



Monday, April 16th, 2018

LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE NESTING & HATCHING SEASON 2018

Dear Property Management, Condominium Associations & Beach Vendor Operators:

The protected Loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*) will soon return to our beaches. Adult female sea turtles will begin nesting on our beaches between May and August. 60 days after the nests are created; the hatchlings will emerge and begin the trek to the Gulf of Mexico; usually between July and October. The next six months - May 01 through October 31 – is a crucial time of year for your part in conservation of this important marine population on the Marco Island beaches.

In the 2017 nesting season, there were **121** nests on Marco Island beaches with **95** of these hatching. Approximately **7,636** hatchlings from the Marco beaches successfully made it to the Gulf of Mexico. With only one out of one thousand hatchlings making it to maturity, every hatchling counts to sustain this species' population. Artificial lights confuse sea turtles and interfere with their natural instincts. Too often this results in discouraging the females from nesting – she emerges from the Gulf ready to lay her eggs, but is confused or disorientated which results in her crawling back to the Gulf without nesting or dropping her eggs as she leaves - a “false crawl”. Last season, our beach had approximately **202** “false crawls”. Artificial lights also can cause the death of hatchlings due to disorientation – they will travel inland toward the brighter, artificial lights, using the energy they need to swim into the Gulf of Mexico. Unfortunately, last season there were **4** disorientations. Overall, lighting compliance was good last year on the Marco Island beaches! Thank you beachfront properties! With your help and compliance, disorientations can be a “zero” occurrence.

Sea turtles and people can easily coexist if we take action to preserve and share our common habitat – Marco Island's beautiful beach! In the effort to support the Collier County Sea Turtle Protection Program and to help prevent disorientation from occurring and protect the sea turtles, the City of Marco Island will strictly enforce its following ordinances: Ordinance 01-35 (Sea Turtle Protection), Ordinance 13-05 (Lighting Regulations), and Ordinance 08-14 (Beach Ordinance).

To ensure compliance, property managers, beach vendors, and/or residents, please step out on the beach at 9 PM, view the building or vendor area to determine what lights need shading or turned off. If you can see the direct light or your shadow on the beach, the light is too bright! Below are easy steps to take for sea turtle nesting and hatching season compliance of the conservation and protection rules:

- All lights visible to the beach after 9 PM should be turned off, shielded, or otherwise modified between the dates of **MAY 01 THROUGH OCTOBER 31**.
- Outside lights that can not be turned off for safety reasons can be temporarily shielded with foil, hoods or painted with black heat resistant oven paint on the beach-facing side.
- **Long wavelength Amber LED lights** are less attractive to sea turtles and prevent disorientations. They are good replacements for yellow and white lights.

- Close blinds and curtains by 9 PM to shield bright interior lights that normally shine onto the beach.
- Outside wall and ceiling balcony lights should be off by 9 PM.
- The sea turtles need a beach free of any barriers that would prevent nesting. Beach furniture, toys, tents, any other equipment and all garbage should be removed from the beach EVERY night. If you see trash, pick it up and remove it from the beach.
- Keep your distance. If you witness a turtle crawling out of the ocean or digging a nest, remain quiet and at a distance and never stop a turtle that is returning to the water. Movements and noises can easily frighten a female sea turtle and prevent nesting. Using flash photography or a mobile phone camera can scare the nesting turtle and prevent her from nesting.
- After 9 PM, it is unlawful to use flashlights, flash photography, lantern, cell phone illumination or other sources of light on the beach. Never point a light source at sea turtle or illuminate a sea turtle nest. No fires or torches on the beach.
- Holes or trenches dug on the beach by beach-goers need to be filled in at the end of each day or by 9 PM. Adult sea turtles can get caught or disorientate and hatchlings get trapped in the holes or trenches, never making it to the Gulf. The holes are also safety hazards for beach goers, sea turtle monitors, and emergency response staff. Please fill in all holes when leaving the beach!
- Sea Turtle nests are monitored and posted on to the beach with stakes, flagging and signage. It is unlawful to enter the posted nest area or impact the posted nest area in any manner. A minimum of a 25-foot perimeter of no activity within should be given to the protected nest area.
- To report dead or injured sea turtles or disoriented hatchlings, please immediately call:

Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

1-888-404-FWCC (3922)

Marco Island Sea Turtle Monitor, Mary Nelson, our "Turtle Lady" 239-289-9736

If you need additional information or have any questions and/or comments, please contact the City of Marco Growth Management Department at **239-389-5000**.

Thank you in advance for your commitment and effort in making it possible for this dwindling, threatened species to coexist with us on our beautiful beach. Do your part, keep the beach dark!

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Smith
Director of community Affairs

Cc: Guillermo Polanco, Marco Island Acting City Manager
Chief Al Schettino, Marco Island Police Department
Captain Dave Baer, Code Compliance Supervisor
Maura Kraus, Senior Environmental Specialist, Collier County Parks & Recreation Department
Mary Nelson, Environmental Specialist, Collier County Parks & Recreation Department