



St. Johns County Environmental Division

Online Protected Species Presentation for Equestrians



Objective

- ❖ Introduce the St. Johns County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and Conditions of the Incidental Take Permit (ITP);
- ❖ Understand HCP/ITP policies and how they effect equestrians;
- ❖ Introduce protected species, permit conditions, and equestrian beach access.





Agenda

I. Introduction and Background:

- ❖ Beach Recreation and Habitat for Sensitive Species

II. HCP/ITP:

- ❖ Explanation of Requirements

III. Sensitive Species:

- ❖ Species that may be encountered

IV. Permit Conditions:

- ❖ Acknowledgements & Rules

V. Planning Your Ride

- ❖ Before You Arrive & When on Beach

VI. Beach Access:

- ❖ North Beaches & South Beaches





Introduction & Background

St. Johns County beaches are home to several species of endangered or threatened wildlife, such as sea turtles and the native Anastasia Island Beach Mouse (AIBM).



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Introduction & Background

Beach driving and other recreational uses are a tradition on St. Johns County beaches. These uses can potentially impact protected species activities and their habitat

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ITP/HCP

Incidental Take Permit (ITP)

- ❖ The Endangered Species Act is a law regulated through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, it protects plants and animals that have been listed for protection;
- ❖ **Take** is defined as harm, harass, kill etc.;
- ❖ The take of federally listed species of plants or animals is illegal under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973;
- ❖ The ITP is an amendment to the ESA authorizing “incidental take” of endangered species related to current law abiding activities;
- ❖ St. Johns County has a 20 year ITP that contains conditions to minimize impact to beach mice and sea turtles.

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ITP/HCP

Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

- ❖ Protects the native Anastasia Island Beach Mouse (AIBM) and 5 species of sea turtles
- ❖ A document required to accompany the ITP application
- ❖ Minimizes impact to protected species
- ❖ ITP/HCP goal is to sustain the social, recreational, cultural, economic, and environmental values of the beach by allowing continued beach access;
- ❖ Boundaries:
 - North/South Boundaries – From the Duval County line south to Flagler County line, excluding Fort Matanzas National Monument
 - East/West Boundaries – Mean Low Water (MLW) to the Coastal Construction Control Line (CCCL)

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Sensitive Species

Anastasia Island Beach Mice (*Peromyscus polionotus phasma*)



Status: Endangered (Federal)



All Photo Credits: FDEP Florida State Parks

- ❖ The only mammal native to the coastal dunes of Anastasia Island;
- ❖ Are light buff-colored with indistinct white markings on nose and face;
- ❖ Reseed dune system by digging burrows for food storage and nesting;
- ❖ Rarely encountered during the day.

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Sensitive Species

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Status: Endangered (Federal)
Green Sea Turtle



Status: Endangered (Federal)
Leatherback



Status: Threatened (Federal)
Loggerhead



Status: Endangered (Federal)
Kemp's Ridley



Status: Endangered (Federal)
Anastasia Island Beach Mice



Photo Credit: Florida State Parks

Status: Endangered (Federal)
Hawksbill





Sensitive Species

The Nesting Process

Introduction & Background

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Sensitive Species

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An adult female will drag herself ashore, crawl up to the dune line...

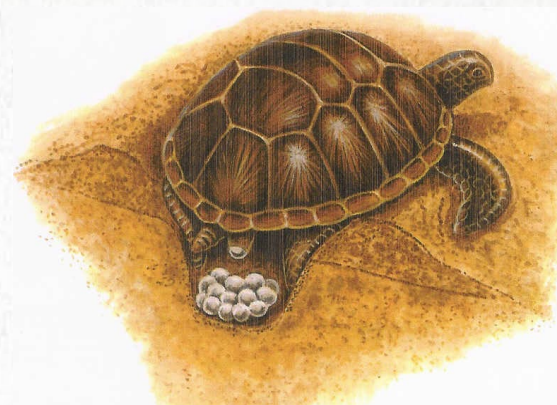


Photo Credit: Loraine A. Jay

...dig an egg chamber with her back flippers, deposit nearly 100 soft leathery eggs...



The eggs must incubate in the sand undisturbed, for about 2 months.



...disguise her nest, and return to the sea.





Sensitive Species

Daytime Sea Turtle Events - Nesting

- ❖ Sea turtles rarely attempt to nest during the day;
- ❖ Are looking for a suitable dry area to lay eggs;
- ❖ Typically occur from April to October;
- ❖ Sea turtle should be allowed to complete nesting without disturbance.

Daytime Nesting St. Augustine Beach



**Sheriff's Non-Emergency:
904.824.8304**

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Sensitive Species

Daytime Sea Turtle Events - Hatching

- ❖ Hatchlings will emerge from the sand in search of the sea;
- ❖ Often occur during cloudy and rainy days;
- ❖ Typically occur June to October;
- ❖ Hatchlings are allowed to travel to ocean on their own.



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Sensitive Species

Daytime Sea Turtle Events – Washback Hatchlings

- ❖ Hatchlings are often “washed-back” in masses of seaweed after large storm events;
- ❖ Minimize impact by avoiding the “wrack line” or line of seaweed;
- ❖ Do not attempt to put sea turtle hatchlings back in the ocean, they are exhausted and/or injured and must be collected by authorized personnel.



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Sensitive Species

Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*)

Status: Threatened (State)

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Juvenile



Adult



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Sensitive Species

Sea Turtle vs. Land Turtle



Sea Turtles

- ❖ Have flippers and streamlined shells for swimming
- ❖ Live only in the ocean



Land/Aquatic Turtles

- ❖ Have legs and claws for navigating on land, dome shaped shells to hide from predators
- ❖ Live on land/or in lakes & ponds

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Sensitive Species

Migratory Shorebirds

- ❖ Myriad of seasonal species utilize local beaches to nest;
- ❖ Most nest in small “scrapes” in sand which can be easily disturbed by vehicular/foot traffic;
- ❖ Nesting area is cordoned off with signage;
- ❖ Protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and/or the Endangered Species Act.



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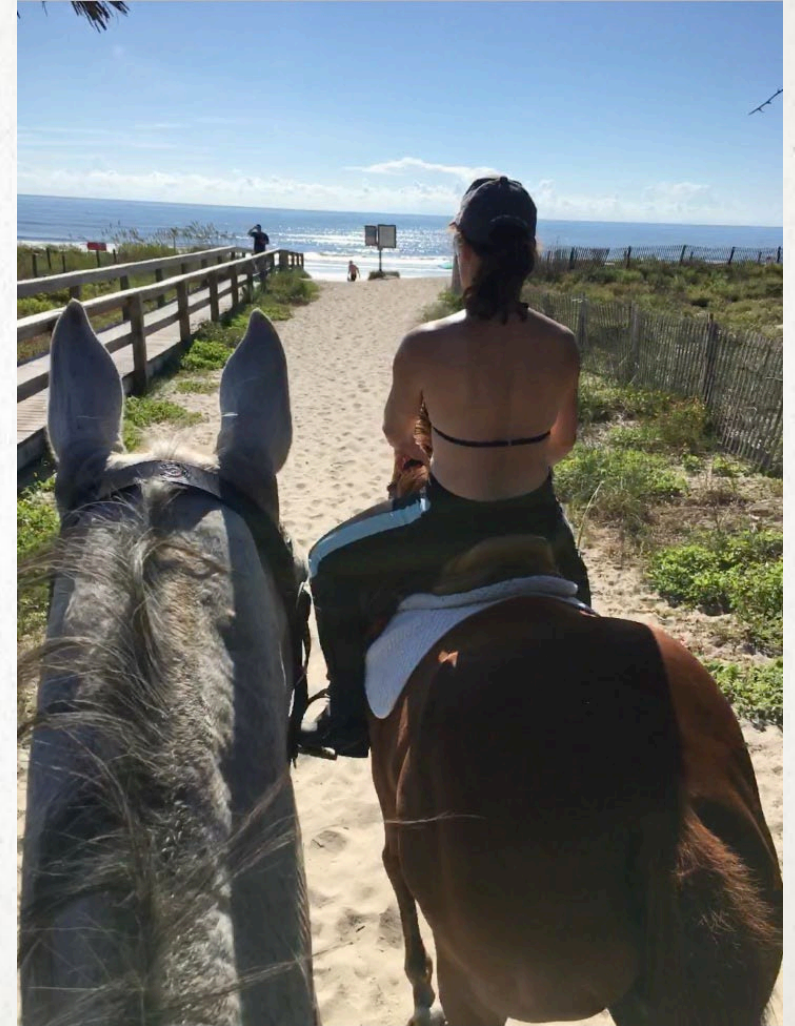
Beach Access



Permit Conditions

Application Acknowledgements:

- ❖ At all times, while on the beach I shall take precautions as may be necessary to avoid accident or collision with or injury to any persons, coastal wildlife & vegetation, or property:
- ❖ I understand that soft sand an extreme tidal conditions may limit my riding access;
- ❖ It shall be my responsibility to promptly remove horses should they succumb to the sand and/or tides;
- ❖ I understand that any violation to the aforementioned activities including any violation to the SJC Beach Code may lead to a citation and revocation of permit privileges.



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Permit Conditions

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ST. JOHNS COUNTY BEACHES USE AND CONDUCT

THE FOLLOWING IS PROHIBITED



Alcoholic Beverages



Commercial Activity



Glass Containers



Motorized Watercraft



Open Fires



Littering



Overnight Camping



Fireworks



Loud Music



Unleashed Pets



Permit Conditions

Common Courtesy:

- ❖ Horse owners are responsible for maintaining sanitary conditions in parking lots and beach entrances.



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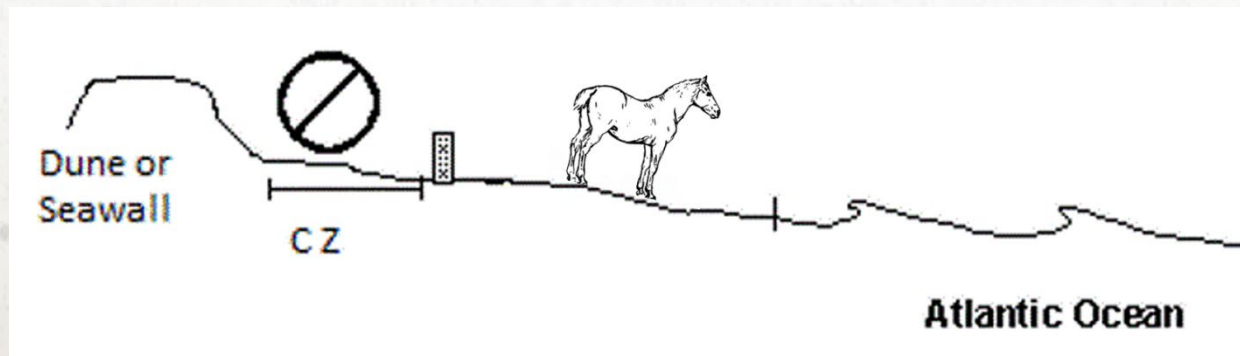
Beach Access



Planning Your Ride

Before You Arrive:

- ❖ Determine which beach access is available to equestrians;
- ❖ Open Beaches & Tide Chart Links on our website: www.sjcfl.us/HCP/Riding.aspx
- ❖ Hooves on Sand **2 hours** prior to low tide event;
- ❖ Exit the sand **2 hours** prior to high tide.



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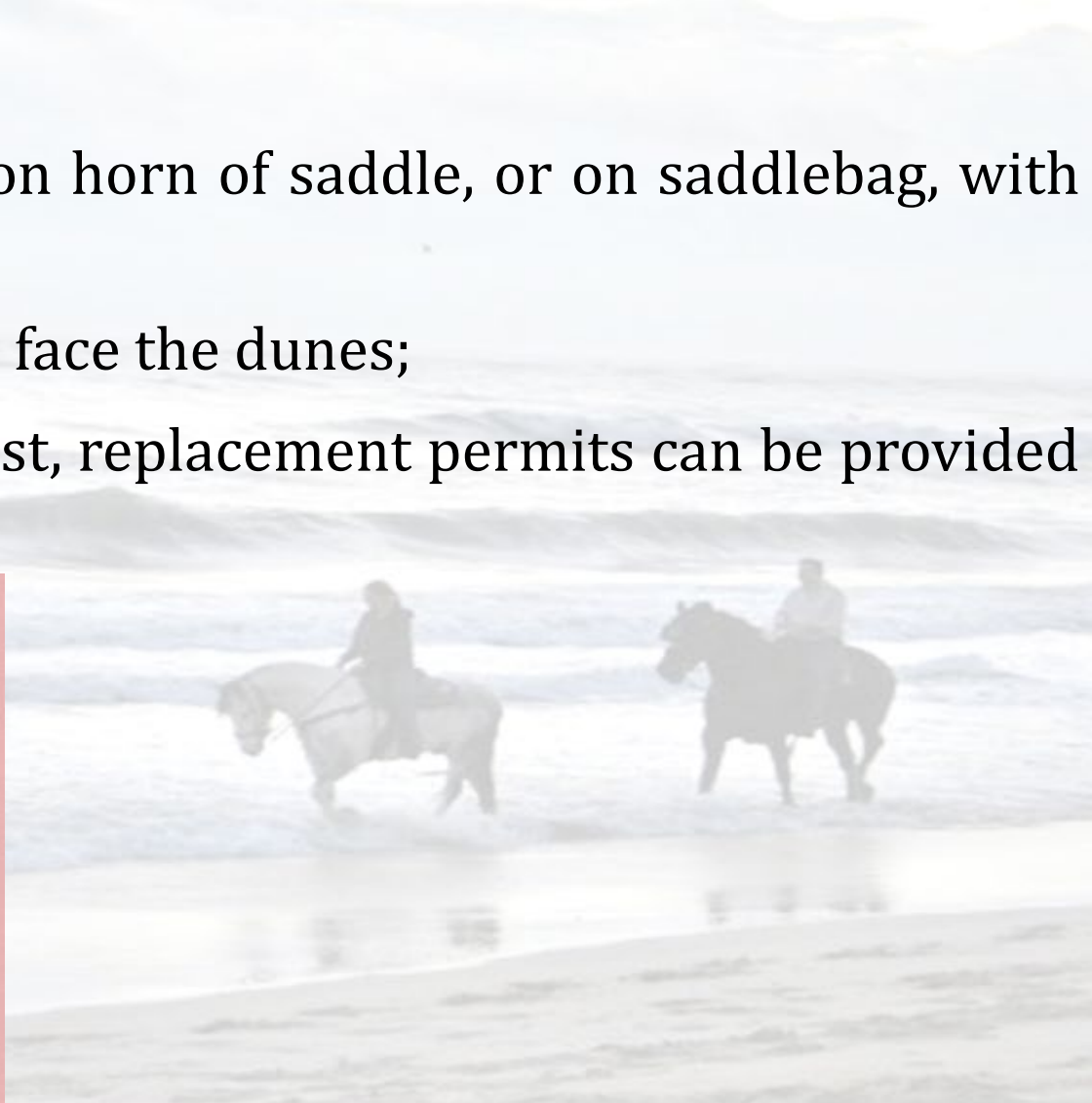
Beach Access



Planning Your Ride

When on Beach:

- ❖ Adhere pink laminated permit on horn of saddle, or on saddlebag, with provided loop;
- ❖ While on the beach permit must face the dunes;
- ❖ If permit becomes illegible or lost, replacement permits can be provided upon request.



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Planning Your Ride

When on Beach:

- ❖ Be mindful of other beach users and their activities;
 - ❖ Why: Safety is important and most beach goers are not used to seeing horses on the beach
- ❖ Conduct Horses **BELOW** the Most Recent High Tide Line;
 - ❖ Why: Sea turtle nests and hatchlings emerge from the dry sand. This eliminates negative impacts to them and their habitat.
- ❖ Swimming with horses is okay.





Beach Access

When on Beach:

- ❖ While navigating the beach you may encounter law enforcement spot-checking for permits;
- ❖ May or may not inquire about USDA Coggins Paperwork.



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Beach Access

North Beaches:

Guana Tolomato Matanzas Estuarine Research Reserve (GTMNERR)

- ❖ Managed by the GTMNERR
- ❖ All St. Johns County rules and regulations for riding on the beach apply;
- ❖ Parking is available at the dam and education center;
- ❖ A daily parking fee is required;
- ❖ To learn more please visit <https://gtmnerr.org/visit> or call 904-823-4500.

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Beach Access

South Beaches:

Frank Butler Park East

5860 A1A S. (32080)

Designated Horse Trailer Parking, restrooms, & watering amenities

Follow arrows to access at Mary St.
Driving Ramp



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Beach Access

South Beaches: Butler Park East

❖ **November 1 – Designated Spring Break:**
Ride 7 days a week. No time restriction

❖ **Designated Spring Break – November 1st :**
Closed for Rides



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Congratulations

"When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world."

John Muir



