



HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN
2024 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 19th 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 19th year of implementation.

The Annual Report was prepared by the environmental supervisor and staff 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 environmental supervisor 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 2024 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 2024 was a productive year with a recorded total of 864 nests: 831 loggerheads (*Caretta caretta*), 20 greens (*Chelonia mydas*), 9 leatherbacks (*Dermochelys coriacea*) and 4 Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*). The executive summary refers to the total number of nests (864) from county line to county line. However, within the body of the report the nesting totals will refer to the summary of nests deposited on HCP managed beaches (863) excluding Fort Matanzas National Monument from this total (unless otherwise noted). Northeast Florida experienced three tropical storms late in the season which fortunately did not impact the nesting nearly as bad as in years past. As a result, 50 nests were washed out. Both nesting and hatchling success rates are consistent with last year's percentages leading to an 85% hatchling success frequency. With a productive overall nesting season 66,986 hatchlings emerged from the sand of St. Johns County beaches.

Nests deposited on driving beaches accounted for 94 nests (11%), 735 nests (85%) on non-driving beaches and 34 nests (4%) on restricted driving beaches, with percentages representing the overall distribution of nesting. For the second year in a row, disorientation increased significantly this past season with a record year of 87 recorded observations.

From March through September, pending weather related cancelations, 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 remained steady with an increase from \$1,248,927 in 2023 to \$1,316,623 throughout the 2024 toll season.

St. Johns County Sea turtle patrol is coordinated by nine different permit holders and based solely on volunteer efforts except for park rangers in Anastasia State Park and Fort Matanzas. 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 and construction projects are 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 within the HCP implementation agreement, formally known as the ITP. The HCP annual report consists 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 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 2024 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 HCP program. All twelve zones are surveyed daily and coordinated by nine 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. The 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.

Currently, beach passes are sold as annual and daily passes with varying fees that relate to residents, non-residents, and handicap visitors. Daily passes are sold at a flat fee of \$10 but at a discounted rate of \$5 for handicapped and active-duty military visitors. Annual passes are sold at a flat fee of \$50 for residents, \$100 for non-residents, \$40 for handicapped visitors, and provided free of charge to disabled veterans.

Gate Openings

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

Nighttime Gate Closures

From May 1 until October 31 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

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 during the fireworks display across the bay from the City of St. Augustine.

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. For the 2024 season, 18 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

The HCP requires that sea turtle patrol volunteers to complete annual HCP training, 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 beaches where driving is allowed are provided with 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.

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. Toll booth operations will be introducing credit and debit card payment options at all the toll booth entrances.

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
2023	61,214	12,898	NA	NA	\$1,248,926	NA
2024	65,298	13,235	NA	NA	\$1,316,623	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.

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: Besides the occasional seizing up of the locks which would be replaced within one day, there were no reports of issues or vandalized gates for the 2024 season.

Program Improvements: During the 2025 season County staff will be testing out more efficient locking mechanisms to ensure easy access to those permitted individuals.

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 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, giving responsibility to the volunteers of the State to collect and report data relating 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
High Risk - South Ponte Vedra Beach - North Beach - Vilano Beach - St. Augustine Beach - Crescent Beach Vehicles, Development, Horseback Riding, Multiple Public Beach Access Points	4 stakes, coded, bright fluorescent flagging and 1 yellow FWC placard - Driving beaches; reflective numbers placed on stake by County staff at 45 days of incubation	- 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
Medium Risk - Ponte Vedra Beach - Summer Haven Development, Horseback Riding, Limited Public Access	3 stakes, coded, bright fluorescent flagging and 1 yellow FWC placard	Self-releasing grids (only after predation, if permitted) - Dummy nest perimeter staking, only after poaching indicated consult with FWC and HCP for direction
Low Risk *GTMNERR - Anastasia State Park Emergency and State Vehicle use, limited development, limited public access	3 stakes, coded, bright fluorescent flagging and 1 yellow FWC placard	Self-releasing grids (only after predation, if permitted) - 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.

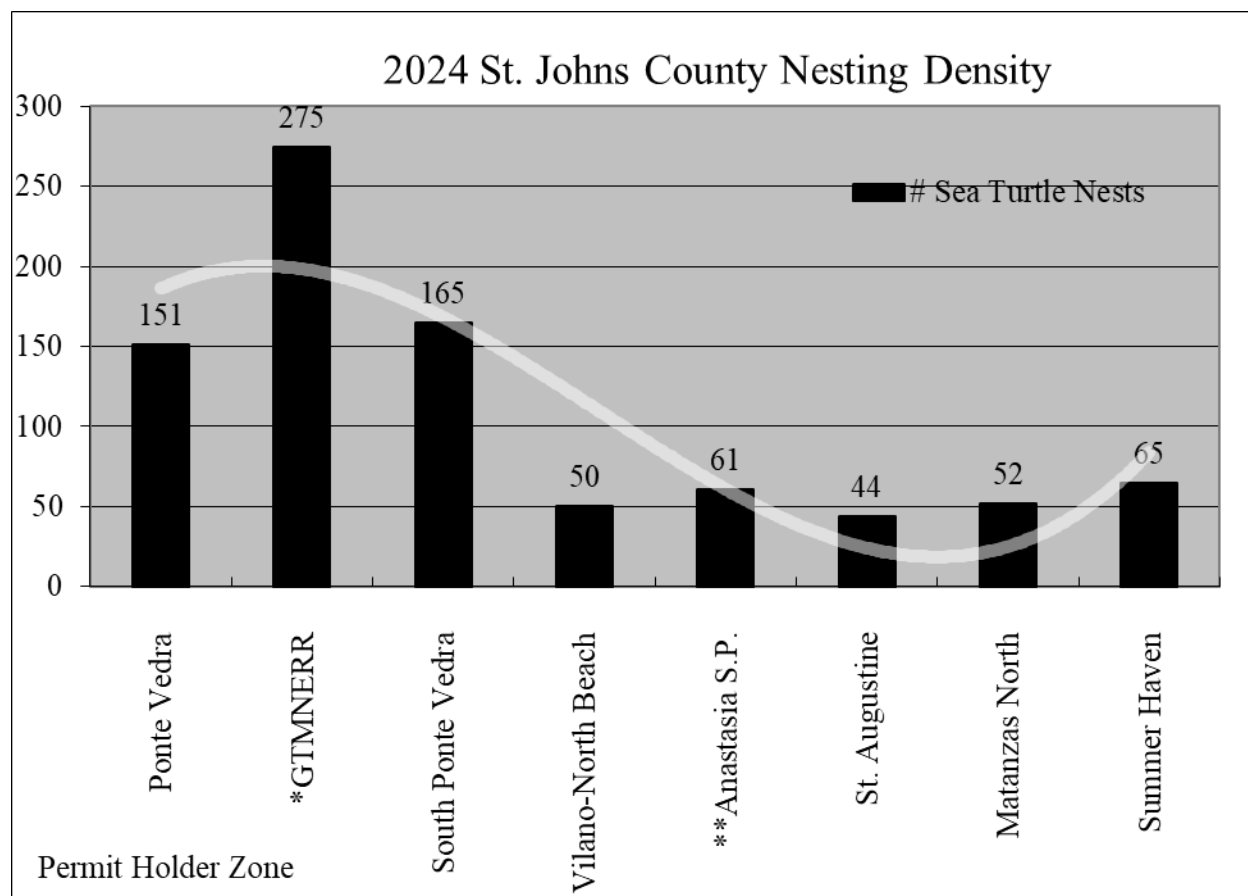
Survey Areas

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 2024 Season ($n = 863$)

*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 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 #029 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 access. 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 access ramps for beach driving. 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. The 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.

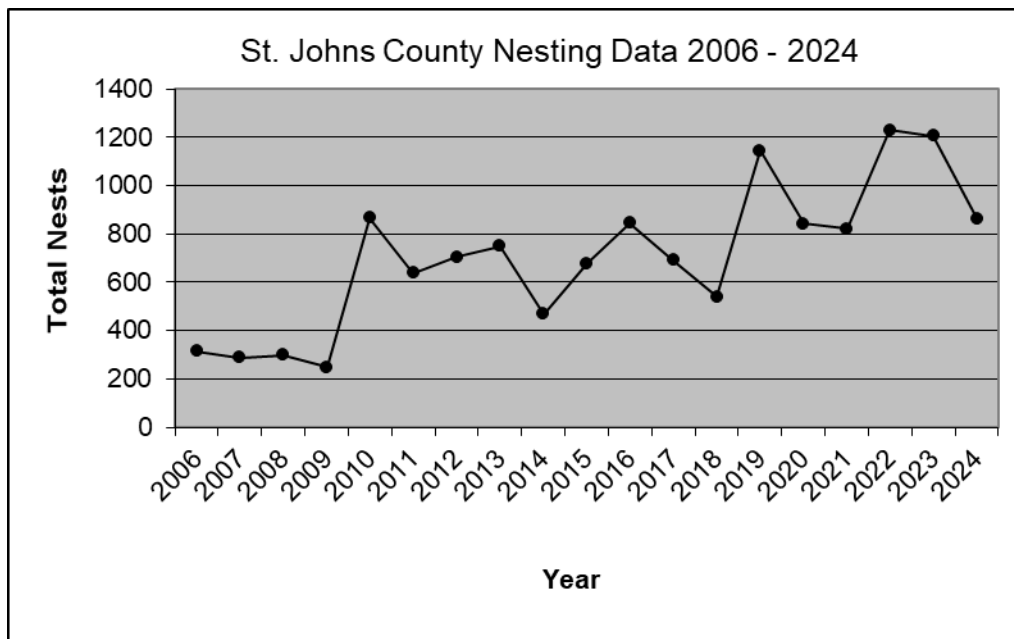
Summer Haven: FWC Permit #046 Matanzas South. This beach as it is commonly referred to as Summer Haven starts at Matanzas inlet south to the St. Johns and Flagler County line. Within this area are 2.56 miles (4.11 kilometers) of single-family homes and multiple construction projects such as a sand berm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

Assessment: As outlined in the SSTMP the County offered HCP annual training in the form of online training. Many of the volunteers attended one of the two pre-season meetings offered in April. Throughout the season weekly nesting data was submitted online or in the form of a spreadsheet. The environmental supervisor completed at least one day of survey with each MTP or their volunteers. 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. A variety of conservation measures aimed at recovering the species have 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. A total of 864 sea turtle nests were documented this season. Hatching success rates are consistent with last year's percentages leading to an 85% hatchling success frequency. With such a productive year of nesting, 66,986 hatchlings emerged from the sand of St. Johns County beaches. Annual nesting has remained at a steady level in comparison from 2006 to 2024 (Graph 2).

Graph 2. St. Johns County Nesting Data 2006-2024

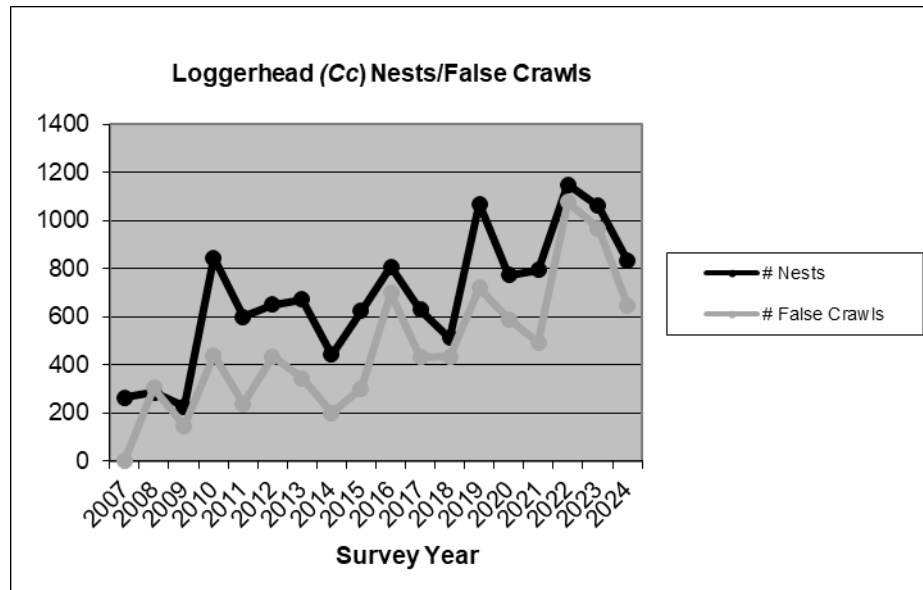


Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*)

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute from 1989 to 2021 a complex pattern with three distinct phases has been demonstrated: increase (1989 – 1998), decrease (1998-2007) and increase (2007–2021) 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 831 nests.

- 831 nests recorded
- 47 washed out
- 44 relocated
- 64,598 hatchlings emerged
- 85% hatchling success rate
- 52 days average incubation
- 645 false crawls

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

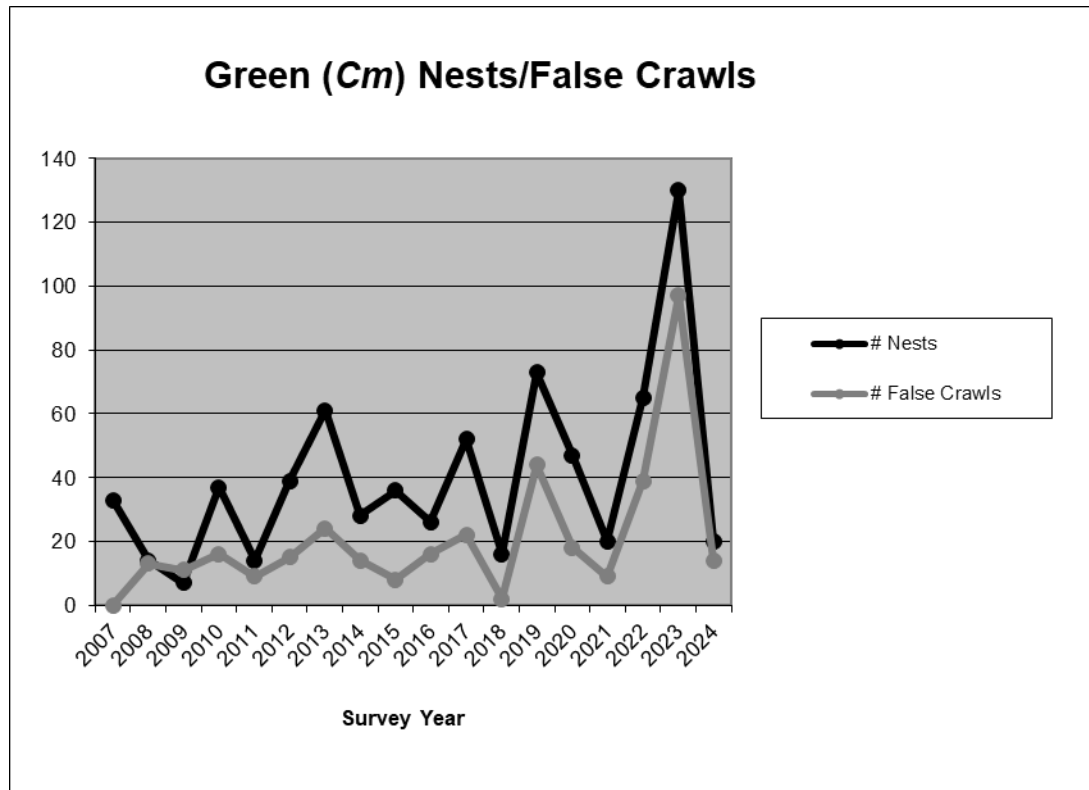


Green (*Chelonia mydas*)

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 \(conserveturtles.org\)](https://www.conserveturtles.org/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 a record high of 130 nests (Graph 4) compared to this year with 20 nests.

- 20 nests recorded
- 3 washed out
- 0 relocated
- 1,620 hatchlings emerged
- 79% hatchling success rate
- 58 days average incubation
- 14 false crawls

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

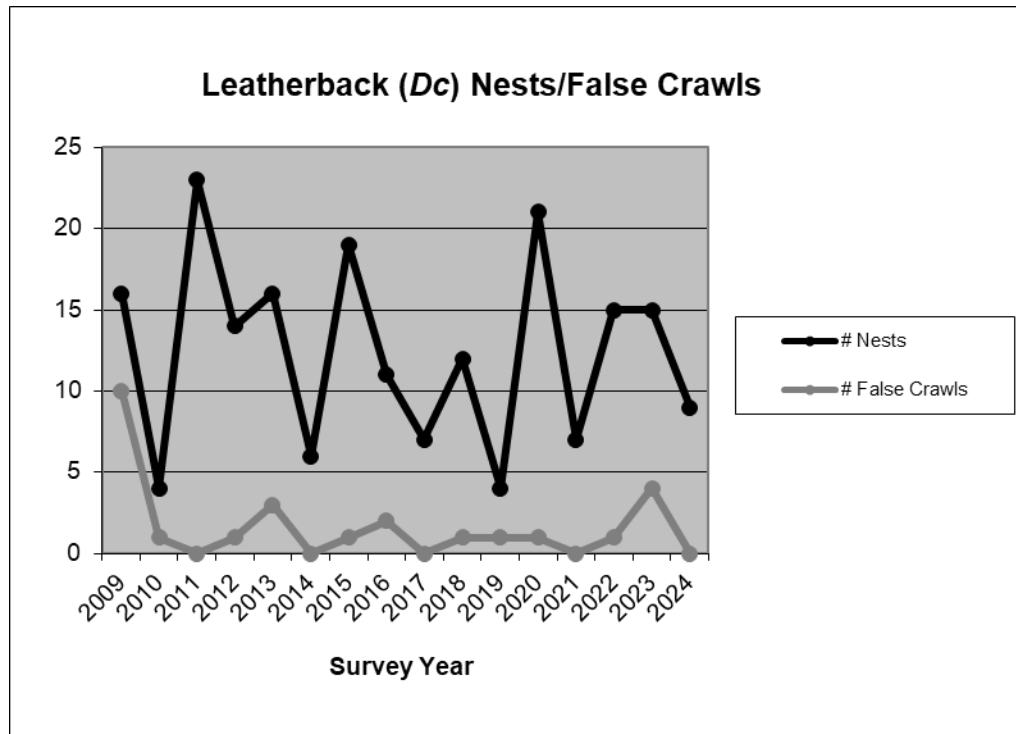


Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

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 9 nests in 2024 (Graph 5) compared to a record low of 4 nests in 2019 and a record high of 23 nests in 2011.

- 9 nests recorded
- 0 washed out
- 0 nests relocated
- 552 hatchlings emerged
- 89% hatchling success rate
- 65 days average incubation
- 0 false crawls

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

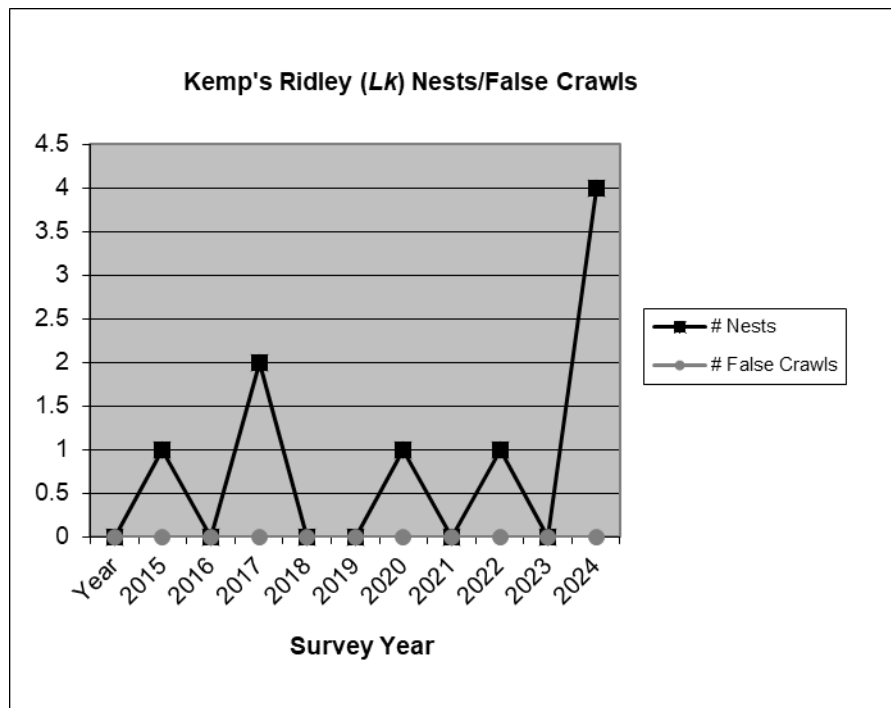


Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*)

Kemp's ridley turtles are a very rare nester for St. Johns County given that they historical nest in Mexico and more recently on a stretch of beach in Texas. However, this season we had a record of 4 Kemp's ridley nests within the county, all of which were laid during the daytime. There was one report of harassment by beach goers, but the female was still able to successful deposit her clutch and make it back to the sea.

- 4 nests recorded
- 0 washed out
- 0 nests relocated
- 216 hatchlings emerged
- 56% hatchling success rate
- 50 days average incubation
- 0 false crawls

Graph 5. Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*) Nests/False Crawls



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

Incubation Periods and Hatching Success

The northern barrier island, Anastasia Island as well as the southern barrier island commonly referred to as Summer Haven recorded incubation periods and hatching success rates all within normal limits for this region.

Relocated Nests

Nests are relocated for various reasons and documented according to the circumstance. Although 864 nests were naturally deposited, 32 nests were relocated to other beaches because of sand placement projects. In response to a washout event 10 nests were relocated, and 2 nests were relocated for unknown reasons. Therefore, a total of 44 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

Some volunteers applied protection methods like self-releasing cages and screens to prevent negative effects like predators impacting the nests. A total of 230 of the recorded nests were impacted by predation, only one of which resulted in a complete loss caused by a fox:

- 23 Fox
- 6 Dog
- 7 Ant
- 0 Raccoon
- 190 Crab
- 4 Unknown

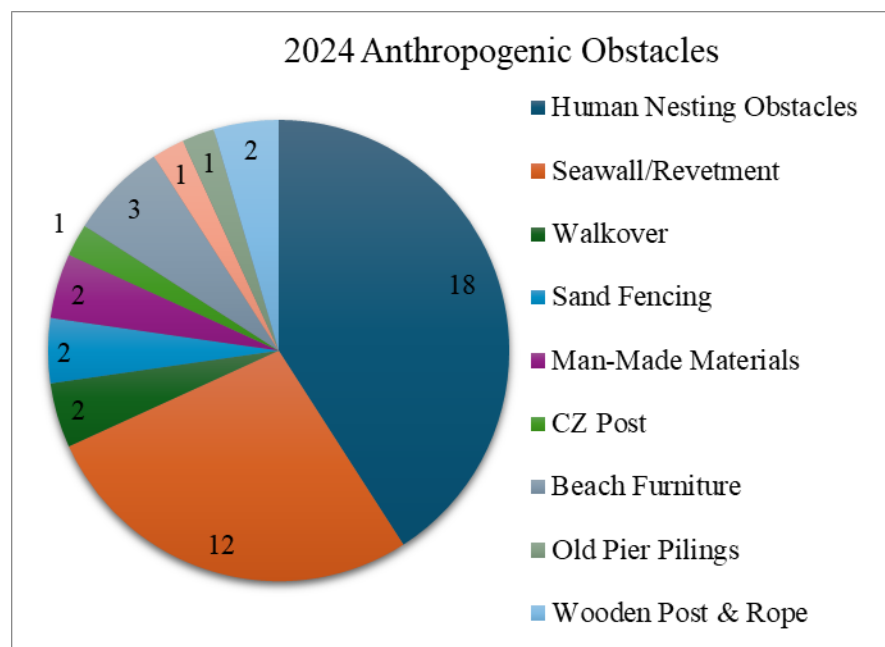
Tidal Inundation/Washout

Tidal inundations 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 50 nests from washout events.

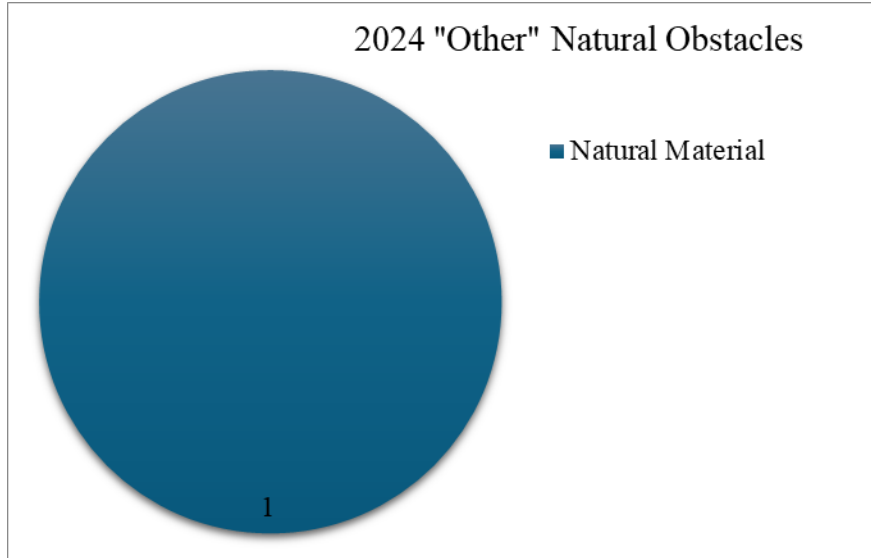
Obstacles Encountered

Obstacles encountered during nesting events are documented under two categories: anthropogenic (human) and other natural obstacles (Graphs 6 & 7). Additionally, when an obstacle is encountered FWC requires MTPs to record the impact and outcome. This information is entered into a statewide system and tracked by FWC biologist.

Graph 6. Human obstacles encountered during nesting events



Graph 7. 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, the relationship of nesting to the Conservation Zone (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 94 nests (11%), 735 nests (85%) on non-driving beaches and 34 nests (4%) 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	94	24%	11%
Non-driving	29.2	735	71%	85%
Restricted	2.1	34	5%	4%
Total	41.1	863	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 345 nests (40%), 336 nests (39%) were located outside of the CZ, and 15 nests (2%) within the driving lane, and 167 nests (20%) were documented in areas not having a CZ present.

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 759 nests (88%) were deposited on beaches with a dune present, no nests (0%) were deposited in front of an escarpment, 97 nests (11%) in front of sea wall, 7 nests (1%) in front of installed geo-tubes on Ponte Vedra beach and no nests (0%) were observed in front of a rock revetment.

Temporal Patterns

The 2024 nesting season began earlier than the official start date of May 1st with a leatherback nest observed on Crescent Beach on April 8th. This was followed up with a loggerhead nest on May 1st. The first green sea turtle of the season was documented on June 30th and continued until September 22nd. More information can be found in Table 4 below.

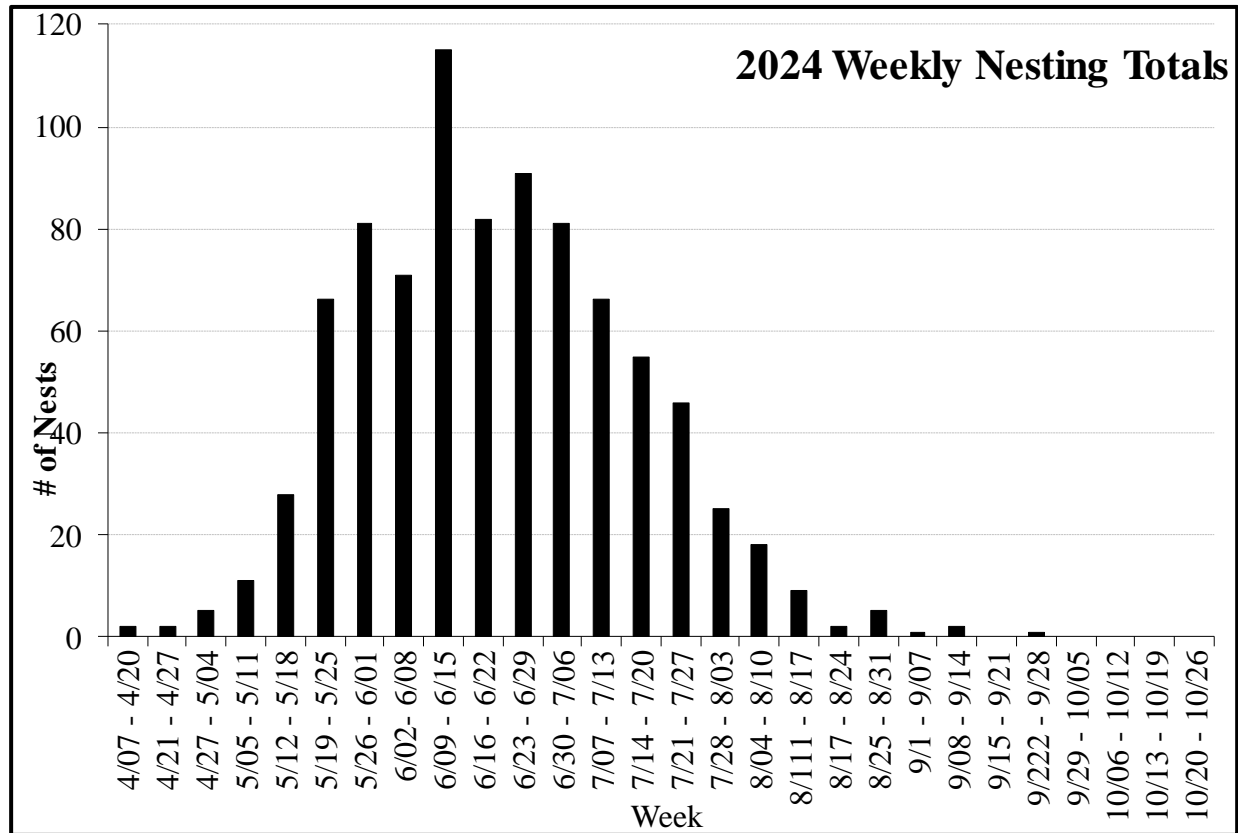
Table 4. Temporal patterns of nesting

Species	Date	Location
Cc (Earliest)	5/1/2024	Mickler's Beach
Cc (Latest)	8/31/2024	North Ponte Vedra
Cm (Earliest)	6/30/2024	Mickler's Beach
Cm (Latest)	9/22/2024	GTMNERR North
Dc (Earliest)	4/8/2024	Crescent Beach
Dc (Latest)	6/15/2024	Crescent Beach

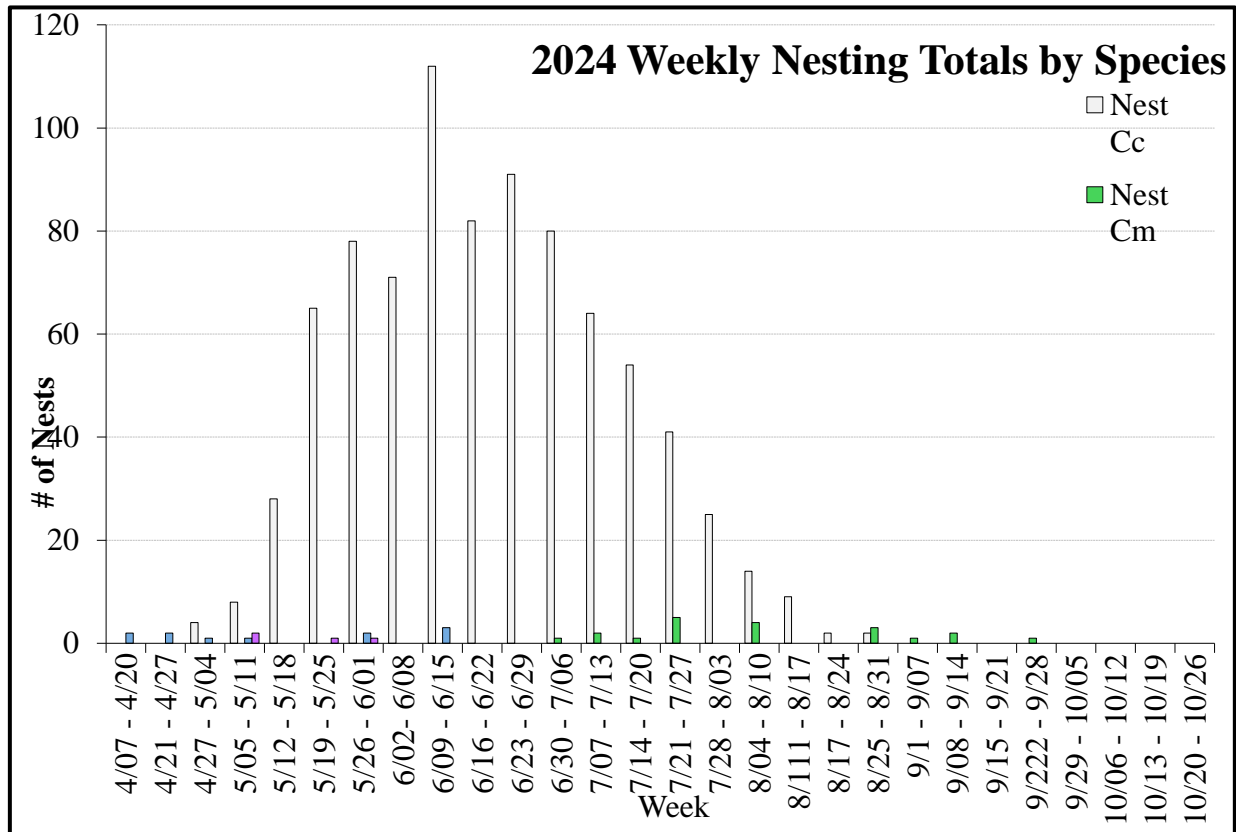
*Cc (*Caretta caretta*) loggerhead | Cm (*Chelonia mydas*) green | Dc (*Dermochelys coriacea*) leatherback

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. Graph 8 below has additional information. 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 9).

Graph 8. Weekly Nesting Totals ($n = 864$)



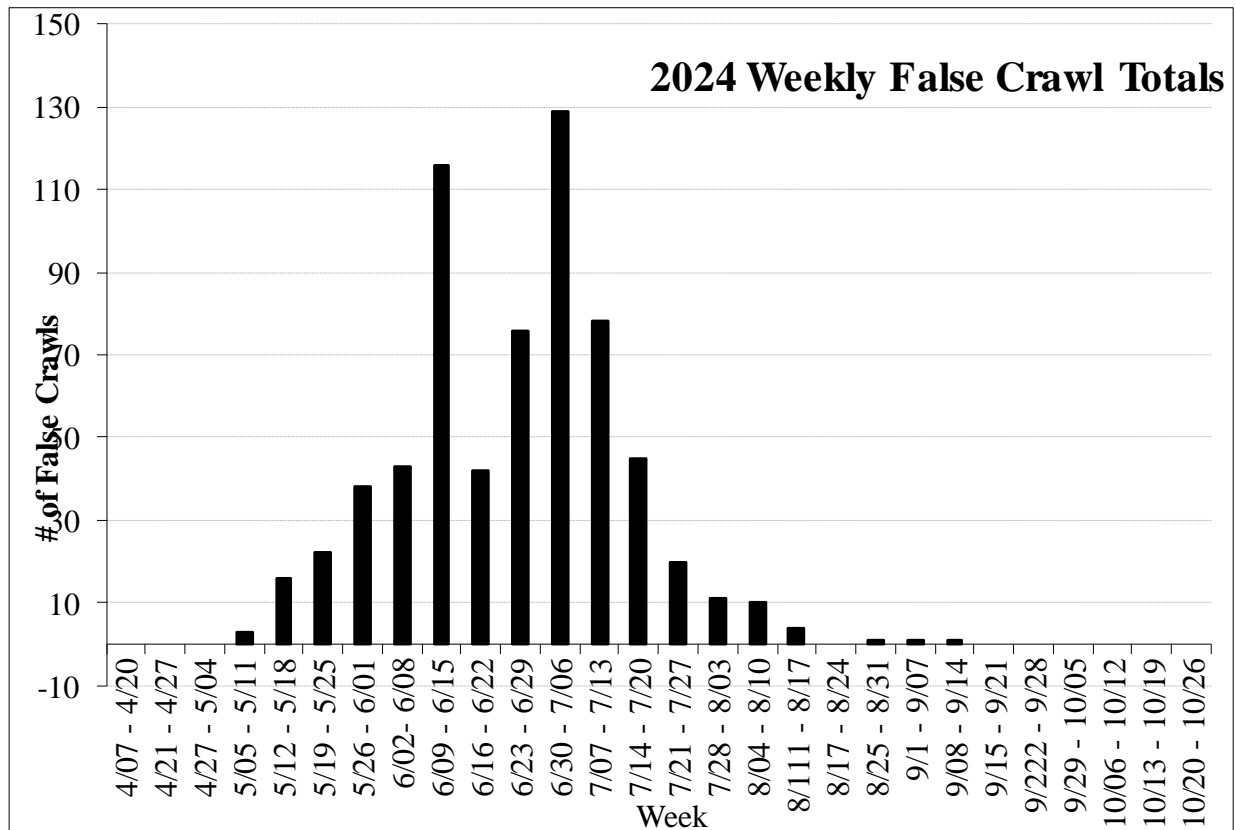
Graph 9. Weekly Nesting Totals by Species ($n = 864$)



False Crawl Summary

False crawls and nesting events somewhat maintain the same pattern throughout the summer with peaks and valleys (Graph 10). In summary for false crawls, 63 (10%) were recorded on driving beaches, 21 (3%) on restricted driving beaches, and 572 (87%) recorded on non-driving beaches.

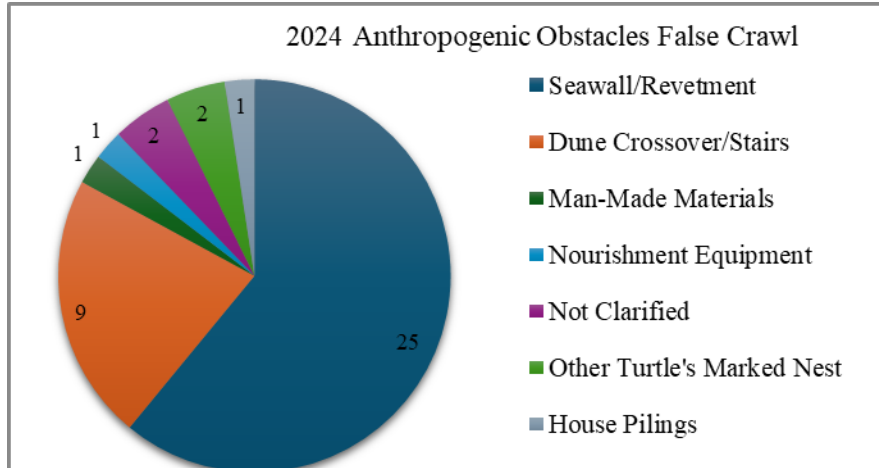
Graph 10. Weekly False Crawl Totals ($n = 659$)



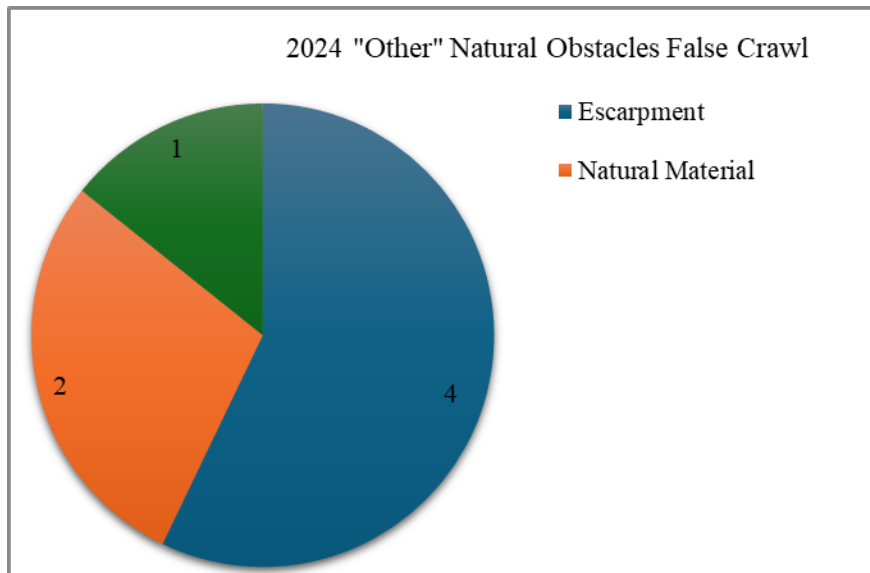
When documenting a false crawl, the volunteer also records shore type, location or apex of the crawl, and any obstacles encountered.

Just like nesting, obstacles encountered during false crawl events are documented under two categories: anthropogenic and other natural obstacles. See Graphs 11 and 12 below.

Graph 11. Human obstacles encountered during false crawl events



Graph 12. Natural obstacles encountered during false crawl events



Disorientations

In 2024, a total of 87 disorientations were either reported to the Beach Lighting Officer, discovered on data sheets when turned in at the end of the season or discovered on the FWC reporting platform of Survey123 (Table 6). Disorientations occurred in 9.9 % of the overall 863 nests within St. Johns County beaches. The peak hatching season on St. Johns County Beaches is typically July and August which coincides with the higher number of disorientations during this time. Important factors that could have contributed to this number of disorientations are growth of vacation rentals and 11.9 miles of beach being nourished during the 2024 nesting season.

The North Ponte Vedra Beach Restoration Project (NPVBRP) was from March 2024-July 2024 and covered 8.9 miles of beach, covering zones 1, 2 and 3 (Table 5). The county had the most disorientation in zones 1 and 2 (Graph 13). There was a total of 37 disorientations in zones 1, 2, and 3 combined, and 70% of those disorientations had hatchlings travel north. One theory the county has is that due to the slope of the beach post-nourishment, the hatchlings were unable to see the ocean and had better visibility North of the Jacksonville skyglow.

When a disorientation occurs, the county requests that MTPHs, and their volunteers report the disorientation to the Beach Lighting Officer on the day of the event. This allows for a follow-up investigation that can be completed on the night of the event. This process gave the county the best chance of finding the possible cause of the disorientation to ensue. Of the 87 disorientations, 23 were found to have a lighting violation in proximity on the night that the follow up report was completed. For more information regarding the Beach Lighting Management Plan and how it is implemented, refer to Section 10.

The table below demonstrates the ten geographic areas that each MTP manages. Each area is given an associated zone number that provides for more concise data reporting shown on latter graphs and tables throughout this report.

Table 5. Zone Descriptions

Zone #	Boundaries
1	Duval/ St Johns County Line to Sawgrass Beach Club
2	Sawgrass Beach Club to Old Ponte Vedra Condos
3	Old Ponte Vedra Condos to North Boundary GTMNERR
4	North Boundary GTMNERR 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 Porpoise Point
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

Graph 13. Disorientations Per Zone

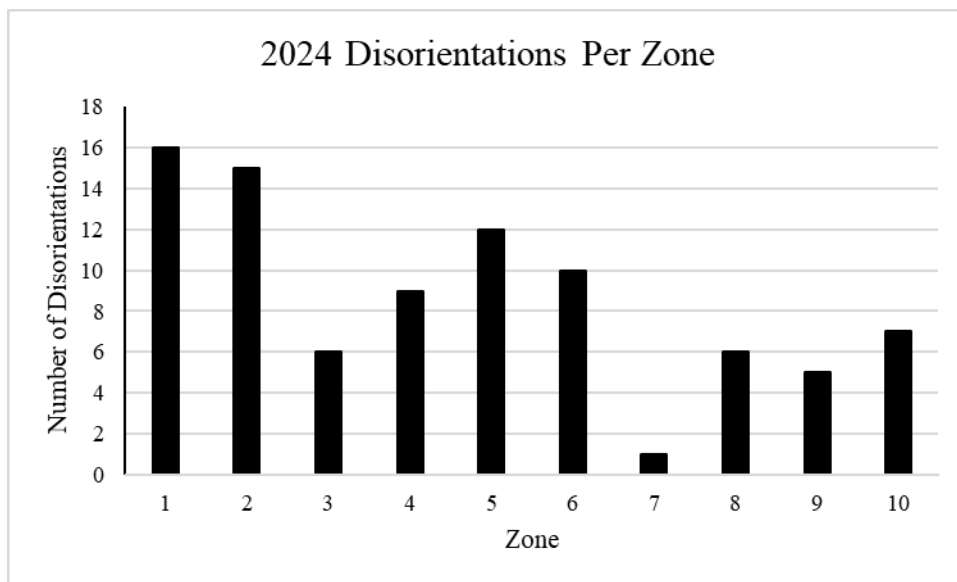


Table 6. Disorientation Summary

#	Date	Zone	Location	Direction of Travel	# of Turtles	# Dead	Light Source
1	5/19/2024	5	2927 SPVB	West	1	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
2	5/19/2024	5	2961 SPVB	West	1	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
3	5/26/2024	3	1445 Ponte Vedra Blvd	West and South	1	0	1433 PVB. White unshielded lights on east side.
4	6/7/2024	9	Summerhouse Condos	South, East and Circled	1	0	Unknown. Disoriented in a.m. No lights.
5	6/9/2024	2	895 PVB	West and Circled	1	0	White upward facing landscape lights at 901 PVB.
6	6/11/2024	8	210 Ocean Hibiscus Drive	North and West	1	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
7	6/12/2024	9	7840 A1A S	North	1	0	None observed, footprints next to exit crawl. Possibly flashlights.
8	6/13/2024	9	7018 A1A S	Unknown	1	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
9	6/23/2024	8	5490 Atlantic Vw	North	1	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
10	7/3/2024	5	3135 SPVB	North	1	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
11	7/3/2024	5	2883 SPVB	West	1	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
12	7/3/2024	8	724 Ocean Palm Way	South	1	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
13	7/5/2024	4	2.7?	S&W	>50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hrs.

14	7/5/2024	5	4190 Coastal Highway	North, South, East, West	11 to 50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
15	7/6/2024	1	729 PVB	Unknown	11 to 50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
16	7/8/2024	1	1025 Ponte Vedra Blvd	South	1	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
17	7/13/2024	1	403 PVB	North	11 to 50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
18	7/15/2024	6	3870 Coastal Highway	North, South, East, West	11 to 50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
19	7/16/2024	5	Serenata	North, South, East, West	11 to 50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
20	7/16/2024	5	2717 SPVB	North, South, West	5 to 10	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
21	7/16/2024	5	6 houses north of 4190 Coastal Hwy	North, South, East	11 to 50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
22	7/20/2024	8	D Street	North	1	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
23	7/20/2024	8	2 6th Street	North	5 to 10	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
24	7/22/2024	9	8200 A1A S	Unknown	1	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
25	7/23/2024	1	305 PVB	North	1	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
26	7/23/2024	10	9281 Old A1A	North	11 to 50	0	9281 Old A1A. Unshielded amber lights.
27	7/24/2024	1	607 PVB	West	1	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
28	7/24/2024	2	921 PVB	North	> 50	0	No lights observed.
29	7/25/2024	6	3810 Coastal Highway	South, East and Circled	11 to 50	37	3810 Coastal Highway. Interior lights and not true red lights.
30	7/28/2024	6	3560 Coastal Highway	South	>50	16	3500 CH bright blue/white unshielded light.
31	7/29/2024	5	2741 SPVB	West	5 to 10	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
32	7/29/2024	10	S of Misfit Houses	North	11 to 50	0	Likely 9293 or 9273 Old A1A exterior lighting.
33	7/30/2024	5	3175 SPVB	South	>50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
34	7/30/2024	2	895 PVB	North West and South	>50	0	4 white unshielded spotlights Ocean Ridge Ct.
35	7/30/2024	4	3.8?	North and West	5 to 10	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
36	7/30/2024	5	2773 SPVB	South and West	>50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.

37	7/31/2024	3	101 Sea Hammock	North	11 to 50	0	White lights at 125 Sea Hammock and 155 Sea Hammock.
38	7/31/2024	4	2575 SPVB	West and North	11 to 50	0	Spotlight at 2575 SPVB.
39	8/1/2024	4	North of North GTM Access	North	11 to 50	0	No houses on the beach here. Unknown.
40	8/2/2024	3	1421 PVB	North	11 to 50	0	Various white lights in Sea Hammock.
41	8/2/2024	1	517 PVB	North	5 to 10	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
42	8/2/2024	1	305 PVB	North and West	1	0	Ponte Vedra Inn and Club / 305 PVB interiors.
43	8/2/2024	10	9281 Old A1A	North	>50	4	Bright unshielded amber floodlights at 9281 Old A1A.
44	8/3/2024	4	2543 SPVB	West	11 to 50	0	Bright interior lights at 2541 SPVB.
45	8/3/2024	4	3141 SPVB	North and West	>50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
46	8/3/2024	5	2909 SPVB	North	11 to 50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
47	8/3/2024	4	1.4?	West	11 to 50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
48	8/4/2024	2	905 PVB	South and West	>50	1	White lights at 909 and 911 PVB.
49	8/9/2024	3	1263 PVB	North	11 to 50	0	No lights observed.
50	8/10/2024	2	959 PVB	North	11 to 50	0	No lights observed.
51	8/10/2024	2	921 PVB	North	>50	0	No lights observed.
52	8/10/2024	2	1151 PVB	North	>50	0	No lights observed.
53	8/10/2024	2	120 Sea Hammock Way	North	>50	0	No lights observed.
54	8/10/2024	4	2453 SPVB	North West and South	11 to 50	0	No lights observed.
55	8/10/2024	7	ASSP	West	11 to 50	0	No houses on the beach here. Unknown.
56	8/10/2024	6	3736 Coastal Highway	North and West	11 to 50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
57	8/10/2024	6	4064 Coastal Highway	West and North	>50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
58	8/11/2024	2	921 PVB	North	11 to 50	0	No lights observed.
59	8/11/2024	3	1271 PVB	North	11 to 50	0	No lights observed.
60	8/11/2024	6	3308 Coastal Highway	North and West	>50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
61	8/12/2024	6	3148 Coastal Highway	West	5 to 10	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
62	8/14/2024	6	3880 Coastal Highway	North & South	11 to 50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
63	8/14/2024	10	9249 Old A1A	West and south	>50	0	No lights observed.

64	8/19/2024	1	405 PVB	North	11 to 50	0	No Lights observed.
65	8/26/2024	1	833 PVB	North and West	11 to 50	0	Interior lights at 831, 833 and 835 PVB.
66	8/26/2024	10	9409 Old A1A	West	1	0	Nested at top of dune. Possibly A1A headlights? Unknown.
67	8/27/2024	10	9200 Old A1A	West	11 to 50	0	No Lights observed.
68	8/27/2024	10	9183 Old A1A	West	11 to 50	0	No Lights observed.
69	8/28/2024	1	729 PVB	North	11 to 50	0	No Lights observed.
70	8/29/2024	2	917 PVB	West then scattered	11 to 50	0	No Lights observed.
71	8/29/2024	2	911 PVB	West then scattered	>50	0	Interior and exterior lights at 909 and 911 PVB.
72	8/29/2024	4	2601 SPVB	South	11 to 50	0	Exterior light at 2603 SPVB and interior at 2601 SPVB.
73	8/29/2024	2	915 PVB	North	>50	0	Interior and exterior lights at 909 and 911 PVB.
74	8/29/2024	2	911 PVB	North	>50	0	Interior and exterior lights at 909 and 911 PVB.
75	8/29/2024	6	3810 Coastal Highway	North and South	11 to 50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
76	8/29/2024	2	1157 PVB	South	>50	0	Interior and exterior lights on 1159, 1161, 1157 PVB.
77	8/31/2024	1	351 PVB	North	11 to 50	0	Exterior lights at 349 PVB.
78	8/31/2024	1	681 PVB	North	11 to 50	0	Interior lights at Retreat V.
79	8/31/2024	1	695 PVB	North	11 to 50	0	No lights observed.
80	8/31/2024	3	101 Sea Hammock	North	11 to 50	0	No lights observed.
81	9/2/2024	9	7672/7642 A1A S	North	11 to 50	1	2 white exterior lights at 7680 A1A S.
82	9/3/2024	1	9795 Summer Place	North and West	11 to 50	0	No lights observed.
83	10/3/2024	6	3520 Coastal Highway	West	5 to 10	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
84	10/4/2024	1	527 PVB	Northeast and Southeast	11 to 50	0	No lights observed.
85	10/5/2024	8	Ocean Hammock Park	West	11 to 50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
86	10/28/2024	1	519 PVB	Northeast and Southeast	5 to 10	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.
87	9/29/24	2	915 PVB	West and North	>50	0	Unknown. Not reported to the county within 48 hours.

Program Improvements: The County will continue to improve its data recording including utilizing the state's on-line reporting system, including utilizing a new software application to record lighting violations in a more efficient manner. The county will also 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 aid 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 whether an emergence took place, if the nests received or did not receive rut removal and why (i.e. storm, could not locate, etc.). Rut removal is conducted using an ATV equipped with a heavy duty drag harrow attached to the rear of the vehicle and using large light-weight aluminum ball field rakes. Nightly efforts also include filling in holes, applying HCP stickers to discarded 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 to public driving but was checked each night for ruts left by law enforcement or marine rescue, and hand raked accordingly. Summer Haven was included as part of the evening routine for rut removal using the ATV and drag harrow.

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. HCP staff were still scheduled nightly to conduct evening walks to check for possible ruts by designated nests. This is due to marine rescue and law enforcement entering this beach on occasion. Any ruts present were hand raked accordingly.

St. Augustine/Crescent Beach

At least two 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 winds 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. 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 failed due to storms and high tides constantly changing the topography of this dynamic area. Throughout the summer this beach is patrolled almost daily by law enforcement and weekly by staff. HCP staff were scheduled as needed to conduct rut removal on designated nests using the ATV and drag harrow. Even though staff 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 and from south of the Matanzas Inlet to the Flagler County Line (Summer Haven). Rut removal procedures began on May 30th on south beaches and concluded on October 23rd for a period of 146 days on 144 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
Vilano	6/23/24	10/23/2024	122	48
St. Augustine	6/23/24	10/11/24	110	44
Crescent	5/30/24	10/13/24	136	52

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 and attempts will be made to retain well-trained staff with experience.

SECTION 5: IMPLEMENTATION

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

- 1.f. HCP Management Activities.** *“Official vehicles 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 Staff Enforcement.** *“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 the 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 include information 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 County Beach Services Staff, Law Enforcement, and County Growth Management staff.

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. The addition of another full-time employee (an Environmental Technician) will be implemented for the 2025 season. 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)	2	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	2	0	0
Parking/Driving after hours Sec.5.03 (c); 5.05	1	0	1
Commercial Fishermen Sec.5.05	0	0	0
Conservation Zone Encroachment Sec. 7.01(b)	1473	121	1
Disturbance/Removal of CZ Vegetation Sec. 7.01(c)	0	0	0
Driving in a 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	1479	121	2
Beach Code Violations			
Violation	VW	WW	CC
Conduct Sec. 3.00	1,607	10	92
Animals Sec.3.02(c)	0	0	0
Leash Law 2001-19 Sec.4.00	1,492	43	2
Litter Sec.3.09(a)	0	0	0
Tents, Chairs, Catamarans etc. Sec.3.09(b)	2	0	0
Fireworks/Explosives Sec.3.13	1	0	3
Vehicles Sec. 5.00	976	171	83
Section Total	4,078	224	180
Totals	5,557	345	182
Grand Total	6,084		

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

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

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

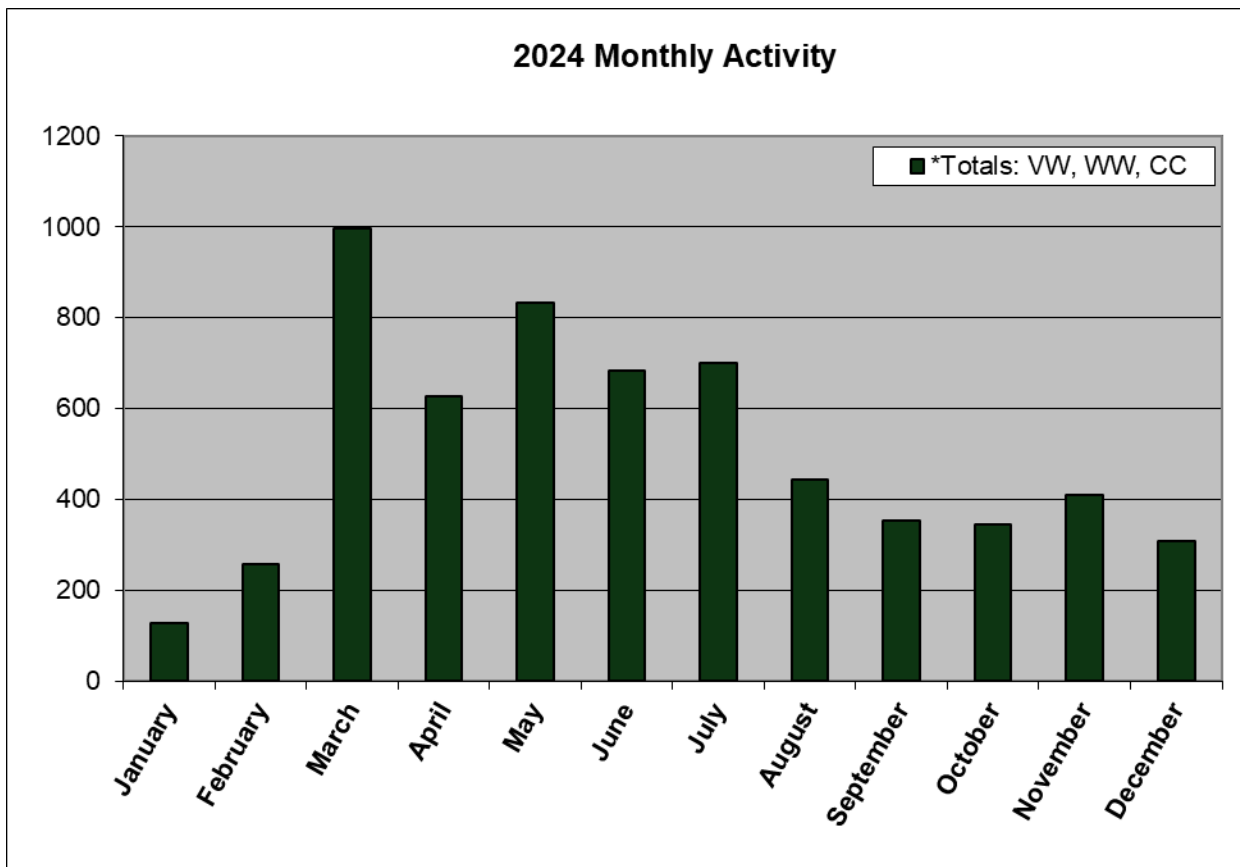
HCP Non-citation Responses	
Stranded Turtle Response	9
Injured Bird Response	24
Gopher Tortoise Response	7
Beached Marine Mammal	2
Permit Check	18
CF &/or Net Fishing Check	0
NRD assist FWC	2
Total	62

HCP field technicians work closely with law enforcement to clear the beaches of vehicles and close beach gates. An 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 law enforcement and HCP technicians.

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. 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 14 below).

Graph 14. Monthly Law Enforcement Activity



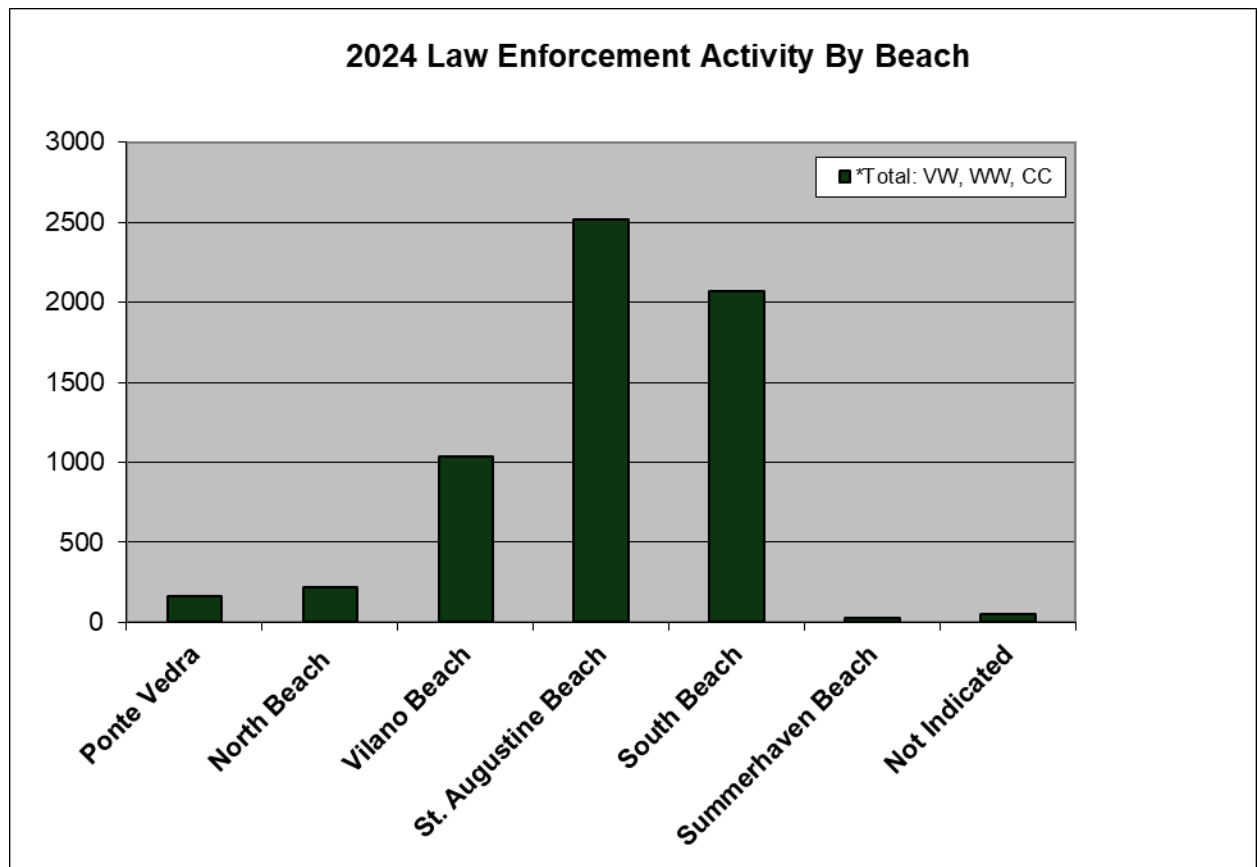
Daily recordings of violations are further broken down into geographic regions excluding the GTMNERR as this stretch of beach receives law enforcement on an as needed basis. The access at each beach varies from walking to horseback riding to driving access. Below is a breakdown of those accesses and 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. The 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 15. Law Enforcement Activity by Beach



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 nine 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 managers provide administrative and fiscal support while beach services provide 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 tasks 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 high levels of consistency. Program improvements include additional training for the implementation of the HCP as well as more precise record keeping. An additional full-time employee will be on board for the 2025 season.

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 at many different levels and input 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 streamline data collection and communication including the encouragement of MTPs to utilize the FWC nesting application.

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 streamline 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.sjcfl.us>), social media and on the “Reach the Beach” application offered by the County. The county website provides information to its residents and visitors detailing 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 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

Each beach access point has varying types of educational signage installed throughout the year. 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 seasonally.

Special Events

Beach services staff 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 relate 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 [Habitat Conservation - St. Johns County \(sjcfl.us\)](http://Habitat Conservation - St. Johns County (sjcfl.us)). 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 130 door hangs, 5,706 postcards, 100 magnets, 163 resource sheets, 1,464 newsletters, and 30 stickers to coastal properties via mail, email, or at events. These materials are specific to the HCP and coastal wildlife conservation efforts.

Education Programs

Staff had an HCP booth at Ancient City Kids Day. At the booth, the topic of discussion was the importance of compliant beach lighting and educating the public on ways they can protect sea turtles. A craft was created for 250 kids on Ancient City Kids Day. Staff also gave presentations to Sawgrass Beach Club, the St. Augustine Garden Club and at various local condominiums about the HCP.

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. 87 “no flashlight” signs were posted in May and remained up until November.

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:

- 995 Minor/ 6 Major

- Special requests before 8 am on driving beaches:

- 3 Minor/ 2 Major

- Special requests before 9 am on non-driving beaches:
 - 0 Minor/ 0 Major
- Total CSAB:
 - 437 Minor/ 0 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 to reach all stakeholders.

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 trash and recycling bin elevated on 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 as no negative issues have been documented.

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 location of the beach.

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 jetty.

South beaches are significantly broader in terms of management due to the length and vastness of the shoreline as well as the extremity of tidal fluctuations. An increased number of CZ posts are installed 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 jetty 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 sand 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 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 seek 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 a 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 a program should 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.

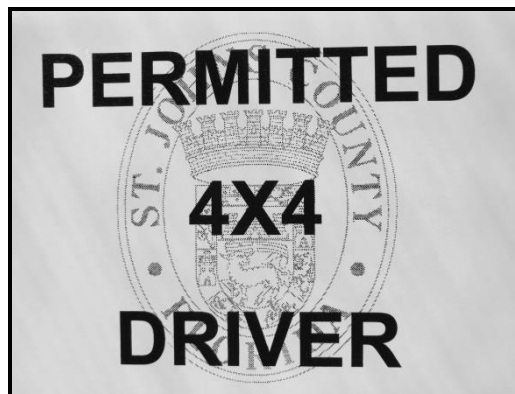
The completed hangtag permit displays an authorizing signature, permit number, tag number and expiration date; the backside of the hangtag displays HCP rules/regulations and the Sheriff's non-emergency number to dispatch Natural Resource Deputies in the event of observed violations or to assist animals 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
2007	40	39
2008	63	48
2009	101	48
2010	147	78
2011	161	76
2012	117	58
2013	100	64
2014	81	46
2015	107	64
2016	93	56
2017	0	0
2018	0	0
2019	9	9
2020	27	27
2021	46	46
2022	52	52
2023	38	38
2024	71	71

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 always remain below the high tide line, and access terminates at the Usina Ramp, adjacent to the Reef Restaurant Parking lot - 4100 Coastal Hwy. The Protected Species online training PowerPoint presentation was updated to reflect the 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 a 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 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 Lighting Officers implement the program through routine education efforts, routine nightly surveys, and home inspections.

Community Education Effort

April	Beach Lighting Officer met with large beachfront condo associations to discuss previous and ongoing lighting violations to ensure the property is brought into compliance with the Land Development Code before May 1 st . Each condo association was individually consulted with. Educational material was also given including door hangs, copies of Article IV and lighting example pages. Beach Lighting Officer also implemented a monthly newsletter that was sent to 219 condo associations, management companies, restaurants and HOA's to inform them of the upcoming season. This newsletter was sent every month with nesting updates and educational reminders.
May	Staff posted no flashlight signs on every public walkover and drive on entrance to the beach. Beach Lighting Officer hand-delivered brochures, table tents, door hangtags, flyers, and light switch stickers to hotels, resorts, and property management companies. Beach Lighting Officer mailed 5,500 postcards to all beachfront property owners, managers, and representatives providing information on the sea turtle nesting season.
June	The second monthly newsletter went out including the first up to date nesting numbers.
July	Beach Lighting Officer gave a presentation to local condo associations about sea turtles and lights.

- Aug & Sept Beach Lighting Officer hand-delivered brochures, table tents, door hangtags, flyers and light switch stickers to hotels, resorts, and property management companies.
- October Beach Lighting Officer and Environmental Supervisor had a booth at Ancient City Kids Day.
- 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 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 Ancient City Kids Day. These events also allow for the distribution of educational material for people to take home. Over 7,882 different types of educational material were given out during the events and by the Beach Lighting Officer to local condominiums, hotels, and resorts throughout the sea turtle nesting season (see Section 6: Public Awareness Program).

New Construction

Any project that is on or adjacent to the beach or has the possibility to have any lights visible from the beach surface will receive a pre-consultation “hold” on their clearance sheet, thereby alerting the permittee that a meeting with the Beach Lighting Officer must be scheduled prior to any lighting installation. This meeting must include all exterior lighting plans including the color and wattage bulb, type of fixtures used, locations of lights and the quantities. Lighting plans and cut sheets must be provided. If there are uncompliant fixtures or bulbs, the Beach Lighting Officer will withhold signing off on the pre-consultation comment until the applicant sends compliant fixtures in the form of cut sheets. If the proposed lighting plans and cut sheets are compliant, Beach Lighting Officer will sign off on the pre-consultation hold.

This recent implementation of adding a “pre-consultation” hold was established to aid the builder/contractor with selecting compliant fixtures before any purchasing or installation. This helped minimize the number of failed inspections and wasted money on uncompliant fixtures.

All properties are required to pass a nighttime lighting inspection prior to receiving a Certificate of Occupancy (CO). The growth management department and building department are 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. 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-inspect the property and determine it to be in full compliance. Staff will upload all inspections forms into our records for future reference. In total, the Beach Lighting Officer conducted 41 nighttime inspections during the calendar year of 2024.

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 7 days a week 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.

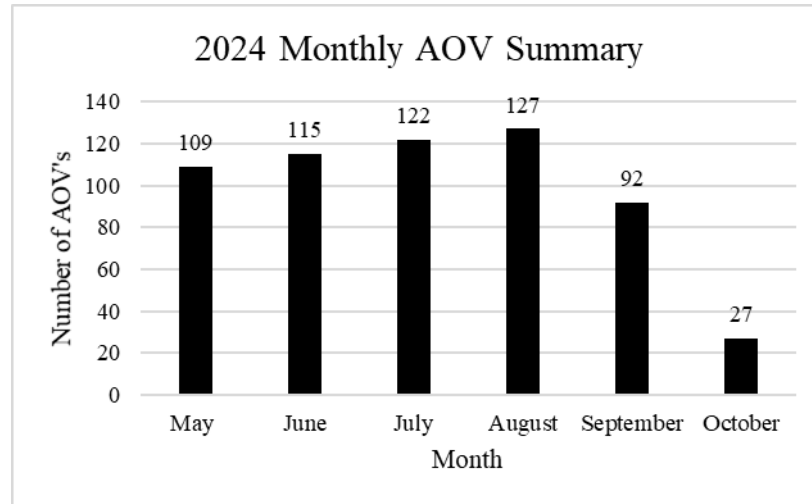
Staff delivered a total of 592 AOVs and issued 35 final warnings to property owners. The highest number of violations per kilometer was Zone 5 (2700 S. Ponte Vedra to 4100 Coastal Hwy). In this area, homes sit within 100 feet or closer to the mean high-water line and the area lacks vegetation. This zone was surveyed more frequently to prevent disorientation.

Complaint and Investigation Log

Staff recorded all complaints concerning potential lighting violations received from the public in a complaints 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 592 complaints through the Public Request Inquiry Data Exchange System (PRIDE) and permit holders reported approximately 34 complaints to the Beach Lighting Officer. All complaints were resolved or partially resolved.

Graph 16. Alert of Violation Summary

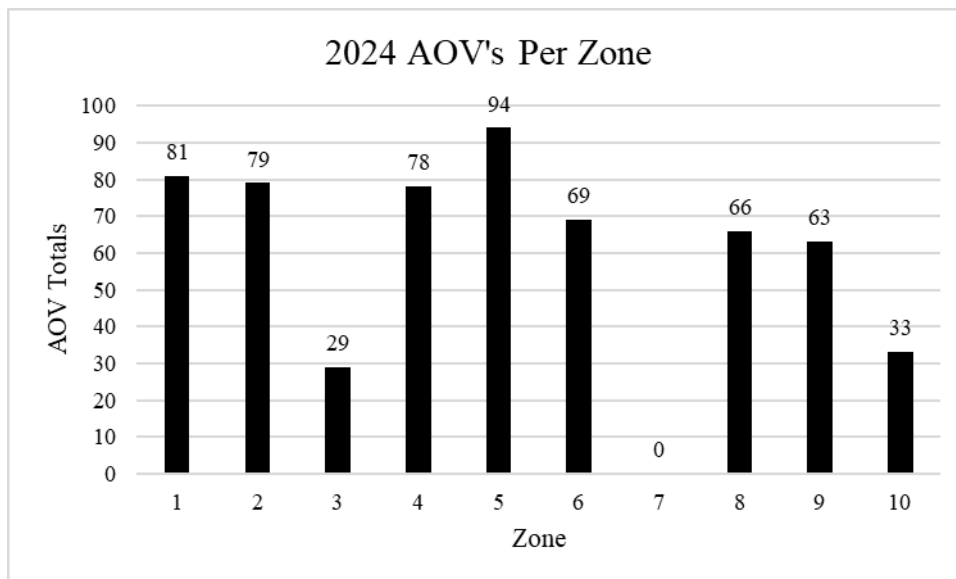


The amount of AOV's distributed to property owners increased as the season progressed. Nightly surveys decreased significantly in October due to minimal nests remaining on beaches, as well as Hurricane Milton recovery efforts.

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	81
Zone 2	8	Sawgrass Beach Club	Old Ponte Vedra Condo	5.6	79
Zone 3	3	Old Ponte Vedra Condo	GTMNERR	1.81	29
Zone 4	6	2343 S. Ponte Vedra Condo	2683 S. Ponte Vedra Blvd	6	78
Zone 5	28	2700 S. Ponte Vedra Blvd	4100Coastal Hwy (Reef Restaurant)	8.29	94
Zone 6	13	4100 Coastal Hwy (Reef Restaurant)	2 Viejo Rd. (Porpoise Point)	4.39	69
Zone 7	0	Anastasia State Park	Anastasia State Park		0
Zone 8	13	300 A1A Beach Blvd	Crescent Beach Ramp	9.81	66
Zone 9	4	Crescent Beach Ramp	Matanzas Ramp North	6.22	63
Zone 10	6	Summer Haven	9443 Old A1A	4.11	33
Total	100			51.23	592

Graph 17. Beach Lighting Percent Distribution



Program Improvements:

Beach Lighting Officer created a new section of the St. Johns County Development Review Manual to include turtle lighting requirements. Beach Lighting Officer has begun the process of updating the Land Development Code Article IV SEC 4.01.09 to reflect recent research and technological advancements which will enhance the ordinance's relevance, functionality, and effectiveness. Staff will continue to notify and consult with existing condos about non-compliant lights. Staff began working with the County's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) team to create a new app to record and deliver more violations. This app will be tested during the 2025 nesting season. Lastly, new postcards that include visuals to reach a wider audience of backgrounds have been created and are ready to mail to all coastal St. Johns County residents by April 2025.

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 were 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 been constantly challenged by the lack of delineation for a driving surface. Volunteers documented 82 nests, 3 of which were located under the homes.

The makeshift entrance to summer haven 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 permitted construction projects, contractors and vacation visitors frequent the beach without understanding the dynamics of driving.

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 beaches: Mickler’s Landing, Surfside Park, and Frank Butler Park East. Mickler’s Landing and Surfside Park access points were restricted due to staging and access for beach nourishment projects and due to limitations of parking lot size. Frank Butler Park East continues to be a popular destination for equestrians when access is seasonally open.

North of St. Augustine Inlet Beaches

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

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 for documenting 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 864 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 the calendar year 2024, a total of 125 General Equestrian and no new Master Equestrian permits were issued (Table 12). Additionally, and upon request from the equestrian permit holders, the County will replace a permit for various reasons such as lost or damaged permits.

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
2023	74	0	74
2024	125	0	125

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 get 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: Three out of the four Kemp’s ridley nesting events were observed or recorded during the 2024 season. One video was recorded by a beach patron at a safe distance and was reported to MTPH for proper data collection to occur. One video was recorded by multiple beach patrons with evidence of harassment occurring. This incident was reported to the county too late to issue any citations. The 3rd daytime event was witnessed by local Law Enforcement and county staff so crowd control and driving lane closures occurred immediately and for the duration of the nesting activity.

Daytime Hatching Events: The HCP technicians did witness some hatchling events in the early evening hours and crowd control measures were implemented to safely observe the hatchlings.

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 could 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 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 classroom 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 the 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
- If a 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 nourishment projects, installation of sand fencing and sand placement over existing geo-tubes. Throughout this year a total of 28 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, and 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. The 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 conduct 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 the same 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 2024 nesting season. New equipment was purchased this year to ensure work can be completed within the appropriate time windows.

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 events, 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.

Program Improvements: The County will continue to work closely with representatives from FWC and USFWS to improve management of protected species in this area. The county Coastal Management division is working on more shoreline stabilization projects for this area and will continue to consult with the HCP program about how those changes will potentially affect the ability for a 30-foot CZ.

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 is done so in a classroom setting. Each program provides details of the HCP/ITP, and how to identify protected species including other listed species not covered on the permit.

Assessment: Many stakeholder groups are very engaged and eager to learn about the material presented.

Program Improvements: The County will continue to update training as needed and as it pertains to the adaptive management style of the beaches. Specifically, updates to the training will streamline the main messaging catered to each stakeholder. 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.

Assessment: Ordinance amendments to the Beach Code have allowed County staff, City Police and the Sheriff’s Department 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 2024 season.

Assessment: No information to report for the 2024 season.

Program Improvements: St. Johns County will continue with open lines of communication with the USFWS and other relevant 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. HCP and ITP are currently funded through both the Environmental division and Beach Services division. The Environmental division 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 seasonal salaries, and the bulk of the operational costs.

Assessment: The natural resources superintendent is tasked with the management of the beach services budget 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. Accessory support and operational costs are demonstrated in Tables 13, 14, and 15.

Table 13. HCP/ITP Support Staff

Duties	Department	Revenue Source	Salary	% Contribution	% Actual Funds
Provides Administrative Support	Growth Management, Environmental Division	General Fund	\$118,081	5%	\$5,904
Manage Beaches/ Special Projects	Recreation & Parks	General Fund/Toll Revenue	\$69,268	50%	\$34,634
2 full time	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$103,852	75%	\$77,889
City Beach Patrol	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$200,000	100%	\$200,000
County Beach Patrol	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$1,000,000	100%	\$1,000,000
Total					\$1,318,427

Table 14. HCP/ITP Staff

Position	Duties	Department	Revenue Source	*Salary
Environmental Supervisor Full Time	Implements HCP/ITP	Growth Management, Environmental Division	General Fund	\$64,854
Environmental Specialist Full Time	HCP Support Staff	Growth Management, Environmental Division	General Fund	\$74,612
Environmental Specialist Full Time	HCP Support Staff	Growth Management, Environmental Division	General Fund	\$53,011
Environmental Technician /Volunteer Coordinator Part Time	HCP Support Staff	Growth Management, Environmental Division	General Fund	\$12,123
HCP Field Assistants	Gates/Rut Removal	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$47,088
TOTAL				\$251,688

Table 15. Operational Costs

Type	Department	Revenue Source	Funds
Communications	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$9,509
Insurance	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$12,252
HCP Maintenance	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$13,056
Equipment Purchase	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$57,854
Gas, Oil, Lubricants	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$27,856
Vehicle Maintenance	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$47,349
Equipment Maintenance	Beach Services	Toll Revenue	\$1,857
Total			\$169,733

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 2025.

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 biologists 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, 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 and consistent washouts following storms which have resulted in 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 there was 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 people entering the nesting site were decreased.

Washback Program

The Washback program is designed to respond to post-hatchling sea turtle events to recover and rehabilitate before further negative impacts can occur. The beaches are broken down into individual zones and organized by volunteer coordinators, 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 transport washbacks. Washback volunteers are invited to a general orientation meeting and are 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 collecting and reporting marine debris.

Training

- Attend one beach survey training session. See dates and locations below (No Registration Required):
 - Thursday, August 15th 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm Mickler’s Beach Access
Location: 1109½ Ponte Vedra Blvd, Ponte Vedra
 - Saturday, August 17th, 9:30 am – 10:30 am North Beach Park Access
Location: 3721 Coastal Highway, St. Augustine
 - Tuesday, August 13th, 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm Butler Beach East
Location: 5860 A1A South, St. Augustine.

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 for the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month September, October, and November

Survey Results

- | | |
|------------------------|----|
| • Number of Volunteers | 82 |
| • Number of surveys | 72 |
| • Live Washback | 3 |
| • Dead Washback | 2 |

Program Improvements: St. Johns County would like to improve the application process for the volunteers and partnering with local non-profit clean-up groups for more oversight with the volunteer application process.

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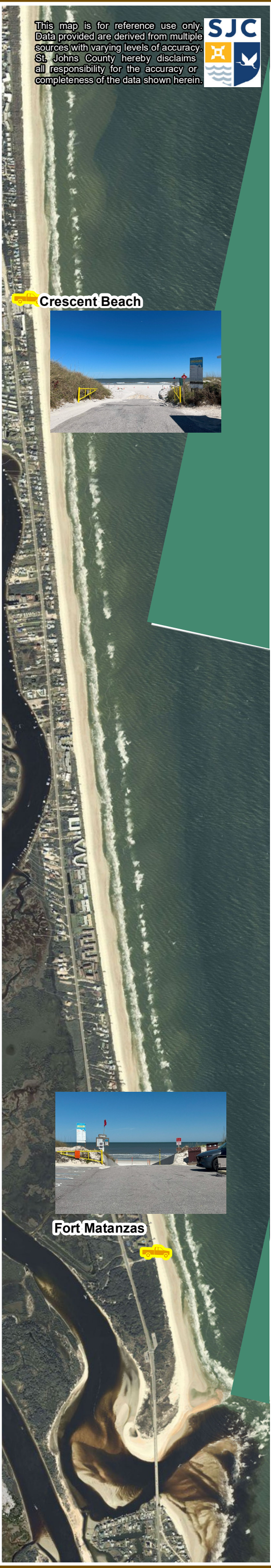
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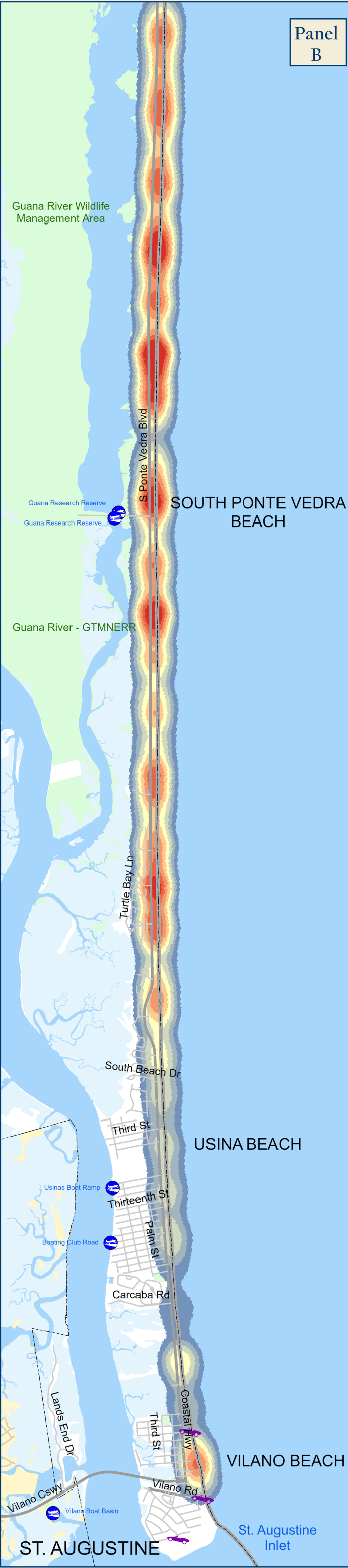
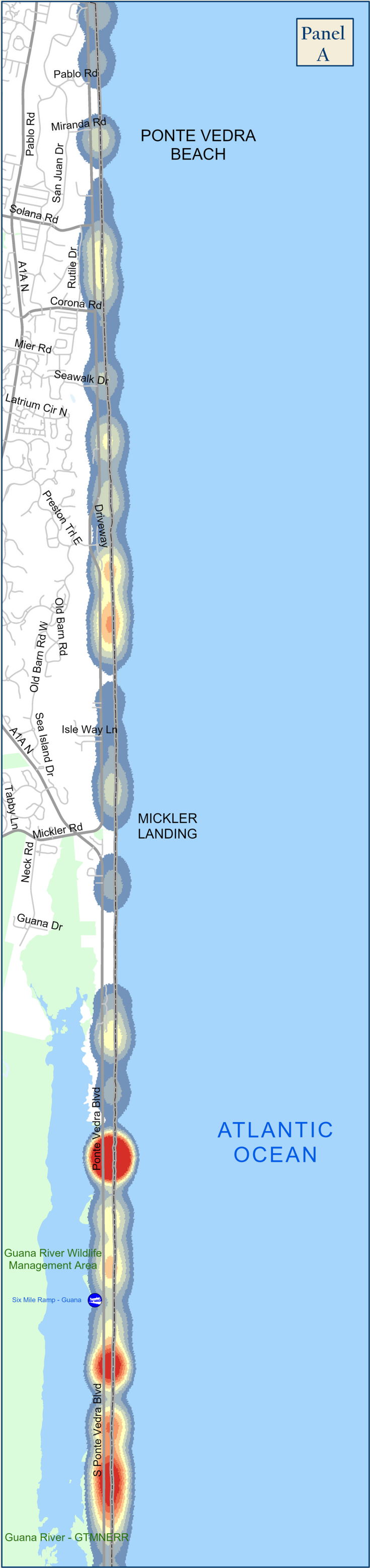
Appendices

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	Start Date	Expiration Date	HCP Training Date
CA24-001	8043026-SJ	4/30/2024	7554 A1A S	construction of new dune walkover	Cubbedge Rd	Pick Up Truck w/trailer	2/12/2024	4/30/2024	2/6/2024
CA24-002	8031474	3/22/2024	8342 SR A1A S	Replacing old walkover	Cubbedge Rd	Truck and trailer	2/22/2024	8/21/2024	2/22/2024
CA24-003	N/A (DOT)	N/A	Vilano beach	Beach soil boring	Reef	Truck/UTV	2/27/2024	2/27/2025	2/26/2024
CA24-004	8043055-SJ	3/7/2025	7198 A1A S	install dune fencing	Cubbedge Rd	Pick Up Truck w/trailer	3/8/2024	3/22/2024	3/8/2024
CA24-007	03677843-001	8/31/2024	SJC line- GTM	NPV Dredge project	Micklers	UTV	3/8/2024	8/1/2024	3/8/2024
CA24-008	03677843-001	8/31/2024	SJC line- GTM	NPV Dredge project	Micklers	Truck/UTV	3/18/2024	8/31/2024	3/18/2024
CA24-012	03677843-001	8/31/2024	SJC line- GTM	NPV Dredge project	Micklers	Truck	3/18/2024	8/31/2024	3/18/2024
CA24-014	03677843-001	8/31/2024	SJC line- GTM	NPV Dredge project	Micklers	Truck/UTV	3/18/2024	8/31/2024	3/18/2024
CA24-020	N/A	N/A	7006 A1A S	Dune walkover	Cubbedge Rd	Truck and trailer	3/19/2024	4/15/2024	3/18/2024
CA24-021	SJ001828 AR	2/23/2027	3164 CH	Navy style seawall	Surfside	backhoe and skidsteer	3/18/2024	3/18/2025	3/18/2024
CA24-022	SJ001841 AR	2/2/2027	3168 CH	Navy style seawall	Surfside	backhoe and skidsteer	3/18/2024	3/18/2025	3/18/2024
CA24-023	SJ001794 AR	2/2/2027	3172 CH	Seawall	Surfside	Trackhoe, mini x, skid steer	3/27/2024	5/1/2024	3/20/2024
CA24-042	03677843-001	8/31/2024	SJC line- GTM	NPV Dredge project	Micklers	UTV/truck	4/16/2024	8/31/2024	4/16/2024
CA24-043	EBC9988462	2/25/2025	200 PV blvd	Beach raking	PV Inn and Club	tractor/rake	4/18/2024	12/31/2024	4/18/2024
CA24-044	EBC998473	2/25/2025	607 PV blvd	Beach raking	Lodge and Club	ATV/rake	4/18/2024	12/31/2024	4/18/2024
CA24-045	N/A	N/A	R76-R102.5	Beach tilling	Exxon, SPV park, Usina	tractor/rake	4/23/2024	4/30/2024	4/22/2024
CA24-046	N/A	N/A	Surfside	removing boat	Surfside	tow truck	6/4/2024	6/5/2024	6/4/2024
CA24-047	0340616-003 JCP	9/18/2035	R67-R109	Surveying	Exxon, SPV park	ATV/UTV	8/22/2024	8/30/2024	8/21/2024
CA24-048	SJ001842 AR	2/23/2027	2755 S PVB	Seawall	2761 S PVB	backhoe and skidsteer	11/1/2024	12/16/2024	10/1/2024
CA24-049	SJ001843 AR	2/23/2027	2757 S PVB	Seawall	2761 S PVB	backhoe and skidsteer	11/1/2024	12/16/2024	10/1/2024
CA24-050	N/A	N/A	Porpoise point	debris removal	Porpoise point	tractor	10/2/2024	10/4/2024	10/1/2024
CA24-051	N/A	N/A	Pier and porpoise point	Surveying	Pope Rd and Porpoise Pt	Truck	10/3/2024	12/31/2024	10/2/2024
CA24-052	SJ001839	6/21/2027	3780 Coastal Hwy	Seawall	3780 CH	backhoe and skidsteer	11/4/2024	7/31/2025	10/24/2024
CA24-053	FP8043131 SJ	4/30/2025	7524 A1A	Dune walkover	Cubbedge Rd	Truck/trailer	11/18/2024	12/31/2024	11/15/2024
CA24-054	N/A	N/A	R01-R48	Surveying	Micklers	ATV/UTV	11/26/2024	12/31/2024	11/25/2024
CA24-055	8043029-SJ	Unk	7618 A1A S	Rebuild dune walkover	Crescent	Truck/trailer	12/1/2024	1/31/2025	12/2/2024
CA24-056	N/A	N/A	8324 A1A	Rebuild tipped walkover	Fort Matanzas	Excavator	12/18/2024	1/30/2024	12/17/2024
CA24-057	SJ001834 AR, SJ001835 AR, SJ001836 AR	2027	2839 thru 2835 S PVB	Seawall	2835 SPVB	Track hoe, skidsteer, crane	1/2/2025	2/2/2025	12/17/2024
CA24-058	0295429-004JN	Unk	R142-R150	Sea Oat Planting	A Street	UTV and trailer	2/10/2025	2/24/2025	12/18/2024

End of 2024 Annual Compliance Report





Map Panel Index

Legend

VALUE

HIGH : 485.895

LOW : 0

BEACH ACCESS SITES - VEHICLE

BOAT RAMP

MAJOR ROAD

LOCAL ROAD

COUNTY BOUNDARY

WATER

SALTWATER MARSH

PARK

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE BEACH

TOWN OF MARINELAND

0

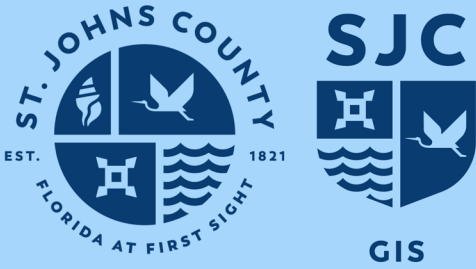
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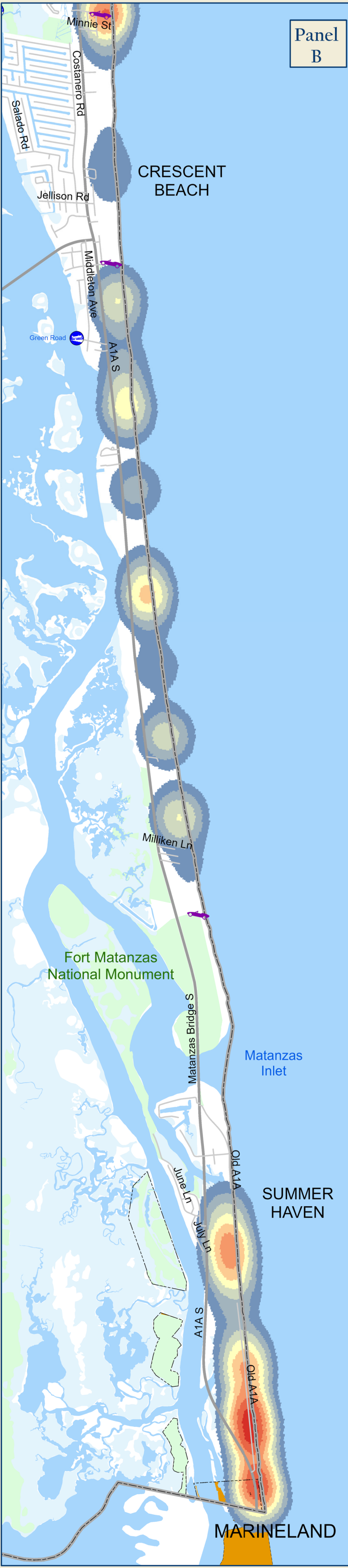
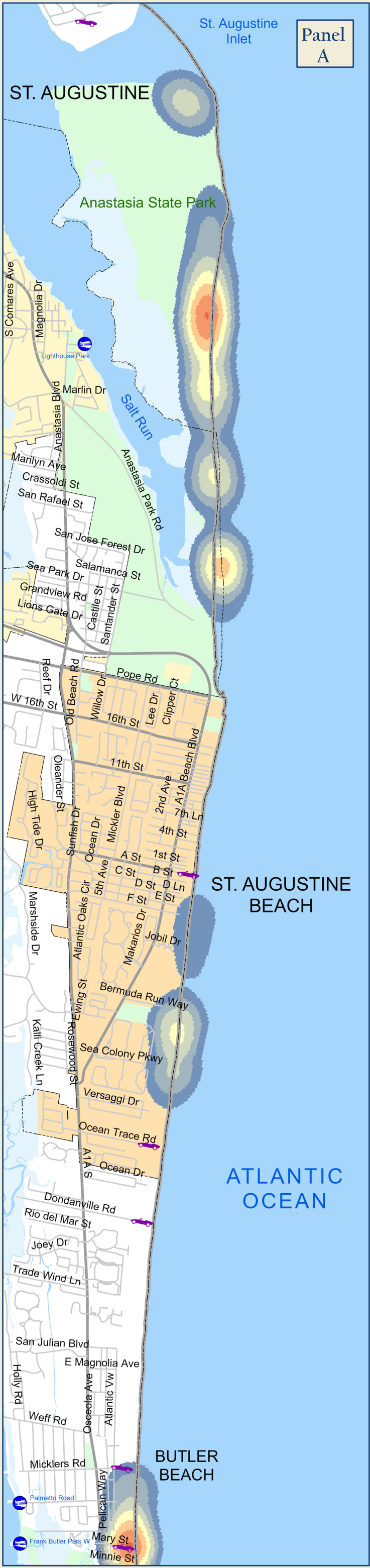
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Miles

Map Figure 2
2024 Turtle Nest Density
North Beaches

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Map Prepared: 3/18/2025





Map Panel Index

Panel A

Panel B

Legend

VALUE

HIGH : 485.895

LOW : 0

BEACH ACCESS SITES - VEHICLE

BOAT RAMP

MAJOR ROAD

LOCAL ROAD

COUNTY BOUNDARY

WATER

SALTWATER MARSH

PARK

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE BEACH

TOWN OF MARINELAND

0

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1

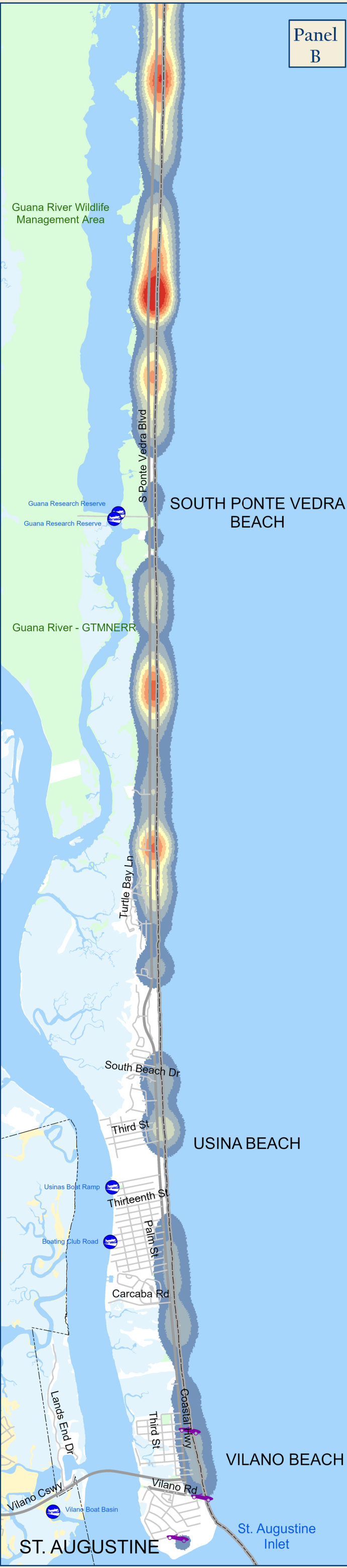
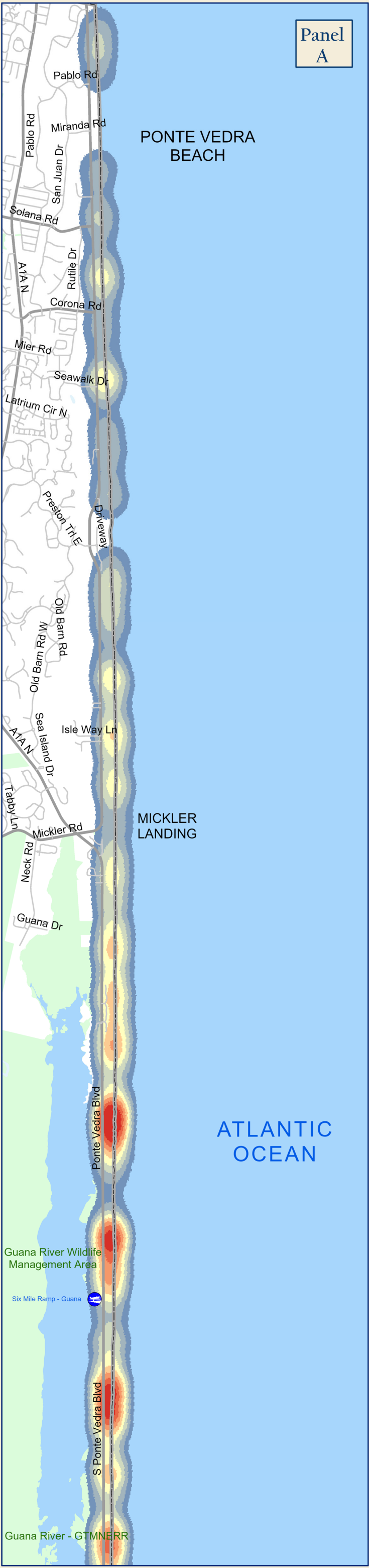
Miles

Map Figure 3
2024 Turtle Nest Density
South Beaches

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Map Prepared: 3/18/2025

ST. JOHNS COUNTY
EST. 1821
FLORIDA AT FIRST SIGHT

SJC
GIS



Map Panel Index

Legend

VALUE

HIGH : 246.653

LOW : 0

BEACH ACCESS SITES - VEHICLE

BOAT RAMP

MAJOR ROAD

LOCAL ROAD

COUNTY BOUNDARY

WATER

SALTWATER MARSH

PARK

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE BEACH

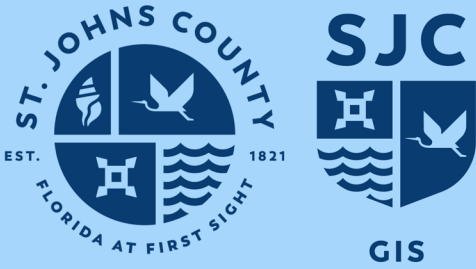
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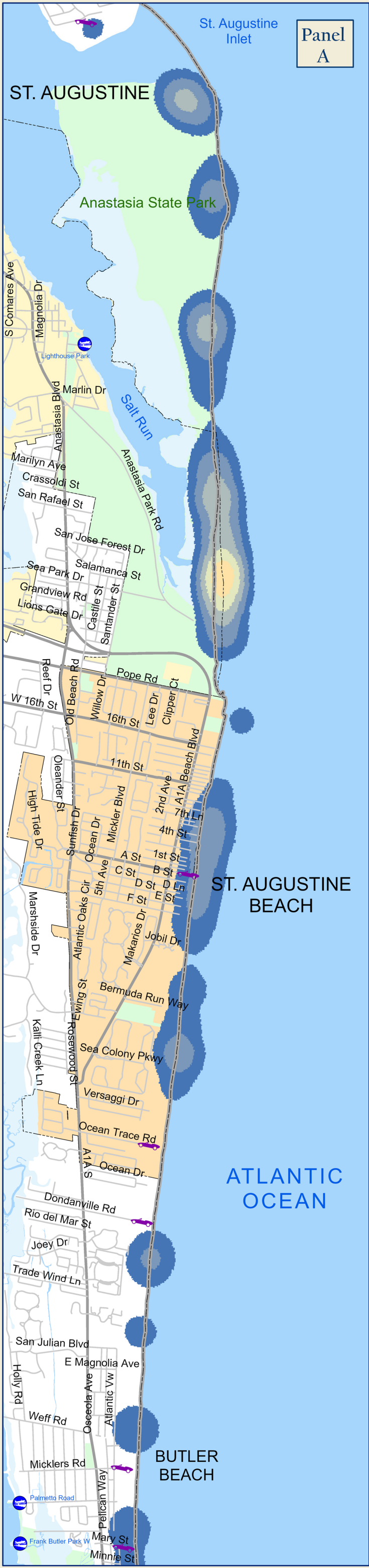
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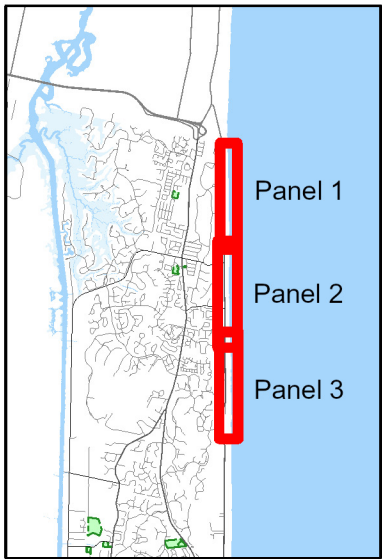
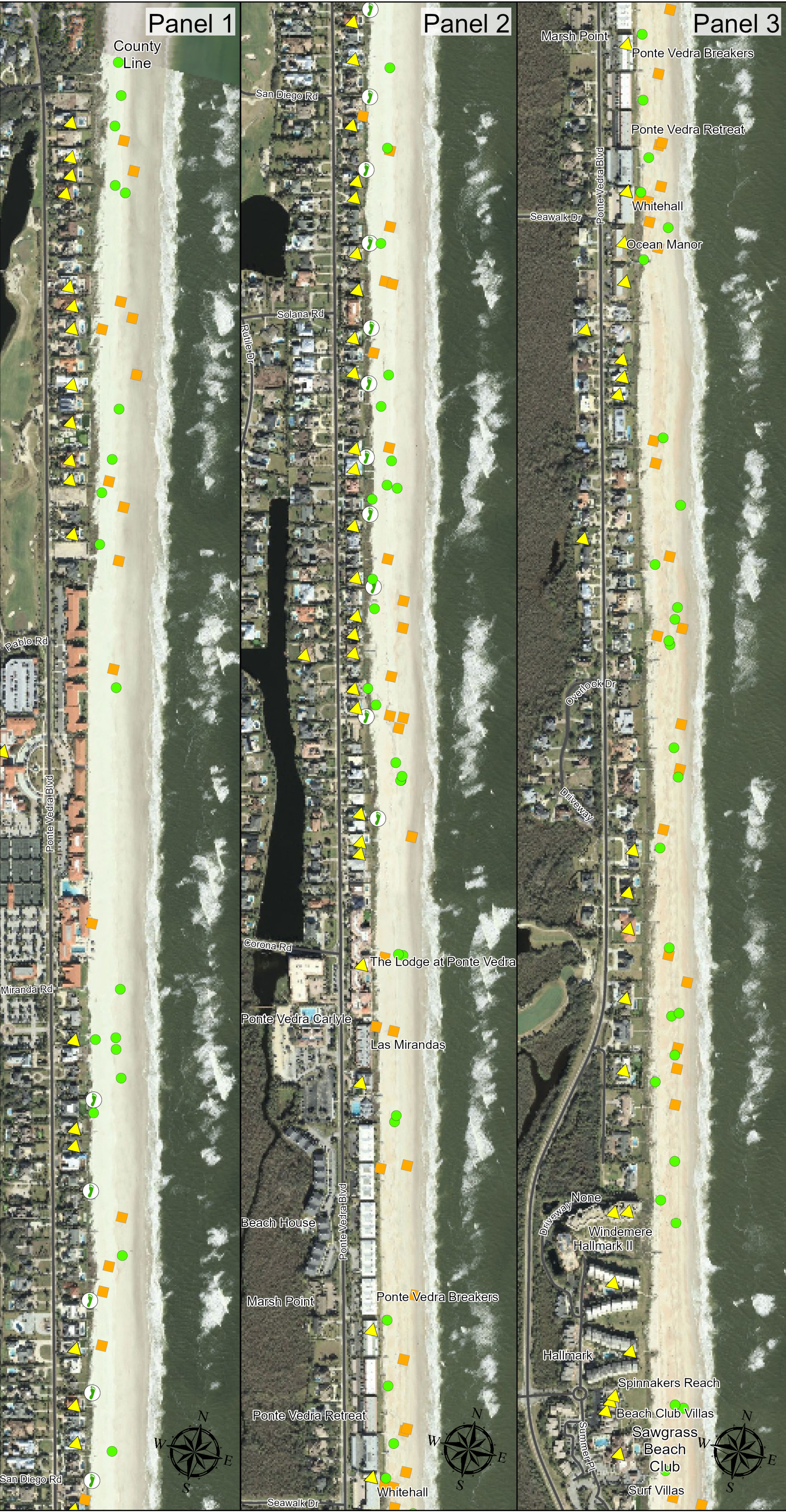
Miles

Map Figure 4
2024 False Crawl Density
North Beaches

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Map Prepared: 3/18/2025





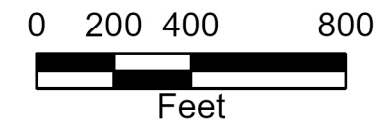


Legend

- Sea Turtle Nests
- False Crawls
- Lighting Violations
- Park

Beach Access Type

- Pedestrian
- Vehicle



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Map Prepared: 3/18/2025
Imagery Data: 3/2024



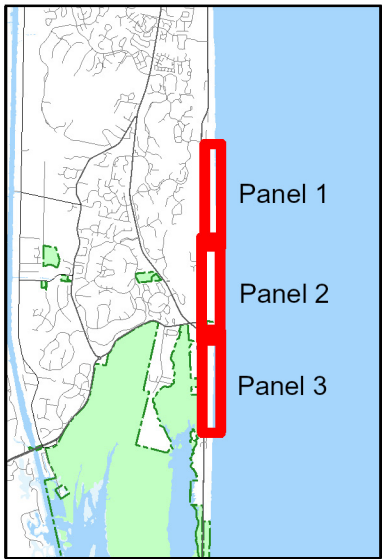


Figure 6b
Turtle Nest Inspection Zone Map
(Sawgrass Beach Club to Old Ponte Vedra Condos)
(3.66 miles)

Legend

Sea Turtle Nests

False Crawls

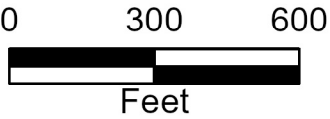
Lighting Violations

Park

Beach Access Type

Pedestrian

Vehicle



Disclaimer:
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Map Prepared: 3/18/2025
Imagery Data: 3/2024



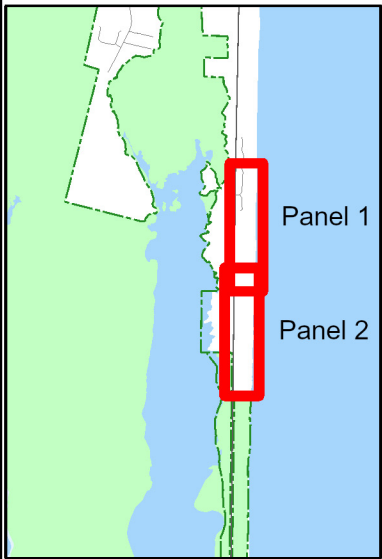
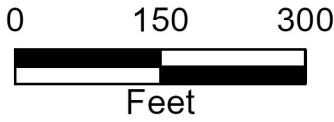


Figure 6c
Turtle Nest Inspection Zone Map
(Old Ponte Vedra Condos to GTM NERR)
(0.99 miles)

Legend

- Sea Turtle Nests
- False Crawls
- ▲ Lighting Violations
- ▭ Park
- Beach Access Type**
 - 🚶 Pedestrian
 - 🚗 Vehicle



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Map Prepared: 3/18/2025
Imagery Data: 3/2024



Panel 2

Panel 1



GTM NERR

Old Ponte Vedra Beach
Old Ponte Vedra Condos

Sea Hammock Way

Ponte Vedra Blvd

Ponte Vedra Blvd

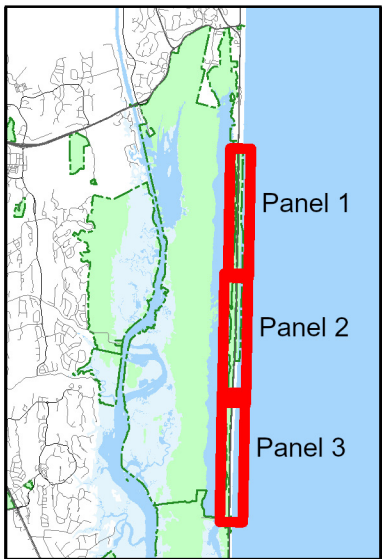
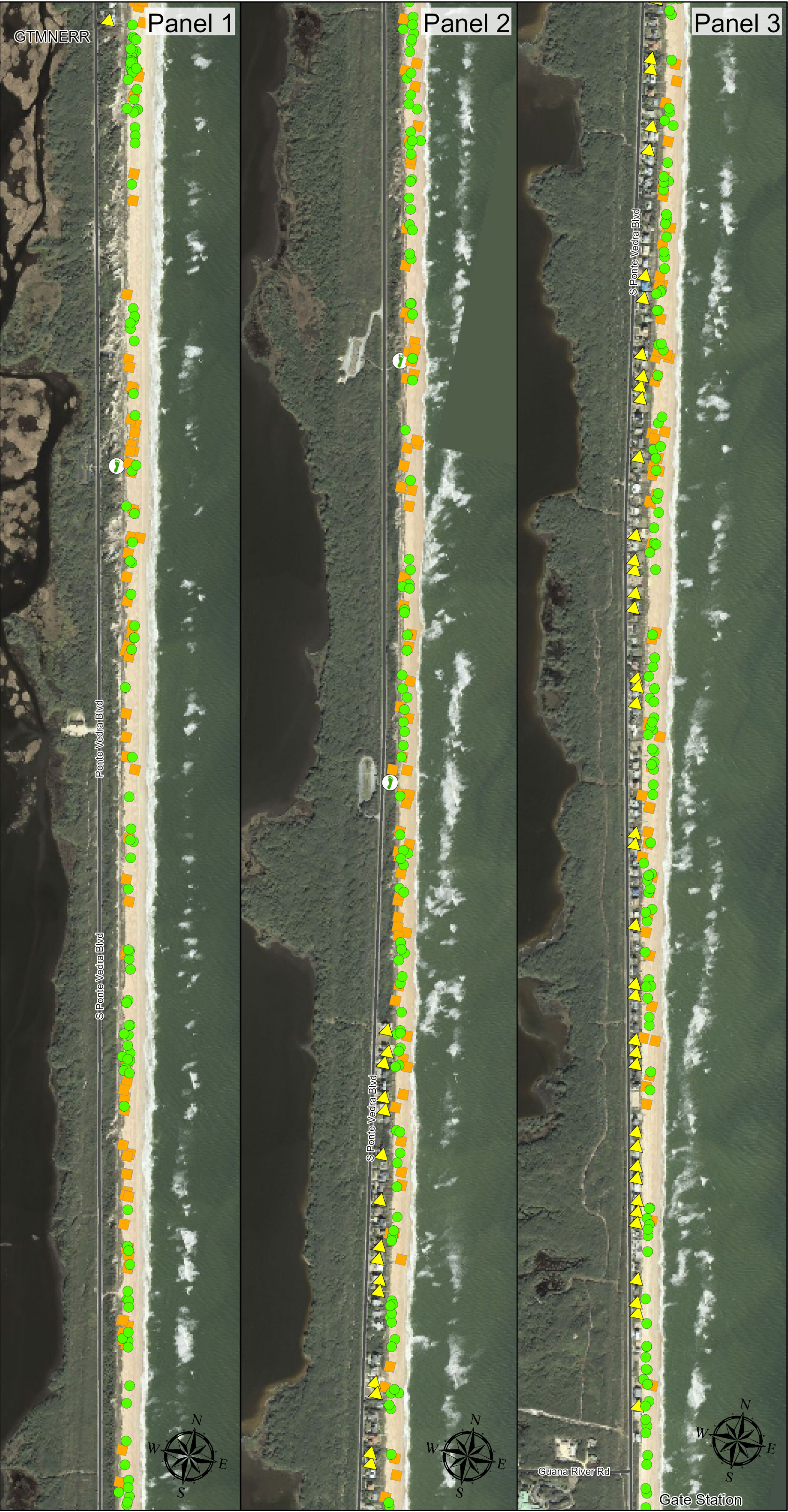


Figure 6d
Turtle Nest Inspection Zone Map
(GTMNERR to Gate Station)
(7.36 miles)

Legend

- Sea Turtle Nests
- False Crawls
- Lighting Violations
- Park
- Beach Access Type**
 - Pedestrian
 - Vehicle



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Map Prepared: 3/18/2025
Imagery Data: 3/2024



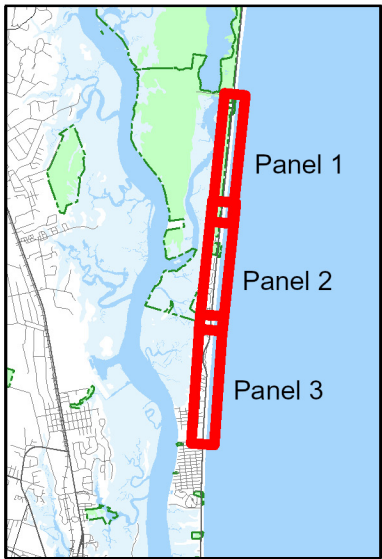


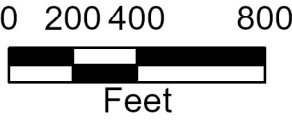
Figure 6e
Turtle Nest Inspection Zone Map
(Gate Station to Reef Restaurant)
(4.97 miles)

Legend

- Sea Turtle Nests
- False Crawls
- Lighting Violations
- Park

Beach Access Type

- Pedestrian
- Vehicle



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Map Prepared: 3/18/2025
Imagery Data: 3/2024



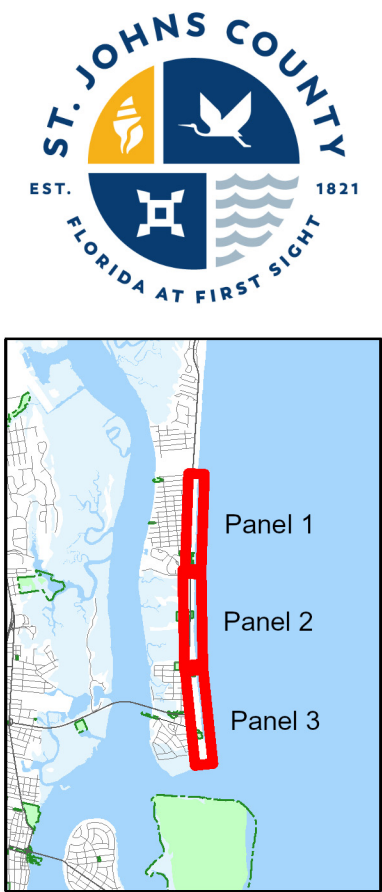
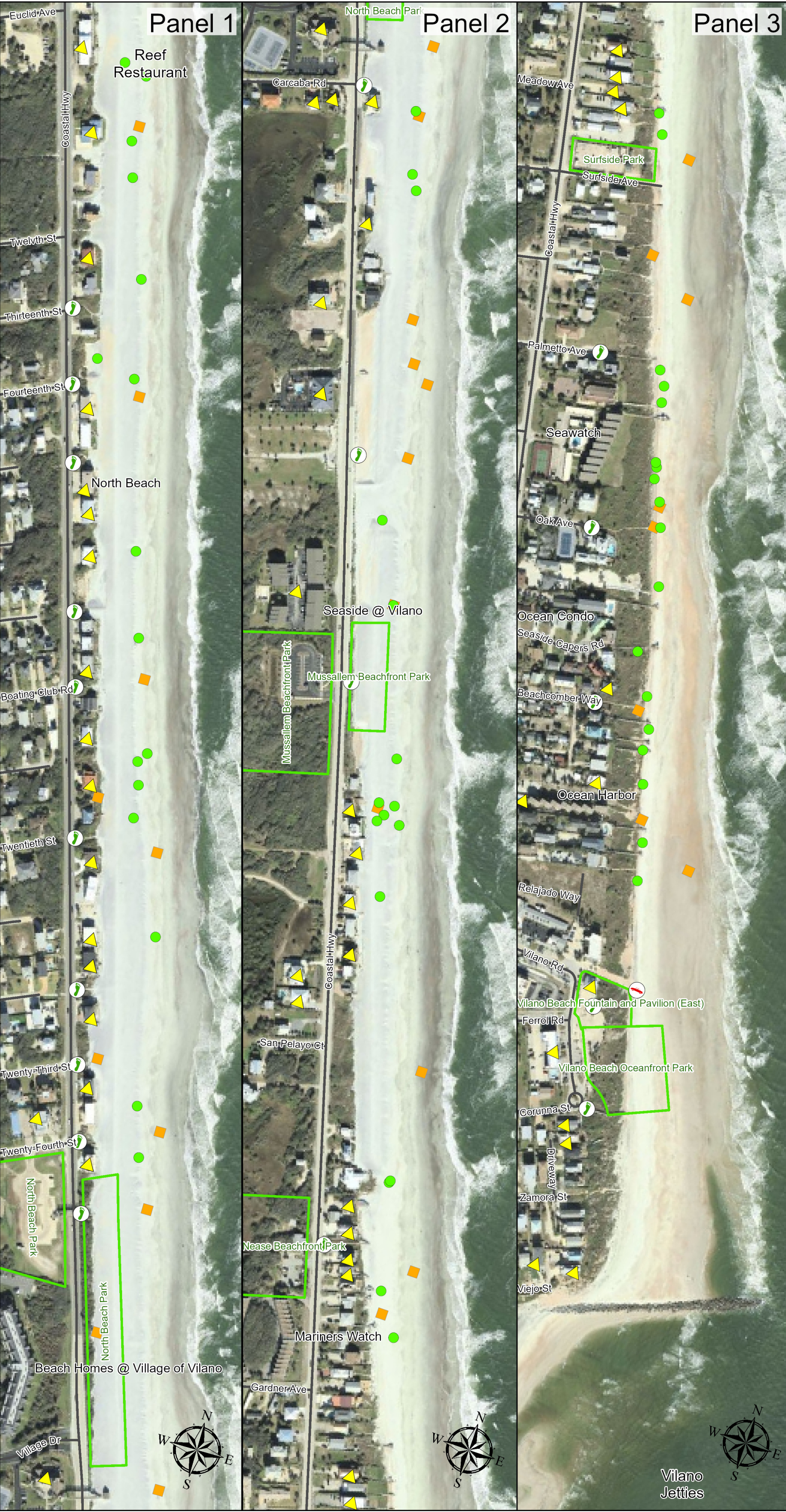


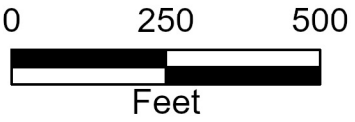
Figure 6f
Turtle Nest Inspection Zone Map
(Reef Restaurant to Vilano Jetties)
(2.81 miles)

Legend

- Sea Turtle Nests
- False Crawls
- Lighting Violations
- Park

Beach Access Type

- Pedestrian
- Vehicle



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Map Prepared: 3/18/2025
Imagery Data: 3/2024



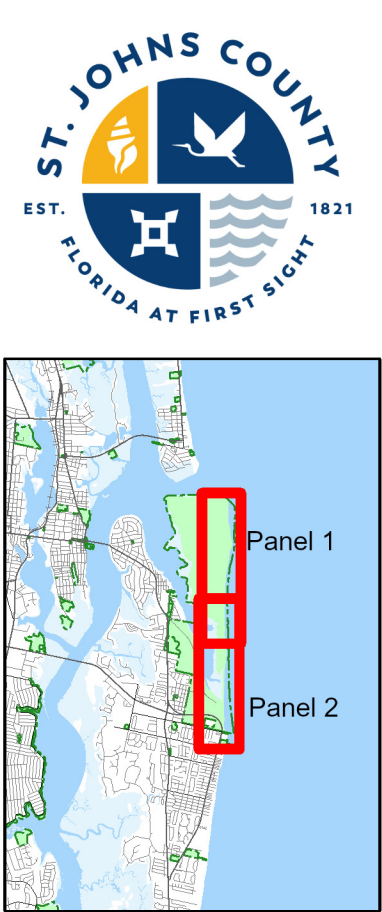
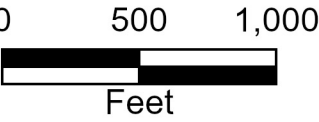


Figure 6g
Turtle Nest Inspection Zone Map
(Anastasia State Park)
(3.87 miles)

Legend

- Sea Turtle Nests
- False Crawls
- Lighting Violations
- Park
- Beach Access Type**
 - Pedestrian
 - Vehicle



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Map Prepared: 3/18/2025
Imagery Data: 3/2024



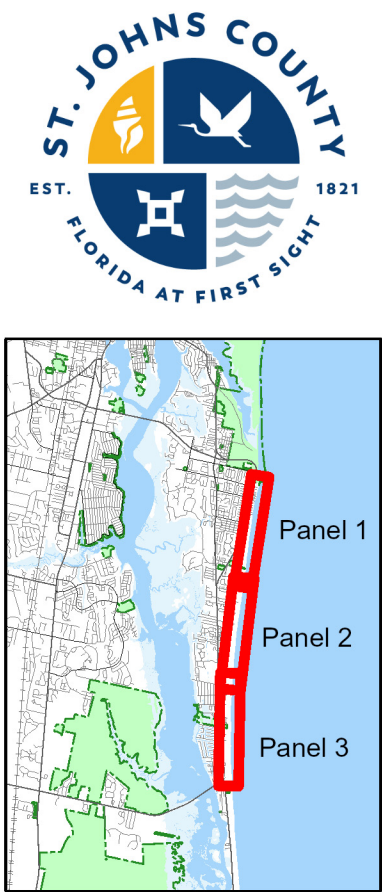


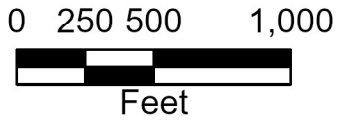
Figure 6h
Turtle Nest Inspection Zone Map
(Anastasia State Park to Crescent Beach Ramp)
(6.30 miles)

Legend

- Sea Turtle Nests
- False Crawls
- Lighting Violations
- Park

Beach Access Type

- Pedestrian
- Vehicle



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Map Prepared: 3/18/2025
Imagery Data: 3/2024



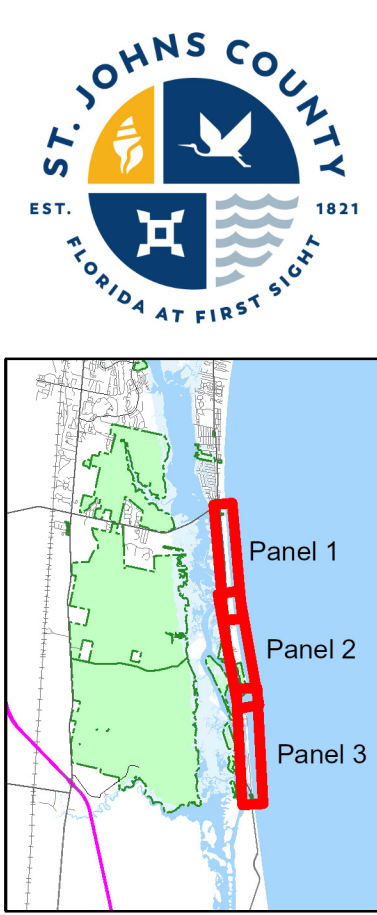

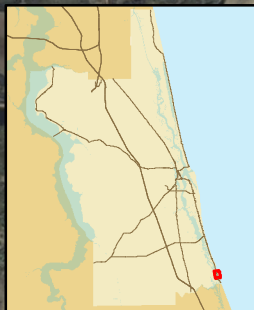


Figure 6i
Turtle Nest Inspection Zone Map
(Crescent Beach Ramp to County Line)
(7.23 miles)

Legend

 2024 Shorebird Nesting Boundary

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**2024 Summer Haven
Shorebird Nesting Site
Map Figure 7**
St. Johns County
Environmental Division
1 inch = 500 feet

Summer Island Dr

June Ln

August Cir

July Ln

Driveway

A1A S

Old A1A

Old A1A