

Sea Turtle Nest Protection Protocols for Clean-up Crews on Beaches in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana

In Florida and Alabama, most sandy beaches have active sea turtle nesting survey and nest protection programs in place. However, some beaches in Florida are not surveyed on a daily basis due to logistical difficulties with access (e.g., Dauphin Island in Mobile County, Alabama; the Marquesas Islands in Monroe County, Florida) or are not currently surveyed at all (e.g., Dog Island in Franklin County, Cape Sable in the Everglades in Monroe County, Florida). No nesting surveys are conducted in Mississippi and Louisiana. Attached is a list of daily surveyed beaches by County and State; please follow the first set of protocols below for these beaches. For beaches that are not surveyed, please follow the second set of protocols.

FOR BEACHES WHERE NESTING SURVEYS ARE CONDUCTED DAILY:

1. Ensure daily sea turtle nesting surveys have been completed and that all nests have been marked by the local sea turtle permit holder with a 10-foot buffer zone before work begins each morning. The clean-up crew leader must contact the appropriate individual identified on the attached list or his/her designee daily to determine if nesting surveys have been completed and clean-up activities can begin.
2. Sea turtles may still be nesting or hatchlings may emerge after sunrise, so it is imperative that clean-up crews watch for nesting and hatchling turtles while they are on the beach and immediately report any turtles sighted to the individual identified on the attached list or his/her designee. Clean-up vehicles should travel slowly to enable a better opportunity to spot turtle crawls and avoid colliding with nesting and hatchling turtles.
3. Look for any marked nests before beginning beach cleaning activities in an area. Nests will be marked with at least eight stakes, four around the nest perimeter and four more around a 10-foot buffer zone (see photo below). Do not remove or destroy any stakes or flagging, even if they are sited up in the dune. These may be back-up stakes that were placed to ensure that future location of the nest is possible should the nest perimeter stakes be lost.



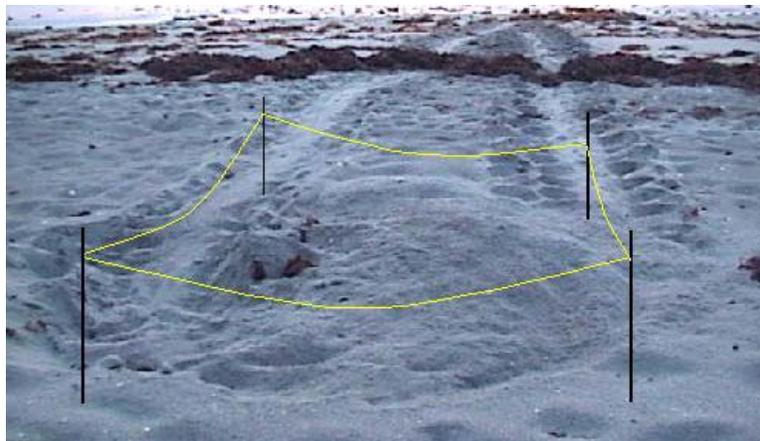
4. Mechanical equipment and hand tools should not be used within the flagged buffer area of a nest.
5. Clean-up crews should gently remove contaminated sand within the flagged area of a nest by hand and replace it with clean, damp sand taken from an area adjacent to the flagged nest area. Removal of sand over a nest should occur only under the direction of the sea turtle permit holder. The surface layer of oiled sand should be removed only to the minimum depth necessary without impacting the top of the nest. If nest flagging was removed to access the nest area, it must be securely replaced after clean-up activities have been completed.
6. All excavations and temporary alteration of beach topography shall be filled, covered, or leveled to the natural beach profile prior to 8:00 p.m. each day.

FOR BEACHES WHERE NESTING SURVEYS ARE NOT CONDUCTED OR ARE NOT CONDUCTED DAILY:

1. Sea turtles may still be nesting or hatchlings may emerge after sunrise, so it is imperative that clean-up crews watch for nesting and hatchling turtles while they are on the beach and immediately report any turtles sighted to the individual identified on the attached list or his/her designee. Clean-up vehicles should travel slowly to enable a better opportunity to spot turtle crawls and avoid colliding with nesting and hatchling turtles.
2. Look for any turtle crawls before beginning beach cleaning activities in an area (see photos below of turtle crawls). [In some cases, there may be marked nests on some partially surveyed beaches (steps 1-5 on the preceding page should be followed for existing nests).]



3. Follow any turtle crawls and look for signs that the turtle dug into the sand. Using stakes and flagging, mark the entire disturbed area created by a turtle digging. Under no circumstances should stakes be driven into the sand within the disturbed area created by the turtle (see photo below of a marked disturbed area – however, please double flag the nest site instead of using a single layer of flagging as shown in the photo).



4. Follow Steps 3-5 on the preceding page.

**ATTACHMENT
SURVEYED BEACHES AND SEA TURTLE CONTACTS***

SURVEYED BEACHES	CONTACT NAME	PHONE NUMBER
ALABAMA		
Mobile County		
Dauphin Island	Mike Reynolds	Cell: 251-747-4985 Office: 251-974-2253
Baldwin County		
Fort Morgan Peninsula, including Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge to West Beach in Gulf Shores	Jackie Isaacs	Cell: 251-752-0654 Office: 251-540-8523
West Beach in Gulf Shores to the Alabama/Florida state line	Mike Reynolds	Cell: 251-747-4985 Office: 251-974-2253
FLORIDA		
Escambia County – all beaches	Robbin Trindell	Cell: 561-262-1104 Office: 850-617-6055
	Meghan Koperski (back-up)	Cell: 561-339-1001 Office: 561-575-5407 x17
Santa Rosa County – all beaches	Same as above	
Okaloosa County – all beaches	Same as above	
Walton County – all beaches	Same as above	
Bay County – all beaches	Same as above	
Gulf County – all beaches	Same as above	
Franklin County		
St. Vincent NWR (survey frequency varies)	Same as above	
Cape St. George (survey frequency varies)	Same as above	
St. George Island	Same as above	
Alligator Point		
Pinellas County – all beaches	Same as above	
Hillsborough County – all beaches	Same as above	
Manatee County – all beaches	Same as above	
Sarasota County – all beaches	Same as above	
Charlotte County – all beaches	Same as above	
Lee County – all beaches	Same as above	
Collier County – all beaches	Same as above	
Ten Thousand Islands NWR (surveyed 3-7 days/week)	Same as above	
Monroe County – all beaches (survey frequency varies)	Same as above	

*If the beach to be cleaned is not identified on the above list or does not fall within a County where all beaches are surveyed, then clean-up crews should follow the protocols on page 2 **FOR BEACHES WHERE NESTING SURVEYS ARE NOT CONDUCTED OR ARE NOT CONDUCTED DAILY**. If you have any questions about whether a beach is surveyed or not, contact the individuals listed above for assistance.



If a depression like this is observed on the beach, and there are no turtle signs around it, it is an unmarked nest hatching. This can occur after mid-July.



Gulf of Mexico is south of this nest. Due to light pollution hatchlings went the wrong way. While all nests will be removed this year, if you notice tracks like this, it is from an unmarked nest that hatched and they went the wrong way. This occurs most nights, ie disorientation, unless the moon is $\frac{3}{4}$ + and clear skies.



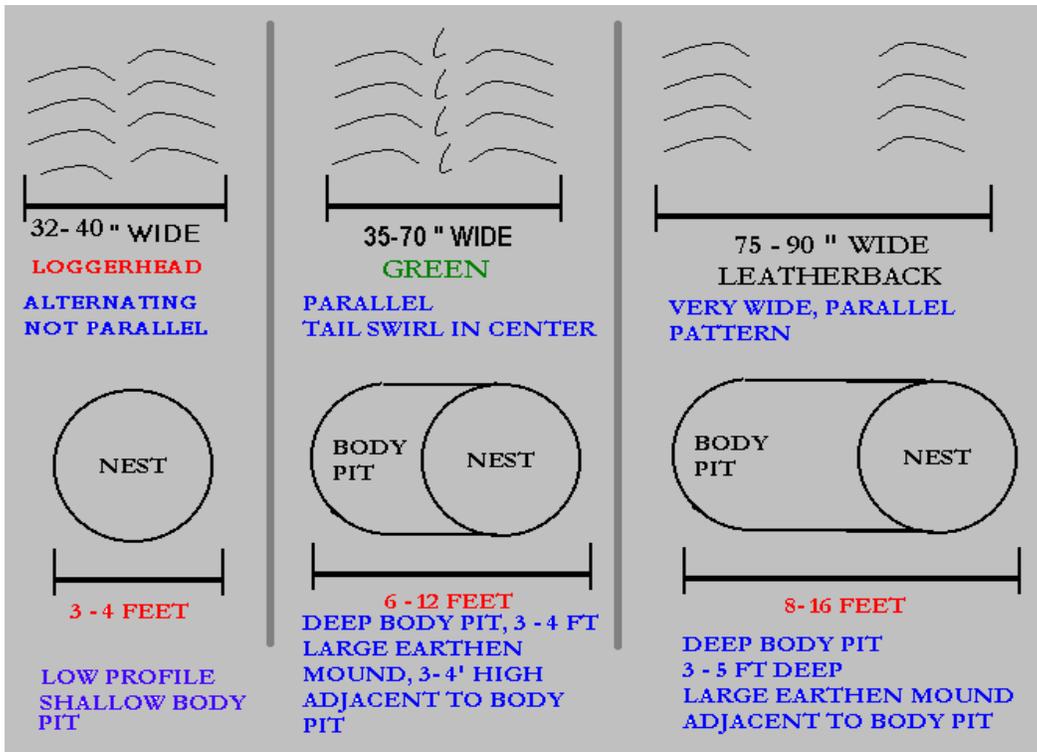
How to do a survey

- DRIVE **SLOWLY** at ~ 10MPH **BE CAREFUL**
- Be Observant !! We are looking for signs of a turtle, not Joy Riding **STAY FOCUSED !!**
- Make a low run (below high tide line, but not in the water) and the return run slightly higher on beach



What are you looking for?

- **Indicators**
 - **TURTLE TRACKS (CRAWL)**
 - **TURTLE BODY PIT**
 - **POSSIBLY SEA TURTLE STILL NESTING** (if so don't bother her, **STOP** the ATV, remain quiet and don't move a lot, let her finish her job and after she leaves, do the same as if you had just found the nest)



What you are looking for :



Loggerhead False Crawl @SR June 18, 2006



Loggerhead nest SR701106



Loggerhead nest SR701106

Loggerhead nest SR72812003



Loggerhead FP70712003



Classic loggerhead nest





Green Crawl/Nest FP622105



Kemp' Crawl/Nest PK602104



Green nest SR712107



Hatchling Tracks



Hatchling Tracks



