

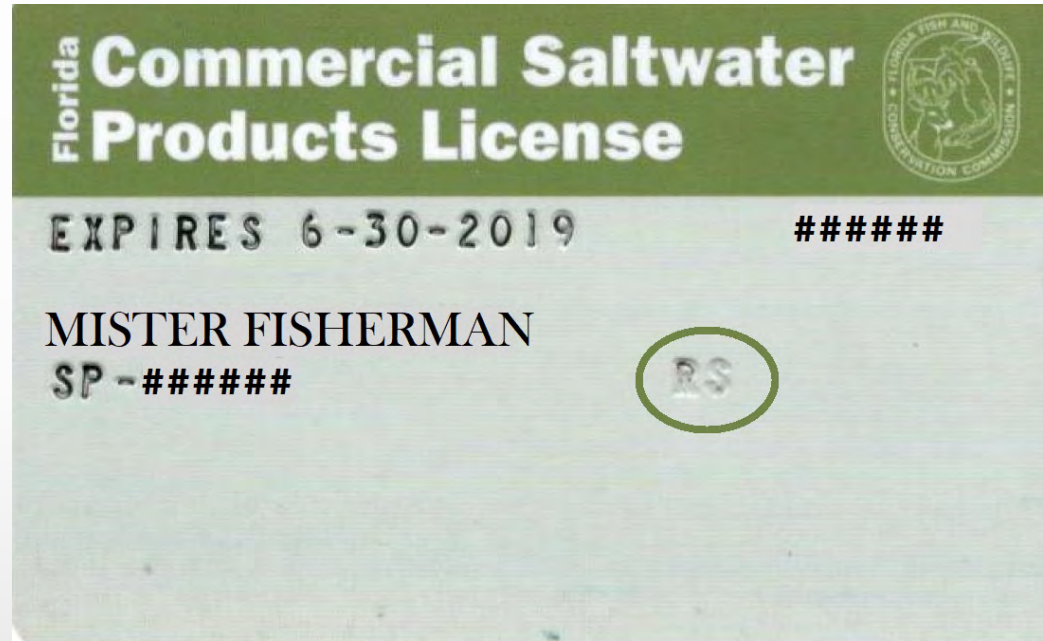


# **St. Johns County Environmental Division**

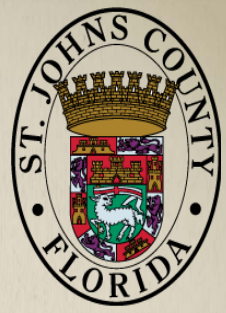
**Online Protected Species Presentation for Commercial Fishermen**



# Mandatory Requirement



RS Endorsed Commercial Saltwater Products License



# Objective

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- ❖ 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 Commercial Fishermen;
- ❖ Introduce protected species, management goals, and permit conditions.





# Agenda

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## **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

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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.



Introduction  
&  
Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive  
Species

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance



# ITP/HCP

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## 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.

Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive  
Species

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance





# ITP/HCP

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## Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

- ❖ Protects 5 species of sea turtles and the native Anastasia Island Beach Mouse (AIBM);
- ❖ 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)

Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive  
Species

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance





# 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**



Photo Credit: Florida State Parks

**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

## Night Time Sea Turtle Events – Nesting & Hatching

- ❖ Sea turtles typically nest and hatch in the early morning hours – between 12-4am;
- ❖ Turtle(s) should be allowed to complete nesting without disturbance.



Should be noted that it these images were taken with permission, and it is illegal to approach

Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive  
Species

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance



# Sensitive Species

## Daytime Sea Turtle Events - Nesting

- ❖ Sea turtles rarely attempt to nest during the day;
- ❖ Typically occur from April to October;
- ❖ Sea turtle should be allowed to complete nesting with no disturbance;
- ❖ After gates have opened County staff may halt or re-direct beach traffic.

Daytime Nesting St. Augustine Beach



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

Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

**Sensitive  
Species**

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance





# Sensitive Species

## Daytime Sea Turtle Events - Hatching

- ❖ Often occur during cloudy and rainy days;
- ❖ Typically occur June to October;
- ❖ Hatchlings are allowed to travel to ocean on their own;
- ❖ Gate openings may be delayed;
- ❖ After Gates have opened, County staff may halt or re-direct beach traffic.



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

Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

**Sensitive  
Species**

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance



# 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;
- ❖ If available, please alert toll operators and lifeguards.



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

Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

**Sensitive  
Species**

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance





# Sensitive Species

## Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*)

Status: Threatened (State)

Juvenile



Adult



Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive  
Species

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance



# 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)**



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.

Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive  
Species

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance



# Sensitive Species

## Migratory Shorebirds

- ❖ Variety 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.



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 nest, and possibly beach mice burrows;
- ❖ 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.



Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive  
Species

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance



# Human Impacts & Sensitive Species

- ❖ Coastal Armoring: Permanent armoring structures diminish quality habitat by crushing nest and burrows, 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 904-209-0331, select option #7 .



Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive  
Species

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance

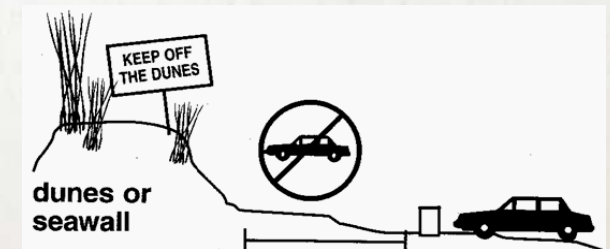




# Permit Conditions & Compliance

## Driver Awareness

- ❖ 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;
- ❖ Vehicle must be driven SEAWARD upon approaching a marked sea turtle nest;
- ❖ 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

## Commercial Fisherman Permit

- ❖ Allows vehicular beach access for Commercial Fishermen with valid State Saltwater Products License with RS endorsement;
- ❖ HCP Training and permit is valid for one year;
- ❖ Combinations provided monthly, May-October, by phone and should not be shared;
- ❖ Annual beach pass must be affixed to windshield;
- ❖ Orange permit hanging from rear-view mirror, and magnetic plaque must be affixed to both passenger and driver side doors when conducting commercial fishing activities;
- ❖ Magnetic plaque is to be displayed whenever on beach conducting commercial fishing activities.



Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive  
Species

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance





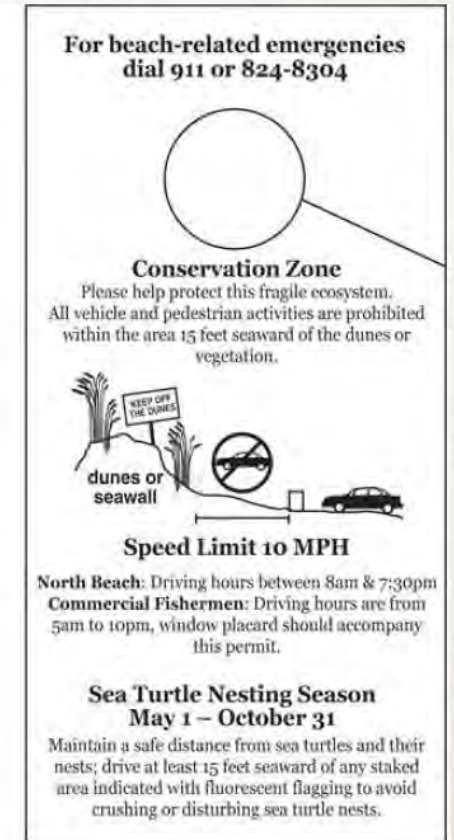
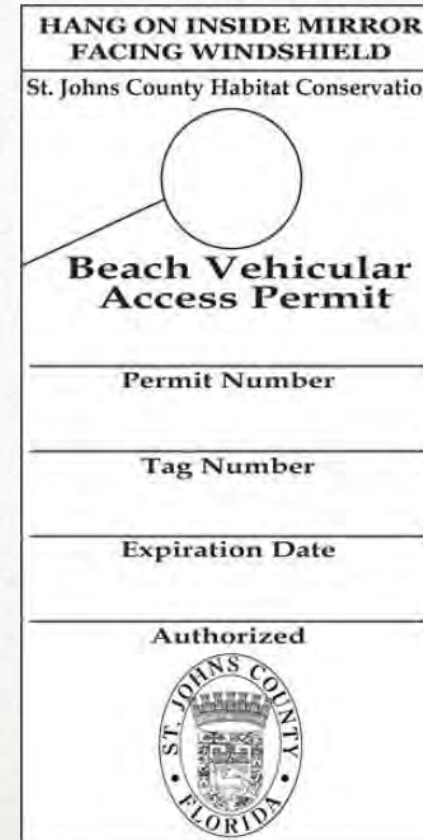
# Permit Conditions & Compliance

## Commercial Fisherman Permit

- ❖ Magnetic plaques & Vehicle Hang-tag is to be displayed whenever on beach conducting commercial fishing activities.



Permits are NON-TRANSFERABLE



Introduction & Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive Species

Human Impacts & Sensitive Species

Permit Conditions & Compliance



# Permit Conditions & Compliance

## Driving & Parking

- ❖ Commercial Fishing Hours of operation on beaches May 1 – October 31: 5:00AM to 10:00PM;
- ❖ Obtain monthly combination for Crescent Ramp, Porpoise Point, and Vilano Ramps;
- ❖ Permittees are prohibited from giving beach access combinations to unauthorized individuals;
- ❖ Before 8:00 am and after 7:30 pm drive below cone line or most recent high tide line;
- ❖ During Normal Beach Hours 8am-7:30pm, drive West of the cone line.



Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive  
Species

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance





# Permit Conditions & Compliance

## Exclusively for Permitted Commercial Fishermen



Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive  
Species

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

**Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance**



# Permit Conditions & Compliance

## Tides & Night Time Driving

- ❖ Be mindful of the changing tides ;
- ❖ Turtle Patrol looks for turtle tracks in the sand;
- ❖ Stay below the most recent high tide, so your vehicle does not traverse turtle tracks;
- ❖ At night, depending on the moon phase, use running lights or low beam headlights.



Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive  
Species

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance





# Permit Conditions & Compliance

## Think "Red/ Orange" When Fishing at Night

- ❖ The colors red & orange in the light spectrum does not disturb turtles;
- ❖ Use red/orange filter stickers on flashlights or chemlight sticks.



Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive  
Species

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance



# Permit Conditions & Compliance

## Combination Locks

- ❖ 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 part – this ruins the lock;
- ❖ Upon entering or exiting, close and lock gate behind you (especially important at Vilano Ramp);
- ❖ 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

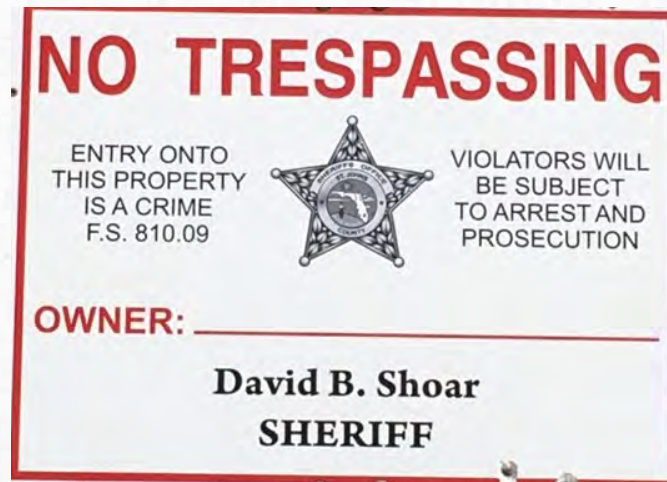




# Permit Conditions & Compliance

## 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

## Hurricane Matthew October 2016



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

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## Common Sense

- ❖ If the conditions look precarious, avoid potential hazards!



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;
- ❖ City of St. Augustine Beach contributes 2 officers solely responsible for enforcement on City beaches during the summer peak season.



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.



Introduction  
& Background

ITP/HCP

Sensitive  
Species

Human  
Impacts &  
Sensitive  
Species

Permit  
Conditions &  
Compliance





# Congratulations

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

**John Muir**



