

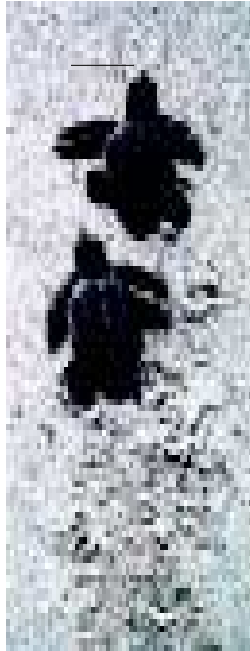
Sea Turtle Friendly Beaches

The goal of the Turtle Friendly Beach Program is to help provide suitable marine turtle nesting habitat in developed areas. Property owners voluntarily adopt best management practices that significantly reduce human impact on nesting sea turtles and their hatchlings. Beach users and visitors learn how to protect coastal dune habitat and sea turtles.

Participants in the program can receive signage and certificates designating their property as “Turtle Friendly.” The program

website will recognize both private and commercial participants. Additionally, commercial or rental properties that achieve designation may use the “Turtle Friendly” logo to promote their business.

Lighting issues will often be the most critical aspect for properties to become Turtle Friendly. It is possible to provide sufficient lighting for human safety while significantly reducing or eliminating the impact on sea turtles. Program team members will be available to assist participants in developing solutions to their lighting concerns. Lamps, shields, or other lighting elements may be available at a discount for participants depending on grant funding and program sponsors. Check with your local coordinator for more information and get Turtle Friendly!



José Azel

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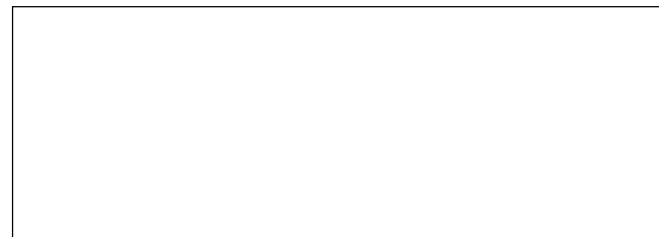


escambia.ifas.ufl.edu/marine
www.flseagrant.org



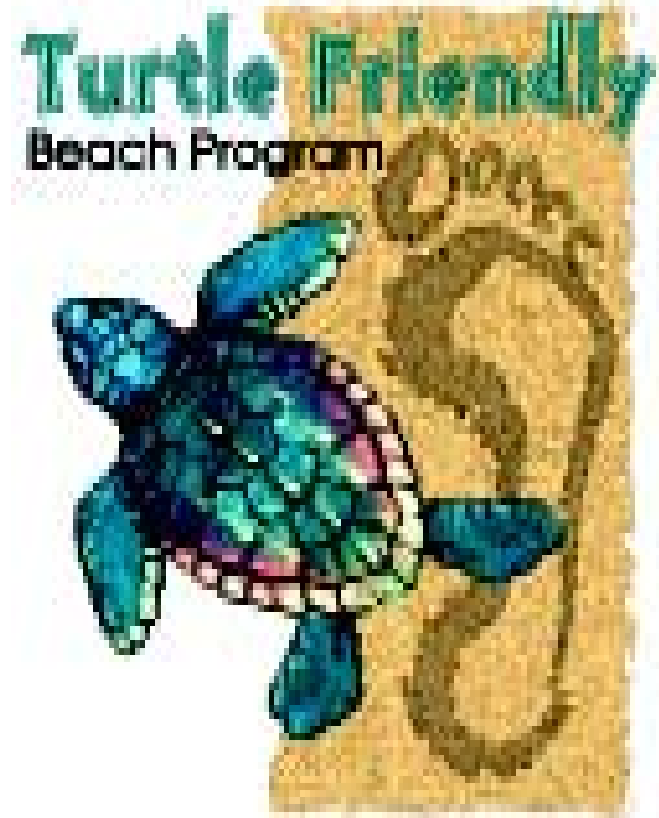
This brochure was funded in part by a grant awarded from the Sea Turtle Grants Program. The Sea Turtle Grants Program is funded from proceeds from the sale of the Florida Sea Turtle License Plate and is administered by the Caribbean Conservation Corporation.

www.helpingseaturtles.org



Unless otherwise noted, photos courtesy Andrew Diller.

SGEF-160



All sea turtle species found along the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coastlines are designated as threatened or endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Every year, sea turtles nest on many of the same beaches where we live, vacation, and relax. Unfortunately, some human development and recreational activities can disrupt this nesting process. If sea turtles are to survive, we must learn to...

Share the Beach

To nest, sea turtles must crawl up the beach to the primary dunes, dig an egg chamber, deposit and bury their eggs, and return to the sea. Females generally nest at night to avoid overheating and being seen. Artificial lights can disturb and disorient nesting turtles.

Development, beach furniture, and recreational



A loggerhead sea turtle finishes her nest at dawn.

equipment can block access to the dune areas that provide the best nesting locations. Nests laid too low on the beach are vulnerable to flooding.

The female digs a nest cavity with her rear flippers, and deposits between 60 and 160 ping-pong ball sized-eggs per nest. After covering the eggs with sand, she returns to the sea. After about 60 days incubation, the hatchlings dig their way out of the nest at night to avoid predators.

As hatchling sea turtles emerge from their nest, they move toward the brightest direction to find their way to the water. On an undeveloped beach, this is the open horizon over the ocean with the water reflecting natural light from the moon and stars. Dunes with vegetation produce dark shadows inland as a contrast.

Unfortunately, artificial lights in developed areas attract hatchlings and lead them inland where they can become prey for a variety of animals, get run over by cars, or dry out when the sun rises. One light visible from the beach can lead hundreds of hatchlings to their

death.

Scientists estimate that only one out of every 1000 hatchlings survives to adulthood. If females must nest low on beaches and hatchlings are led away from the water, this ratio becomes even worse. By following some simple suggestions, many developed areas can still provide suitable nesting habitat for sea turtles. We can...

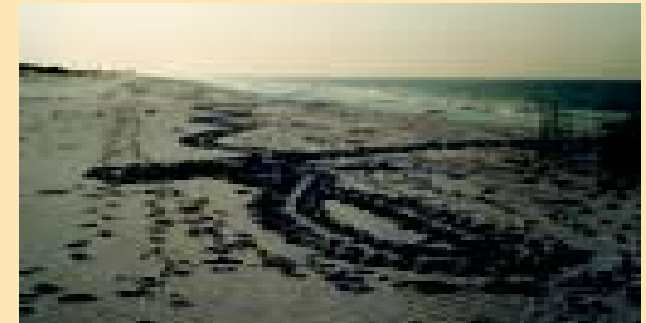


Turtle tracks are known as a "crawl."

Share the Beach

Help Make Our Beaches Turtle Friendly.

- Minimize beachfront lighting during nesting season, April through October.
- Keep beachfront curtains and shades drawn at night so interior lights are not visible on the beach.
- For areas that require light: lower, shield, and/or redirect light source so the beach is not lighted.
- Do not start campfires on the beach that can attract hatchlings which may crawl into the fire and perish.
- Remove or consolidate beach furniture and recreational equipment at night so they will not interfere with nesting females.
- Each night, fill in large holes dug in the sand that could trap adult or hatchling turtles.
- Properly dispose of plastic bags, balloons, and debris that may be mistaken in the water as food (jellyfish) by sea turtles. This debris can kill turtles if it lodges in the intestinal tract.
- Recycle or dispose of excess fishing line that can entangle and drown turtles and kill other marine animals.
- Use boardwalks instead of walking across sand dunes to protect vegetation that stabilizes the dune system. Sand dunes protect human development and block artificial lighting from turtle nesting areas.



Turtles disturbed by artificial lights may not nest or may have trouble returning to the water.

- If you encounter a nesting sea turtle or hatchlings, remain still and observe quietly. No flashlights or flash photography! Contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission hotline (1-888-404-FWCC) to report the nest location.