



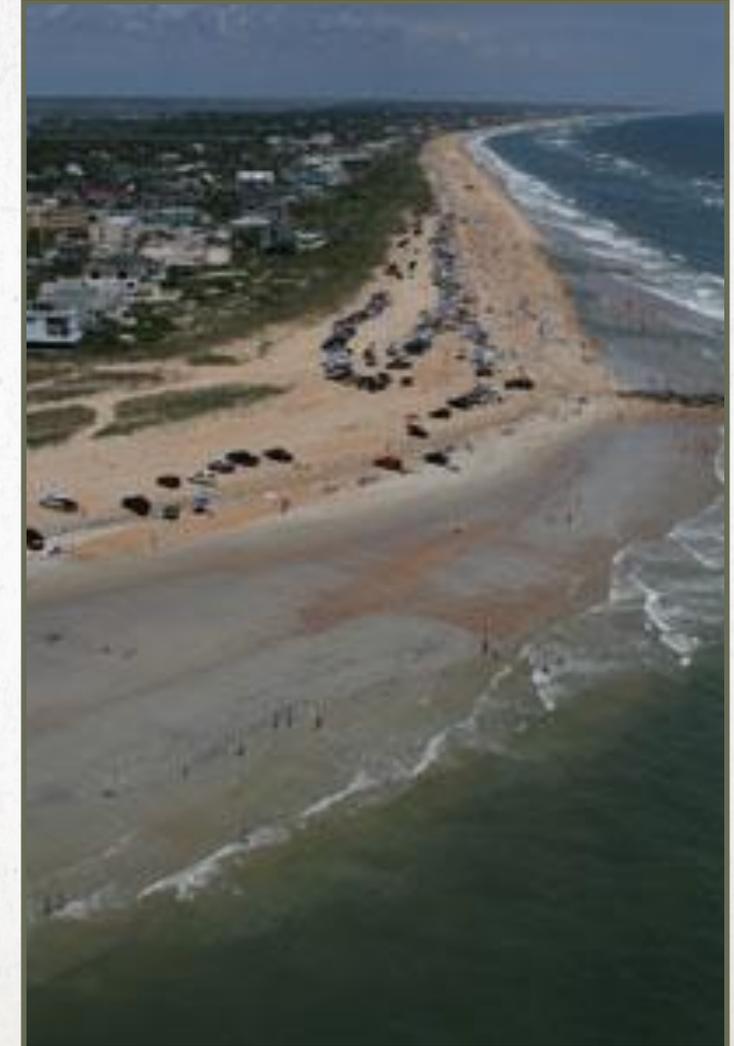
St. Johns County Environmental Division

Online Protected Species Presentation for 4x4 North Beach Drivers



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 North Beach Drivers
- ❖ Introduce protected species, management goals, and permit conditions.





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. Human Impacts & Sensitive Species:

- ❖ Conditions of Permit

V. Permit Conditions & Compliance:

- ❖ Conditions of Permit & Other Beach Rules



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).



Introduction
&
Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



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 fragile habitat.



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Introduction
&
Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



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.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Conserving The Nature of America

Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



ITP/HCP

Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

- ❖ A document required to accompany the ITP application;
- ❖ Minimizes impacts to 5 species of sea turtles & the native Anastasia Island Beach Mouse (AIBM);
- ❖ Along with the ITP, allows for the continued practice of diverse beach user groups;
- ❖ 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).

Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Conserving The Nature of America



Sensitive Species

Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance

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



Status: Endangered (Federal)
Hawksbill





Sensitive Species

The Night Time Nesting Process

Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



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

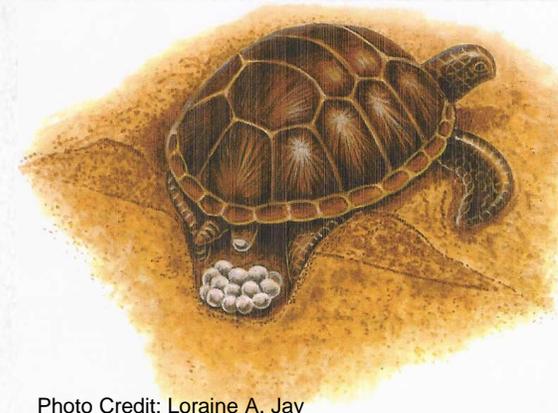


Photo Credit: Loraine A. Jay

...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 Events

Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance

Nesting Attempt

- ❖ Sea turtles rarely attempt to nest during the day;
- ❖ Typically occur from April to October;
- ❖ Sea turtle should be allowed to complete nesting without disturbance:
- ❖ Maintain a 30 foot distance and minimize noise and movement.

Hatching Event

- ❖ Sea turtles occasionally hatch during cooler/overcast days;
- ❖ Typically occur from July to October;
- ❖ If sand is cool, sea turtles should be allowed to travel to the ocean undisturbed;
- ❖ If sand is “hot to touch” hatchlings are recovered and placed in safe bins.



**If observed, please call
the Sheriff's Non-
Emergency Dispatch
904.824.8304**



Sensitive Species – Washback Events

Washback Events (July 1 – November 30)

- ❖ Washback events occur when nests hatch and a storm or extreme high tide pushes post-hatchling sea turtles back on to the beach;
- ❖ Do not drive on wrack line (line of seaweed);
- ❖ Hatchlings are about the size of the palm of your hand;
- ❖ County staff monitors the presence of wrack on beaches;
- ❖ Volunteers conduct surveys to recover washbacks from wrack line;
- ❖ Washbacks are brought to a wildlife hospital for care.



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Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



Sensitive Species

Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*)

Status: Threatened (State)

Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



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Sensitive Species

Sea Turtle vs. Land Turtle

Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



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 in ponds



Sensitive Species

Anastasia Island Beach Mice (*Peromyscus polionotus phasma*)



Status: Endangered (Federal)



- ❖ 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.

Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



Human Impacts & Sensitive Species

- ❖ **Recreational & Commercial Fishing:** Driving on the beach to and from fishing destination, fishing debris, improperly discarded line, can all have negative impacts to sea turtles;
- ❖ **Recreational Beach Activities:** Recreational equipment (tents, volleyball courts), storing personal property (kayaks, chairs, boats), and special events (July 4th) can damage dune vegetation, sea turtle nests;
- ❖ **Beach Driving:** Adult, hatchling, live stranded, and live “washback” post-hatchling sea turtles, nests, and beach mice may be run over by vehicles;
- ❖ **Horseback Riding:** Horse tracks can cause harm to incubating nest, emerging hatchlings or beach mice.





Human Impacts & Sensitive Species

- ❖ **Coastal Armoring**: Permanent armoring structures diminish the quality of habitat, degrading the primary dune system, and/or diminishing food resources for beach mice;
- ❖ **Beach Lighting**: Beach driving and coastal development both produce light pollution that can negatively affect nesting and hatchling sea turtles causing them to lose their way on the beach;
- ❖ **Pollution**: Cigarette butts, balloons, plastic bags, straws, glass, monofilament from fishing activities, and other clear plastics are harmful to sea turtles and beach mice;
- ❖ **Derelict Vessels**: After storm events, beached large vessels can pose a risk to driving conditions and habitat, please report observations to Sheriff's office 904-824-8304.



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Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



Permit Conditions & Compliance

North Beach Driving Permit

- ❖ Allows 4x4 vehicular beach access;
- ❖ Annual beach pass must be affixed to windshield;
- ❖ Permittees required to review HCP training, complete quiz, and vehicle inspection annually;
- ❖ North Beach vehicle permits are valid for one year from issuance date;
- ❖ Gate combination provided monthly by phone;
- ❖ Permittees are prohibited from giving beach access combinations to unauthorized individuals.

PERMITS ARE NON-TRANSFERABLE

Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

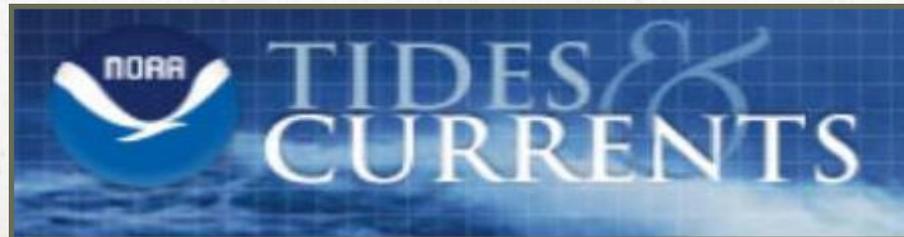
Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



Permit Conditions & Compliance

North Beach Access & Tides

- ❖ May 1st through October 31st beach access is limited to normal beach hours, **8am-7:30pm** & during **Mid-to-Low** or **Low-to-Mid Tides** only;
- ❖ November 1st through April 31st during **Mid-to-Low** or **Low-to-Mid Tides** only;
- ❖ Vehicles must remain on the **wet sand at all times**;
- ❖ Vehicles are **NOT PERMITTED** on the beach during **High Tide Events**.



Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



Permit Conditions & Compliance

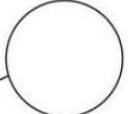
North Beach Driving Permit

Yellow magnetic placard to be placed on each side of vehicle and visible.



Orange permit must be hanging from rear-view mirror.

**HANG ON INSIDE MIRROR
FACING WINDSHIELD**
St. Johns County Habitat Conservation



**Beach Vehicular
Access Permit**

Permit Number _____

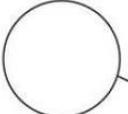
Tag Number _____

Expiration Date _____

Authorized



**For beach-related emergencies
dial 911 or 824-8304**



Conservation Zone
Please help protect this fragile ecosystem.
All vehicle and pedestrian activities are prohibited
within the area 15 feet seaward of the dunes or
vegetation.



Speed Limit 10 MPH

North Beach: Driving hours between 8am & 7:30pm
Commercial Fishermen: Driving hours are from
5am to 10pm, window placard should accompany
this permit.

**Sea Turtle Nesting Season
May 1 – October 31**
Maintain a safe distance from sea turtles and their
nests; drive at least 15 feet seaward of any staked
area indicated with fluorescent flagging to avoid
crushing or disturbing sea turtle nests.

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Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



Permit Conditions & Compliance

Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance

- ❖ Permittees must **ENTER & EXIT** at Surfside Park Ramp;
- ❖ Permittees may drive between Surfside Park and Usina Ramp;
- ❖ Thank you for your patience as the sands allow access.





Permit Conditions & Compliance

North Beach Access

- ❖ North Beach **ENTER & EXIT** at Surfside Park Beach Access Ramp;
- ❖ **No Entry South** of Surfside (Toward Inlet);
- ❖ Entering at Surfside driving **Northbound Only**;
- ❖ Vehicle must be driven **SEAWARD** upon approaching a marked sea turtle nest.



Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

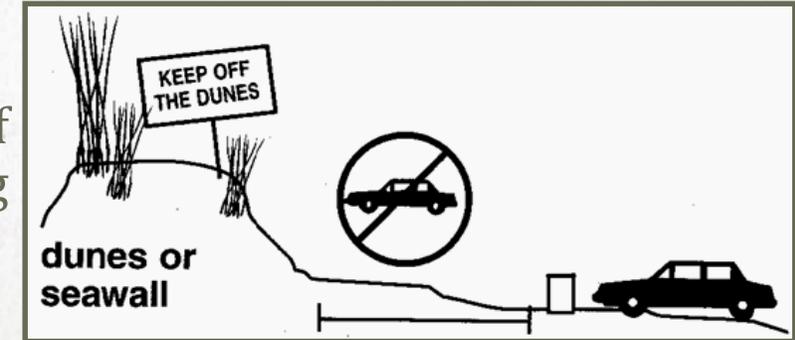
Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



Permit Conditions & Compliance

Driver Requirements (Beach Code 2007-19)

- ❖ Speed limit **10 mph**;
- ❖ Permittee shall yield the right-of-way to pedestrians;
- ❖ Permittee shall avoid accident or collision with coastal inhabitants (sea turtles, shore birds, beach mice, etc.);
- ❖ Driving is not allowed within **15 feet** of marked sea turtle nests;
- ❖ **15 feet** seaward from base of dune or line of permanent vegetation - No sitting, standing, storing personal property, driving, parking is allowed.



Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



Permit Conditions & Compliance

Common Sense

❖ If the conditions look precarious, avoid potential hazards!



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Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



Permit Conditions & Compliance

Communication

- ❖ Abide by No Parking, No Trespassing, & other directional signs;



Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



Permit Conditions & Compliance

Combination Lock

- ❖ Combination line is at center row of tumblers;
- ❖ Turn the tumblers on the lock, **do not leave combo in lock**, or “dummy lock” the gate;
- ❖ **Do not spray WD-40 into lock parts** – this ruins the lock;
- ❖ Upon entering or exiting, close and lock gate behind you;
- ❖ If you have issues with lock please call:
Jade O’Neill 904.209.0619 or 904.814.2477



Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



Permit Conditions & Compliance

Combination Lockout

- ❖ In the event of a named storm (hurricane/tropical depression), nor'easter, or other anticipated storm-surge event the Sheriff will determine if beach access closures are required.



LOCK-TO-LOCK ACCESS



LOCK-OUT

Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



Permit Conditions & Compliance

Law Enforcement

- ❖ Natural Resource Deputies (NRDs) under St. Johns County Sheriff's Department in partnership with Beach Services;
- ❖ 4 Total Deputies – 2 designated on North Beaches & 2 designated on South Beaches;
- ❖ NRDs are year-round deputies whose priorities involve habitat conservation regulatory compliance.



Introduction
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive
Species

Human
Impacts &
Sensitive
Species

Permit
Conditions &
Compliance



Permit Conditions & Compliance

Other Beach Code Regulations

Fishing:

- ❖ Prohibited to fish from the beach and/or surf after having been warned by the Sheriff or County Lifeguard concerning the welfare of other beach patrons;
- ❖ Prohibited to fish within 600 feet from shore to intentionally fish for sharks or to fish by those methods commonly known as “chumming” or “blood baiting.”

Dogs:

- ❖ Prohibited to run “off-leash” without owners control;
- ❖ Defecation must be removed from beach.





Congratulations

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

John Muir



