)	2 ~ 10	0	Interior lights
4	2467 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West	>50	0	White unshielded light fixture on top floor
5	2967 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	Northwest (2965 S PVB) & South (2977 S PVB)	11 ~ 50	0	Possible flash lights or sky glow
7	Anastasia State Park	West	2~10	2	Possible lighthouse
5	2719 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West (2719 S PVB) & northwest (2700 SPVB)	11 ~ 50	0	Exterior unshielded lights at home being sold
10	9293 Old A1A	West and South	11 ~ 50	3	Unknown. There are only amber exterior light existing in the area.
10	9411 Old A1A	North toward 9409 Old A1A	2 ~ 10	0	Exterior unshielded lights at home being sold
2	911 Ponte Vedra Blvd	North, then circled, and gradual northeast	1	0	Jax beach glow or flash lights
10	9183 Old A1A	North and South	2 ~ 10	0	No lights present
3	1325 Ponte Vedra Blvd	North	11~50	0	Unable to follow up on disorientation
4	2497 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West (2497 S PVB) & northwest (2493 S PVB)	11~ 50	0	Unable to follow up on disorientation
5	3083 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	West (3083 SPVB) & southwest (3081 S PVB)	2 ~ 10	0	Interior lights
1	165 Ponte Vedra Blvd	West	2~10	2	Ponte Vedra Inn & Club Lights
9	7790 A1A South	North and West	2 ~10	1	Condo Glow and possible flashlight

Zone	Location	Direction of Travel	# of Turtles	# Dead	Light Source
10	9401 Old A1A	West through residential driveway and under house	50+	0	Airbnb interior lights
5	2731 South Ponte Vedra Blvd	SW (2733 S PVB)	2 ~ 10	0	Interior Garage light

Table 6. Zone Descriptions

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	GTMNEER 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 beach. Additionally, Map Figures 6 (a-i) identifies each zone and reflects all nesting, false crawls and AOVS.

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: These procedures are carried out according to the approved protocol as outlined in the tire tracks and rut removal plan and the SSMTP. Based on this protocol MTPs submit weekly nesting data to County staff which aids in developing active daily management. 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. Weekly rut removal spreadsheets are created and distributed to nighttime staff that identifies which nests need 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.

Assessment: Rut removal was conducted on all south beach nests where daily beach driving occurs by both the public and official vehicles. Vilano beach remained closed until September but was intermittently “spot-checked” for ruts left by law enforcement or marine rescue. Summer Haven continued to be included as part of the evening routine for spot checking.

Vilano/North Beach

The area extending North between Vilano and Usina Ramps in North Beach is a productive beach for nesting. It is also a restricted beach driving area where participants obtain a four-wheel drive permit for special access. However, due to a renourishment project the beach remained closed to special 4x4 activity. Therefore, staff conducted routine “spot-checking” at various access points as marine rescue and law enforcement enters this beach on occasion. They are required to “self-police” and to remain below the high-tide line. Fortunately, there were no reports of impacts to nesting.

Additionally, sea turtle patrol recorded 3 nests (Cc) on Porpoise Point requiring routine rut removal depending on tides.

St. Augustine/Crescent Beach

HCP technicians are scheduled each evening on the South Beaches to complete rut removal on designated nests. Deeper ruts can be present during times of little rainfall and small trade wind swell. Additionally, the sand condition will vary depending on the location of the tides.

Summer Haven

The beaches of summer haven are lined with approximately 25 homes. Some are full time residents while others are part-time or rented out as vacation rentals. Throughout the season a construction project took place on the east and west portion of the beach. Its purpose was to remove sand from the Summer Haven river, close a breach that had formed, and to create a new dune on the easterly portion of the beach. The previously existing roadway washed out during Hurricane Dorian in September of 2017. Attempts have been made to delineate the driving surface from the beach but this has however been failed attempts due to storms. Throughout the summer this beach is patrolled almost daily by law enforcement and weekly by staff. We maintained a spot checking of nests on summer haven to reduce any impacts to nests that were approaching hatch out. Even though we removed ruts vehicles still had the ability to drive through the area that was freshly raked as there is no delineation as previously mentioned. More information regarding summer haven can be found in Section 11: Summer Haven.

Seasonal Break-Down

Rut removal was achieved on approximately 12 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 June 19th on south beaches and concluded on November 4th for a period of 138 days on 138 nests. Table 7 below represents additional information as collected and reported by seasonal HCP field technicians:

Table 7. Rut Removal Summary

Beach	Start Date	End Date	Length (days)	Total Nests	*Average Days
Vilano	6/27/22	11/04/22	68	75	12
St. Augustine	6/19/22	10/23/22	126	46	14
Crescent	6/30/22	10/16/22	109	56	16

*Average days 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 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 and

coordination of daytime events as well as the benefit of constant communication between departments.

Assessment: A classroom workshop was organized and attended by 22 law enforcement personnel and beach management staff on March 23, 2022.

Program Improvements: Annual trainings and ongoing communication with other County departments will continue to occur with updates as necessary.

Implementation Measures: Increased Enforcement Staffing

Implementation: The implementation and enforcement of the Beach Code is done so in cooperation with SJSO beach patrol and City of St. Augustine Beach police department. From March 1st through Labor Day weekend full time deputies are augmented by a varied number of trained over time Sheriff's deputies.

Law enforcement records daily enforcement activity on data sheets that are provided to the County on a weekly basis. 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 two full time year-round environmental specialists whose duties include enforcement of the beach lighting management plan and data management. Both play important roles in implementation of the HCP during sea turtle nesting season as well as outside of the nesting season. An additional part time beach lighting officer is retained to ensure that surveys are conducted 6 – 7 nights a week. A more detailed report of such activity can be found in Section 10: Beach Lighting Management Plan.

Assessment: 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.

Table 8. St. Johns County Law Enforcement Statistics

HCP Violations			
Violation	VW	WW	CC
Horseback (HB) Riding w/o Permit Sec 3.02(b)	0	0	0
Removal of Beach Sand/Coquina Sec 3.12	0	0	0
HB Riding South Surfside Sec 3.02(b)	0	0	0
HB Riding South Beach Date Restrictions Sec 3.01(b)	1	0	0
Beach Special Events w/o Permit Sec. 4.02	0	0	0
Parking/Driving after hours Sec.5.03 (c); 5.05	0	2	1
Commercial Fishermen Sec.5.05	0	0	0
Conservation Zone Encroachment Sec. 7.01(b)	841	47	4
Disturbance/Removal of CZ Vegetation Sec. 7.01(c)	0	0	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	842	49	5
Beach Code Violations			
Violation	VW	WW	CC
Conduct Sec. 3.00	1,957	120	128
Animals Sec.3.02(c)	0	1	0
Leash Law 2001-19 Sec.4.00	783	79	8
Litter Sec.3.09(a)	0	0	0
Tents, Chairs, Catamarans etc. Sec.3.09(b)	2	4	0
Fireworks/Explosives Sec.3.13	0	0	0
Vehicles Sec. 5.00	1,427	477	159
Section Total	4,169	681	295
Totals	5,011	730	300
Grand Total	6,041		

In addition to their routine tasks law enforcement also responds to other events on the beach that involve permitting activities and wildlife response (Table 9 below).

Table 9. St. Johns County HCP non-citation responses

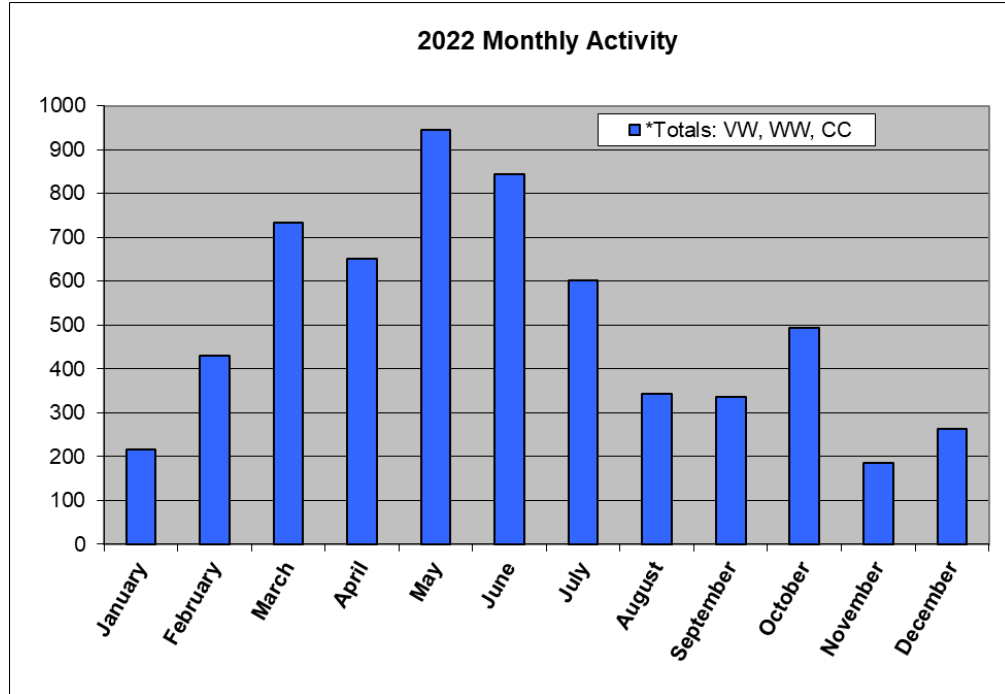
HCP Non-citation Responses	
Stranded Turtle Response	14
Injured Bird Response	25
Bird Nesting Area Patrol	0
Gopher Tortoise Response	12
Beached Marine Mammal	1
NB Permit Check	0
HB Permit Check	8
CCA Permit Check	2
CF &/or Net Fishing Check	1
Event Permit Check	5
NRD assist FWC	0
Total	68

HCP field technicians work closely with law enforcement to clear the beaches of vehicles and close beach gates. The occasional wildlife related emergency (i.e. a hatching sea turtle nest) does occur stirring up the procedures and causing a re-routing of traffic to exit at the closest beach gate. Successful implementation of enforcement and education of the beach gate closures is the result of positive communication between

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. According to daily logs recorded by staff 6 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.

The months of March and April mark the periods in which spring break for surrounding counties and colleges take place. Due to the increase in people and cars horseback riding is prohibited until November 1. This is also the time when the beaches are consistently busy and law enforcement activity begins to increase (Graph 16 below).

Graph 16. Monthly Law Enforcement Activity



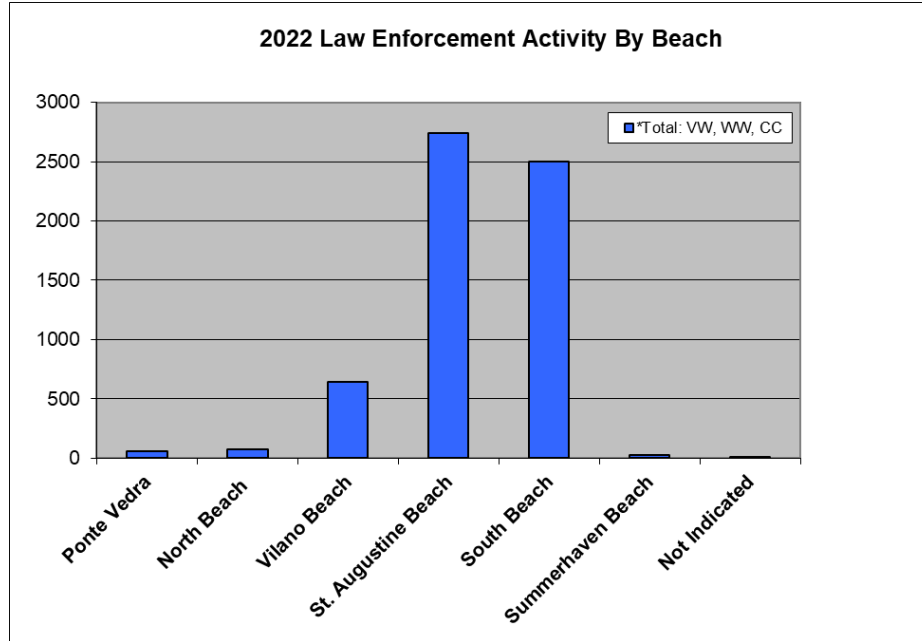
*VW = Verbal Warning WW = Written Warning CC = County Citation

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 year-round horseback riding access at Mickler's Beachfront Park.
- ◆ **North Beach:** Stretch of beach includes multiple beach access points with walking paths, walkovers, year-round 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. 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 seasonal horseback riding access at Crescent Beach.

The various regions of the beach offer numerous recreational opportunities. Therefore, the level of use is increased as evidenced in the number of citations.

Graph 17. 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, regulations, documenting, and analyzing law enforcement activity. The county will continue to improve the level of training and how the data is collected.

Implementation Measures: Staffing

Implementation: The environmental supervisor manages the habitat conservation section which is a sub-component of the environmental division where the manager provides support and direction. Two environmental specialists support the HCP through lighting and data management. One part time seasonal employee served as the assistant beach lighting officer to further support the beach lighting management plan. As well as six part time HCP field technicians were retained on a part-time, seasonal basis to support further implementation of the HCP. The environmental division and its manager provide administrative and fiscal support while beach services, provides administrative, logistical and over-arching fiscal support.

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 the habitat conservation section 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: Through balanced implementation the HCP maintains level of consistency. 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, 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.

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 and communication.

Implementation Measures: Enforcement and Coordination of Enforcement

Implementation: The environmental supervisor works closely with the beach services natural resource superintendent and the dedicated staff of the Sheriff's department to achieve compliance with the HCP and ITP. Supplemental staff provides an increase in the education and enforcement capabilities of the HCP and ITP through routine patrols of popular beaches. On rare occasions if compliance is not achieved law enforcement is requested to assist.

Assessment: Although challenging due to the length of beach and volume of visitors the enforcement of the HCP and ITP has maintained a consistent level of enforcement and implementation due to reliable team efforts. The habitat conservation section team has been able to identify problem areas to target for additional education and enforcement.

Program Improvements: The environmental supervisor will continue to work with seasonal and full-time staff from beach services 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 information is released to the public regarding the upcoming sea turtle nesting season. This information is sent by the county public relations office and distributed to multiple media outlets including the St. Johns County website (<http://www.sjefl.us>), social media and on the “Reach the Beach” application offered by the County. The county website provides information to its residents and visitors detailed information regarding the HCP, beach access, permitting, special events, beach lighting management, as well as protected species and their habitat.

Brochures/Pamphlets

Beach lighting officers distribute multiple types of education material to local restaurants, hotels, resorts, property management groups and other interested organizations before the start of the sea turtle nesting season and throughout to refresh materials.

Education Programs

To further compliment the HCP and its public outreach program staff and NRDs attend and conduct workshops throughout the year. These events give the county the opportunity to provide important information on coastal conservation and sea turtle nesting activities.

Beach Access Signs

They varying beach access points have varying types of educational signage installed throughout. Signs are made of either custom text or photos developed by staff or taken from posters offered by state and federal agencies. Their location is specific to capture beach goers as they enter the beach while their purpose is to provide necessary education material that relates to natural resource protection.

Special Events

Beach services are responsible for implementing a special event permitting process with the purpose of providing written authorization for holding an organized event. The process includes specific rules and regulations and special conditions as they related to each individual event.

Assessment: Information regarding the HCP, endangered species, volunteering, beach lighting, and the departments involved in implementation are 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

Staff successfully distributed 6,484 brochures, 188 table tents, 272 door hangs, and 1,917 postcards 98 “no flashlight” signs were handed out or sent to coastal properties. These materials are specific to the HCP and coastal wildlife conservation efforts.

Education Programs

Due to limited gatherings and social distancing efforts staff did not participate in education programs this year.

Beach Access Signs

Signage is placed at each beach access location with important information on how to share the beach with coastal wildlife and their habitat. Signage was changed out seasonally to reflect the habitat and species use for that time of year.

Special Events

Both residents and visitors apply to hold special events on the beaches. Upon approval of such applications they are provided with a beach etiquette flyer and permit conditions that reflect HCP and Beach Code regulations. A breakdown of the events is located below:

Total events:

- 576 Minor/ 4 Major

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

- Special requests before 9 am on non-driving beaches:
 - 8 Minor/ 2 Major

- Total CSAB:
 - 171 Minor/ 1 Major

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

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 trash and recycling bin elevated to one post. Conservation Zone (CZ) signs are installed on the wooden post between the cans and are maintained throughout the season.

Assessment: All trash cans located on the beaches of Anastasia Island have been elevated to discourage AIBM from entering the bins. 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.

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: The Conservation Zone (CZ) line is adjusted based on the accreting and eroding dunes regularly and where routine beach driving occurs. 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, and 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.

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 adhered to 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 four-wheel drive capability.

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.

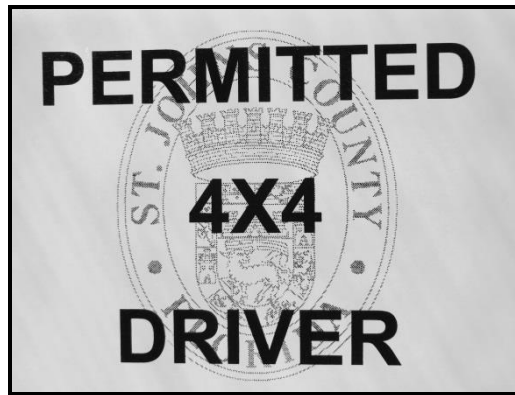
The completed hangtag permit displays a signature from the Environmental Supervisor, permit number, tag number, and expiration date; the backside of the hangtag displays HCP rules/regulations and the Sheriff's non-emergency number to dispatch Natural Resource Deputies in the event of observed violations or to assist 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.

Table 10. 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
2020	27	27	0
2021	46	46	0
2022	52	52	0

Image 1. 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 Usina Ramp, adjacent the Reef Restaurant Parking lot - 4100 Coastal Hwy. 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.

15. 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. The environmental division employs one year-round beach lighting officer and one part-time assistant, who provide routine enforcement and education of the Beach Lighting Management Plan (For this report, both are referenced as beach lighting officers). On an annual basis, the beach lighting officers follow a routine approach by informing coastal residents, property management companies, resorts, hotels, beachfront businesses, and visitors that sea turtle season is approaching and that the lighting rules and regulations are in effect. Beach officers implement the program through routine education efforts, routine nightly surveys, and home inspections.

Community Education Effort

February	Beach lighting officer hand-delivered notification letters to 20 different condo associations along St. Augustine Beach and Ponte Vedra Beach coastline. Each condo association was individually consulted with. These letters called attention to ongoing lighting issues and remedies to bring property into compliance with the Land Development Code before May 1 st .
April	Staff mailed an informational postcard to all beachfront property owners, managers, and representatives providing information on the sea turtle nesting season. A newsletter was emailed to all condo management companies to provide important to guest.
May	Staff posted educational information on multiple social media outlets. The Beach Lighting Officers hand-delivered brochures, table tents, magnets, door hangtags, flyers, window decals, and light switch stickers to hotels, resorts, and property management companies.
May – Oct	Beach Lighting Officers conducted nightly surveys of coastal properties and issued Alert of Violations (AOV) for any non-compliant lights. Recommendations are included in each AOV, to bring offending lights into compliance. Throughout the season, Beach Lighting Officers maintained contact with the Florida Power & Light Company (FPL) to discuss issues arising from customer complaints and any FPL lighting that became non-compliant during the course of the season due to new construction, beach profile change, or landscape changes.

Formal Education Programs

Education tables are set up at various festivals and workshops throughout the year, including but not limited to, Movie in the Park, Ocean Kids Day, National Night Out, Cattlemen’s Event, and private environmental tour groups. It is estimated that approximately 1,000 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 10,350 different types of educational material were given out at during the events and by the beach lighting officer(s) to local condominiums, hotels, and resorts (see Section 6: Public Awareness Program).

Staff created educational marketing material that was posted on several social media outlets. These posts were shared over 400 times on individual pages.

New Construction

All properties are required to pass a nighttime lighting inspection prior to receiving a Certificate of Occupancy (CO). The building department is responsible for reviewing permit applications and building plans for new construction. During the review process, if staff found a property was subject to the sea turtle lighting requirements a “hold” would be placed on the property, thereby alerting the permittee that a lighting inspection would be required prior to permit 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 works with the contractor or property owner throughout the construction phase by conducting periodic site visits and offering guidance for compliant lighting. At the conclusion of lighting installation, a final nighttime inspection is required after sunset and from the vantage point of the beach. If the property is complying, the Beach Lighting Officer will approve the property through an online tracking database, allowing the property owner to receive a CO from the building department. If the property is not in compliance, it will result in a “failed” inspection. The building department will withhold the CO until staff re-inspects the property and determine it to be in full compliance. Staff uploads all inspections forms into the building department database for future reference. In total, the Beach Lighting Officer conducted 19 nighttime inspections during the calendar year of 2022.

Existing Construction

During the months of March and April, the Beach Lighting Officer gathered information related to non-compliant FPL streetlights. Staff conducted official lighting surveys nightly during the sea turtle nesting season. For all properties that did not comply with Land Development Code 4.01.09, Beach Lighting Officers issued an AOV door hang and logged the violation into the beach lighting database. Staff posted the AOV at the property the following day of the documented violation. Staff provided various information with the AOV, including, the section of the code in violation, instructions to modify or disable all non-compliant lights (including a date to bring the property into compliance), and directed the property owner to contact the Habitat Conservation Section within 24 hours of receiving the violation notice. If staff did not receive a call from the property owner within 24 hours and compliance was not met, staff would attempt to find contact information through other sources to contact the property owner. If staff could not obtain any contact with the owner, staff certified and issued a final warning. If the

property owner had not corrected the violation by the time specified on the AOV and final warning, Staff issued a Uniform Code Citation pursuant to Sec. 162.21, *Florida Statutes* (FS). Staff conducted additional site inspections, following each correspondence, until the property owner brought the property into compliance.

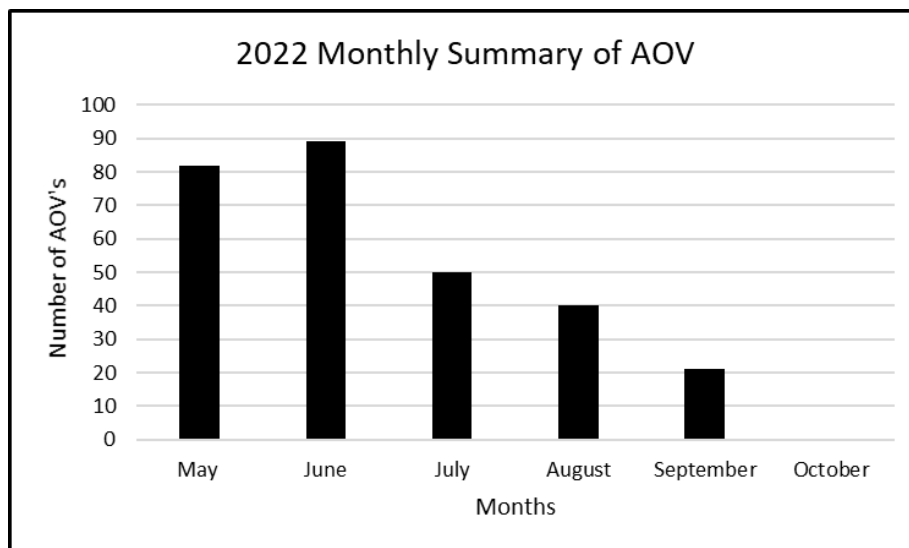
Staff delivered a total of 282 AOVs and issued 14 final warnings to property owners. The highest number of violations per kilometer was Zone 5 (2700 S. Ponte Vedra to 4100 Coastal Hwy). In this area, homes sit within 100 feet or closer to the mean high-water line and the area lacks vegetation. This zone was surveyed more frequently to prevent disorientations.

Complaint and Investigation Log

Staff recorded all complaints concerning potential lighting violations received from the public in a complaint and investigation log of the beach lighting database. Staff investigated all complaints within 24 hours of receipt. Staff documented all findings regarding compliance or non-compliance in the log and provided the information to the complainant at their request. Staff addressed violations in the same manner as previously described.

Staff recorded 215 complaint through the Public Request Inquiry Data Exchange System (PRIDE) and permit holders reported 31 complaints to the Beach Lighting Officer. All complaints were resolved or partially resolved.

Graph 18. Alert of Violation Summary

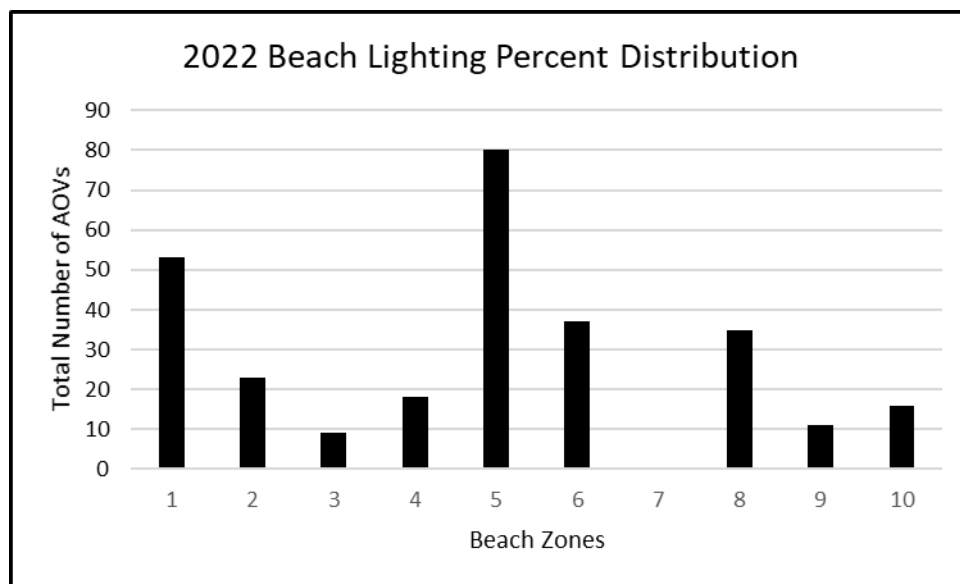


The amount of AOV distributed to property owners decreased as the season progressed and slightly increased in June. Hurricane Ian shorten sea turtle nesting season and surveys in September and October.

Table 11. Beach Lighting Percent Distribution per Zone

Zone	%	Beginning	End	Km	# of Violations
Zone 1	19	49 Ponte Vedra Blvd.	Sawgrass Beach Club	5	53
Zone 2	8	Sawgrass Beach Club	Old Ponte Vedra Condo	5.6	23
Zone 3	3	Old Ponte Vedra Condo	GTMNERR	1.81	9
Zone 4	6	2343 S. Ponte Vedra Condo	2683 S. Ponte Vedra Blvd	6	18
Zone 5	28	2700 S. Ponte Vedra Blvd	4100Coastal Hwy (Reef Restaurant)	8.29	80
Zone 6	13	4100 Coastal Hwy (Reef Restaurant)	2 Viejo Rd. (Porpoise Point)	4.39	37
Zone 7	0	Anastasia State Park	Anastasia State Park		0
Zone 8	13	300 A1A Beach Blvd	Crescent Beach Ramp	9.81	35
Zone 9	4	Crescent Beach Ramp	Matanzas Ramp North	6.22	11
Zone 10	6	Summer Haven	9443 Old A1A	4.11	16
Total	100			51.23	282

Graph 19. Beach Lighting Percent Distribution



Program Improvements:

New education signs for public beach walkovers and parks were designed, created, and will be installed prior to the 2023 nesting season to provide beach goers with updated conservation information. Improved beach pathways were created with post, rope, and signage leading from the busy walkovers to enhance dune growth after hurricane Ian and Nicole flattened portions of existing dune. Staff will continue to notify and consult with existing condos about non-compliant lights. Lastly, new postcards that include visuals to reach a wider audience of backgrounds are being created and will be ready for print by 2023.

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 original locked gate and barricade in the aforementioned was removed in 2008 due to a storm event.

Assessment: 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 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 bumped up against the existing driving lane. The amount of available nesting habitat in which nesting female sea turtles has is constantly challenged by the lack of delineation for a driving surface. Volunteers documented 104 nests, 7 of which were located in the driving path and 1 under a home. On May 6th turtle patrol reported a nest being driven over by a resident prior to their morning nesting surveys. This was reported to both SJSO and FWC law enforcement resulting in an investigation into the incident (SJSO report #SJSO220OFF004409 and FWC report #FWC220N0037485). A second incident was reported on May 17th where the turtle went under sand fencing that was previously installed to delineate the driving surface, laying her eggs on the west side and then exiting around the fencing and crawling back to the sea. The area was barricaded to guide residents around the nests to gain access.

The entrance to summer haven, albeit is the beach as much as it is the driving entrance, is affixed with a gate and signage indicating the entrance being for local traffic only. However, because several of the houses are receiving repairs and are vacation rentals contractors frequent the beach without understanding the dynamics of the driving. Law enforcement made routine visits to the area documenting 6 citations being issued to illegal driving on the beach.

Images 2. Nest in driving lane at Summer Haven



Images 3. Nest in driving lane at Summer Haven



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 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.

Access: Traditionally three access points were available for permitted equestrians to access the beach: Mickler’s Landing, Surfside Park, and Frank Butler Park East. Mickler’s Landing and Surfside Park access points were restricted from March 2022 to end of calendar year 2022; after Designated Spring Break 2022, no permits were issued until access resumed November 1st 2022.

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

*Due to the erosion from storms and Beach Renourishment Project lead by the Army Corps of Engineers, beach access was restricted March 2022 through the end of the calendar year.

GTMNERR Access 505 Guana River Rd.

- Paid Parking Area Managed by the GTMNERR
- All St. Johns County rules and regulations apply
- May 1 – October 31
Ride 8am-7:30pm
- November 1 – April 30
Ride 7 days a week. No time restriction

*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

*Access was restricted at Surfside Park due to challenges of parking lot

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 1,230 nests documented, 0 emergence events were reported to have had interactions with horse tracks (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 2022, a total of 51 General Equestrian and no new Master Equestrian permits were issued (Table 12). Additionally, and upon request by the equestrian permit holders, the County will replace a permit for various reasons such as lost or damaged permits. 5 replacement permits were re-issued in 2022.

Table 12. 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
2020	121	0	121
2021	100	0	100
2022	51	0	51

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: Often turtle patrol and rarely does the public gets an opportunity to observe the tracks left by the adult and hatchlings. Therefore, when there is a daytime event it typically takes the effort by law enforcement to educate the public on maintaining a safe distance from the hatchlings.

Daytime Nesting Events: No events to report.

Daytime Hatching Events:

- 7/19/2022 hatchlings emerging reported by beach patron. Law enforcement responded by implementing crowd control measures.

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.”

15. 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 all agencies involved have the opportunity to comment or contribute by applying conditions that are meant to reduce impacts to the natural resource. A building permit must be applied for and approved by the County in order to proceed with construction activities. 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 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 approved 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 nesting season as permitted if considered an emergency
- Requested location for access
- If public access location is requested a user agreement is required

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 sand placement over existing geotubes. Throughout this time a total of 34 coastal construction access permits were issued by St. Johns County. 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 conducts all trash removal from the beach in-house. Each employee retained for this service completes annual training alongside other members of the beach management team including law enforcement. Current staff has several years of experience on both driving and non-driving beaches demonstrating 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. Employees use one truck to collect trash from cans on driving beaches and are allowed access to Mickler’s beach through the sandy entrance that is also used by Marine Rescue and horseback riders. In addition, an ATV or side-by-side are used to collect debris on both driving and non-driving beaches.

Assessment: St. Johns County retains the services of two part-time employees with assistance from full time maintenance staff to complete trash removal duties. Trash collection continued as it has in years past with minor challenges.

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

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 2022 nesting season.

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

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 13 below outlines each of the attendees for 2022 HCP and Protected Species Training.

Table 13. Attendance for 2022 HCP and Protected Species Training

Date	Source	Group	# of Participants
Multiple Dates	Online	Equestrian	51
Multiple Dates	Online	North Beach	52
Multiple Dates	Online	Coastal Construction	34
Multiple Dates	Online	Marine Turtle Volunteers	NA
2/14/2022	Classroom	Toll Operators	40
3/23/2022	Classroom	Law Enforcement/Beach Staff	22
8/3/2022	Classroom	Commercial Fishing	11
Multiple Dates	Online/Classroom	Washback	114
Total			221

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: No information to report for the 2022 season.

Assessment: No information to report for the 2022 season.

Program Improvements: St. Johns County will continue with open lines of communication with the USFWS and other agencies.

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 natural resources superintendent is tasked with the management of 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, and HCP field assistants as well as partial salary support from the superintendent. Accessory support and operational costs are demonstrated in both Tables 14, 15 and 16. 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 14. HCP/ITP Support Staff

Duties	Department	Revenue Source	Salary	% Contribution	% Actual Funds
Provides Administrative Support	Growth Management, Environmental Division	General Fund	\$97,884.00	5%	\$4,894
Manages Beaches/ Special Projects	Recreation & Parks	General Fund/Toll Revenue	\$60,651.00	50%	\$30,325
2 full time	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$89,033.00	75%	\$66,774
City Beach Patrol	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$113,193.00	100%	\$113,193
County Beach Patrol	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$799,141.00	100%	\$1,000,000
Total					\$1,215,186

Table 15. HCP/ITP Staff

Position	Duties	Department	Revenue Source	*Salary
Environmental Supervisor Full Time	Implements HCP/ITP	Growth Management, Environmental Division	General Fund	\$68,564
Environmental Specialist Full Time	HCP Support Staff	Growth Management, Environmental Division	General Fund	\$59,686
Environmental Technician Full Time	HCP Support Staff	Growth Management, Environmental Division	General Fund	\$47,292
Environmental Technician /Volunteer Coordinator Part Time	HCP Support Staff	Growth Management, Environmental Division	General Fund	\$10,234
HCP Field Assistants	Gates/Rut Removal	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$32,591
TOTAL				\$218,367

Table 16. Operational Costs

Type	Department	Revenue Source	Funds
Communications	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$9,150.53
Insurance	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$9,444.95
HCP Maintenance	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$7,797.17
Equipment Purchase	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$11,995.45
Equipment Purchase	Tourist Development Council	*Category 3	\$0
HCP Maintenance	Tourist Development Council	*Category 3	\$2,532.36
Gas, Oil, Lubricants	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$30,202.62
Vehicle Maintenance	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$24,405.74
Equipment Maintenance	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$11,752.88
Total			\$107,281.70

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 2022.

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 of potential nesting activity. Through consultation with biologist of 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.

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

Trainings

- Online Workshop – General Information

- Attend one beach survey training session. See dates and locations below (No Registration Required):
 - Monday, August 15th 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm Mickler’s Beach Access
Location: South end of Ponte Vedra Beach on Highway A1A. 1109½ Ponte Vedra Blvd., Ponte Vedra. [Mickler's Beachfront Park Map](#)
 - Tuesday, August 16th, 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm Surfside Beach Access
Location: One half mile north of the Vilano vehicle access ramp on Highway A1A. 3070 Coastal Highway, St. Augustine. [Surfside Park Beach Map](#)
 - Wednesday, August 17th, 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm Butler Beach East
Location: 5860 A1A South, St. Augustine. [Frank B. Butler Park East Map](#)

Surveyed Zones

- Out of 41.1 miles of St. Johns County Beaches, 20.36 miles were surveyed
 - Non-Driving Beach: 10.19 miles
 - Restricted Driving Beach: 2.5 miles
 - Driving Beach: 7.67 miles
- Routine beach cleanups were scheduled 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month September, October, and November

Survey Results

- Number of Volunteers: 114
- Pounds of Trash Collected: 641
- Cigarette Butts Collected: 2,062
- Live Washbacks: 0
- Dead Washback 0

Program Improvements: St. Johns County would like to improve the application process for the volunteers.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Coastal Construction Access Permit Summary

SJC Permit Number	DEP Permit #	DEP Exp. Date	Construction Address	Type of Construction	Authorized Access Point	Equipment Type	HCP Training Date	Start Date	Expiration Date
CA22-001	NA	NA	2851 S PV Blvd	Repair of existing seawall	2851 S PV Blvd	Mini Excavator	1/6/22	1/17/22	2/17/22
CA22-002	NA	NA	8324 A1A South	Repair of existing boardwalk	Fort Matanzas Ramp	Mini forklift	1/10/22	1/10/22	1/30/22
CA22-003	NA	NA	2863 S PV Blvd	Repair of existing seawall	2863 S PV Blvd	Mini Excavator	1/6/22	1/17/22	1/30/22
CA22-004	8040762-SJ	4/30/22	5012 Atlantic View	Dune Walkover	Dondanville Road	Pick Up Truck w/trailer	NA	2/28/22	4/15/22
CA22-005	8040764-SJ	4/30/22	6710 A1A South	Sand fencing, and walkover excavation	Mary Street	Mini Excavator	NA	2/25/22	2/28/22
CA22-006	16668-SJ	NA	431 Porpoise Point	Replacing seawall	Porpoise Point	Dooson Excavator, bobcat skid steer	3/2/22	3/7/22	4/30/22
CA22-007	0340616-003-JC	NA	GT surveys R76-R103.5	GT surveys	Exxon and S PVB Rec Area	Side by Side	3/24/22	3/2/22	3/31/22
CA22-008	0340616-003-JC	NA	GT surveys R76-R103.5	GT surveys	Exxon and S PVB Rec Area	Side by Side	3/24/22	3/2/22	3/31/22
CA22-009	0340616-003-JC	NA	GT surveys R76-R103.5	GT surveys	Exxon and S PVB Rec Area	Side by Side	3/24/22	3/2/22	3/31/22
CA22-010	0340616-003-JC	9/18/35	Survey R76-R103.5	Survey	Exxon and S PVB Rec Area	ATV	4/11/22	4/11/22	10/31/22
CA22-013	NA	NA	9369, 9281, 9289, and 9297 Old A1A	Repairs on homes	Summer Haven - Old A1A	ATV/SUV/Mule	4/18/22	4/21/22	12/31/22
CA22-014	NA	NA	R1-49, R57-76, R189-194	Dune construction surveys	Mickler's, Crescent	ATV/SUV/Mule	NA - emerg	9/1/22	10/31/22
CA22-015	55-0408495-001-EE	7/27/26	9329 Old A1A	Removing installed pilings	Old A1A	Excavator	8/15/22	8/16/22	9/15/22
CA22-016	SJ-1727 AR	7/9/23	300 A1A Beach Blvd	Repair of N section seawall	Pope Road, adjacent to Embassy Suites	Skid steer and trackhoe	9/9/22	9/13/22	10/31/22

SJC Permit Number	DEP Permit #	DEP Exp. Date	Construction Address	Type of Construction	Authorized Access Point	Equipment Type	HCP Training Date	Start Date	Expiration Date
CA22-017	NA	NA	Exxon South	Surveys of shoreline	Exxon station beach access	Side by Side	9/9/22	9/13/22	9/14/22
CA22-018	NA	NA	N Fort Matanzas & Summer Haven	Beach Profile Surveys	FMR & Old A1A	ATV	9/19/22	9/20/22	10/11/22
CA22-019	NA	NA	2700 S Ponte Vedra	Removal of derelict vessel	Exxon	Excavator	10/13/22	10/19/22	10/26/22
CA22-020	SJ8040891	10/20/23	7654 A1A S	Dune Walkover	Crescent Beach Access	Pick Up Truck w/trailer	10/25/22	10/27/22	11/10/22
CA22-021	SJ0340616003	9/15/35	South Ponte Vedra Dune	Surveys of shoreline	Exxon/S PV Rec Area	ATV	11/15/22	11/16/22	11/16/22
CA22-022	EFO 22-2816	12/9/22	2407 S PV Blvd	Beach Sand Replacement	2405 S PV Blvd	Excavator, Skid Steer	NA - Emerg	11/29/22	12/9/22
CA22-023	EFO 22-2816	12/9/22	2405 S PV Blvd	Beach Sand Replacement	2405 S PV Blvd	Excavator, Skid Steer	NA - Emerg	11/29/22	12/9/22
CA22-024	EFO 22-2816	12/9/22	2837 S PV Blvd	Emergency Temporary vinyl sheet pile	2839 S PV Blvd, permission from land owner	Skid steer and mini excavator	NA - Emerg	11/19/22	12/9/22
CA22-025	SJ 001759 AR E	2/1/23	3200 Coastal Hwy	Rock revetment repairs	Surfside access ramp	Bobcat, front end loader, truck	NA - Emerg	12/1/22	1/15/23
CA22-026	EFO 22-2816	NA	7024 A1A South	Repair walkover	Crescent Beach Access	White 2018 Ford F-250	NA - Emerg	12/5/22	12/9/22
CA22-027	EFO 22-2816	NA	2755 S PV Blvd	Installation of emergency temporary vinyl sheet pile wall	2761 S PV Blvd, permission from land owner	Skid Steer, Mini Excavator	NA - Emerg	12/2/22	12/4/22
CA22-028	EFO 22-2816	NA	7606 A1A South	Restore and repair private walkover	Crescent Beach Access	1994 GMC Serria blue 2002 Ford F350	NA - Emerg	12/5/22	12/10/22
CA22-029	SJ-8040935	11/29/23	7880 A1A South	Installation dune walkover	Crescent Beach Access	Pick Up Truck w/trailer	12/8/23	12/9/22	12/22/22
CA22-030	EFO 22-2602		All SJC owned properties	Repairs and installation of walkovers	All south beach driving access points	Pick Up Truck w/trailer	NA - Emerg	12/10/22	2/22/22

SJC Permit Number	DEP Permit #	DEP Exp. Date	Construction Address	Type of Construction	Authorized Access Point	Equipment Type	HCP Training Date	Start Date	Expiration Date
CA22-031	EFO 22-2602	NA	8342 A1A south	Restore and repair private walkover	Crescent Beach Access	Pick Up Truck w/trailer	NA - Emerg	12/16/22	12/31/22
CA22-032	EFO 22-2602	NA	7844 A1A South	Restore and repair private walkover	Crescent Beach Access	Brown Chevy Pick Up Truck	NA - Emerg	12/20/22	12/28/22
CA22-033	804097E - SJ 8040947E - SJ 8040949E - SJ	12/21/23	7566, 7600, 8000 A1A South	Restore and repair private walkover	Crescent Beach Access	Pick Up Truck w/trailer	NA - Emerg	12/26/22	1/2/23
CA22-034	SJ-1764 - 1774	1/20/23	PV Breakers I&II, Retreat Condos	Installation trap bags	Condo entrance	Front loader, skid steer, dump truck	NA - Emerg	12/13/22	1/18/23

End of 2022 Annual Compliance Report