

Welcome!

- Please **mute** your microphones and **turn off** your camera
- Please hold your questions until the end of the presentation
 - In the Q & A session, you can type questions in the chat, or unmute yourself and ask the question yourself
- Please stay until the end of the presentation
 - You will be given a “phrase of the day” that you must email to Carly Oakley (coakley@cmaquarium.org) as proof of attendance today
 - That attendance list will be provided to FDEP to show proof you have attended the meeting and have a communication plan with your Marine Turtle Permit Holder

Operating on the Beach with Nesting Sea Turtles, Seabirds, and Shorebirds

Carly Oakley

Sea Turtle Conservation Program Manager

Clearwater Marine Aquarium



Outline

- How do you renew your FDEP field permit?
- Review of permit conditions
 - These conditions are also helpful for individuals collecting trash, removing items off the beach, and operating businesses on the sand
- Sea turtle monitors: Who are they and how do I contact them?
- Beach-nesting bird information, including draft monitoring guidelines
- Question and answer session

How to Renew Your FDEP Field Permit

- You must renew your FDEP field permit, “Beach cleaning with mechanical equipment” **every year**
- The FDEP portal may be viewed here: <https://www.fldepportal.com/DepPortal/go/home>
- If you are encountering difficulty using the FDEP Business Portal, please contact the FDEP service desk
 - Email: ServiceDesk@dep.state.fl.us
 - Phone: 850-245-7555
- For any other questions, you can contact the Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection, Coastal Construction Control Line
 - Website: www.FloridaDEP.gov/CCCL
 - Email: CCCL@FloridaDEP.gov
 - Phone: 850-245-2094



Following Permit Conditions

- Mechanical beach cleaners **must** follow these conditions throughout the sea turtle nesting season
- Municipal entities that collect trash/debris in the mornings, as well as business operators (chairs, cabanas, watersports, etc.), should also follow these conditions because:
 - If **any** entity is found tampering with a sea turtle (adult or hatchling), sea turtle nest, nest markers, sea turtle crawl track, etc., the Marine Turtle Permit Holder is required to report it as an instance of vandalism to FWC, and individuals could be vulnerable to prosecution under state law (Marine Turtle Protection Act) and federal law (Endangered Species Act)
 - If the conditions of your FDEP permit are not followed, the Marine Turtle Permit Holder must inform FDEP, which could impact your permit status

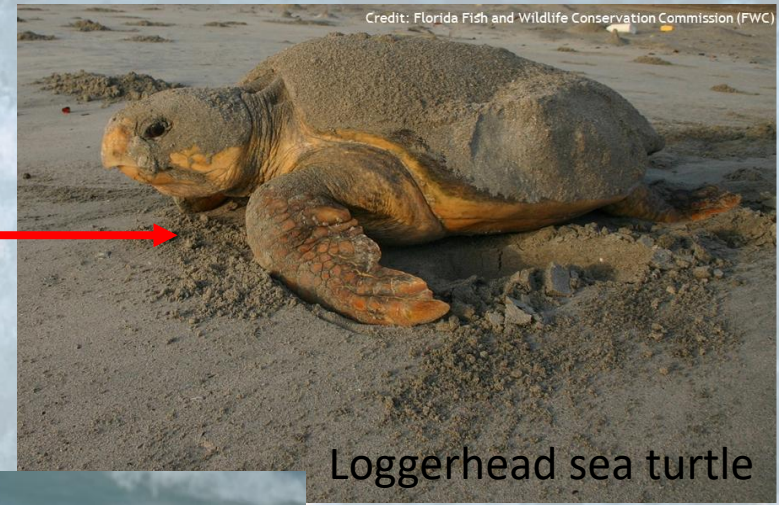
Permit Conditions

- During the marine turtle nesting season (May 1 to October 31), mechanical beach cleaning activities shall be confined to daylight hours (sunrise to sunset)

Permit Conditions

- During marine turtle nesting season (May 1 to October 31), the permittee is responsible for ensuring that a daily marine turtle nest survey, protection, and monitoring program is conducted throughout the permitted beach cleaning area
- The nesting survey must be accomplished by an individual possessing the appropriate marine turtle expertise and a valid permit issued by the FWC
 - This is because they are protected under state law (Marine Turtle Protection Act, FS 379.2431 (1)), and federal law (Endangered Species Act)
 - We will talk about who your permitted marine turtle monitors are shortly

Most common nesting species in Pinellas County

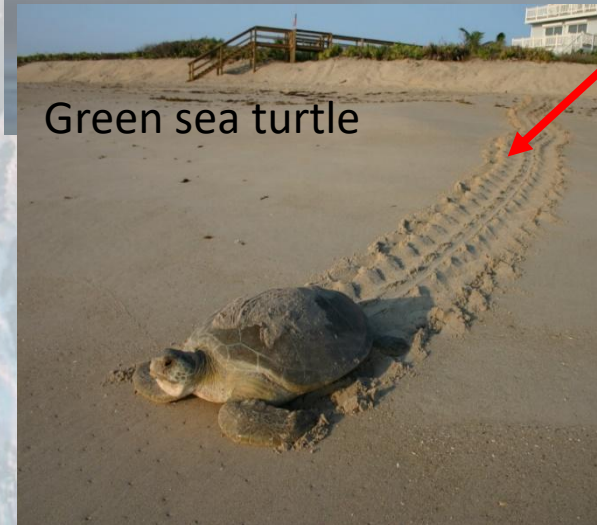


Kemp's ridley



Rare nesting species in Pinellas County

Green sea turtle



Leatherback



Permit Conditions



Credit: CMA



Credit: FWC



Credit: FWC



Credit: CMA

- Beach cleaning activities **cannot** proceed prior to the completion of the daily marine turtle nesting survey
 - Beach cleaning activity prior to the marine turtle survey eliminates the opportunity to identify marine turtle nesting activity and hence locating and protecting nest sites
 - It is the responsibility of the beach cleaning permit holder to ensure this survey has been completed prior to cleaning the beach
 - This requires cooperation with the entity authorized by FWC to conduct marine turtle surveys in this area
- If in the unlikely event that the marine turtle survey is not accomplished prior to 10:00am the beach cleaning permittee is **not** authorized to conduct cleaning activities
 - In this case the beach cleaning permittee should contact the FWC (**850-922-4330**) for additional guidance

Permit Conditions

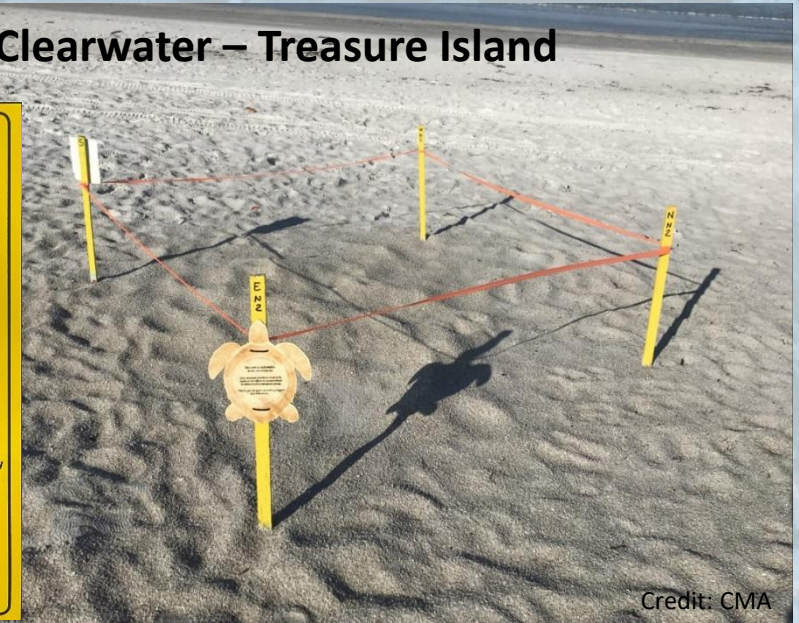
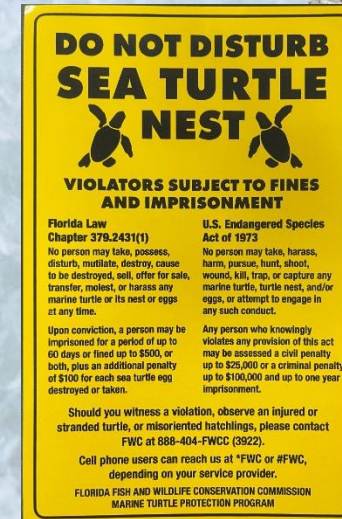
- If beach cleaning occurs before the marine turtle nest survey, protection, and monitoring program, mechanical beach cleaning shall not occur on that beach until 65 days have passed or after November 30, whichever is earlier
- The permittee shall contact the Marine Turtle Permit Holder prior to reinitiating mechanical beach cleaning in that area

**When in doubt – WAIT and make contact with the permit holder
NEVER ASSUME!**

Permit Conditions

- All equipment operators must be briefed on the types of marking utilized and should be able to easily contact the individual responsible for the nest survey to verify any questionable areas
- All nests deposited on the beach will be clearly marked by the Marine Turtle Permit Holder so that these areas can be easily avoided by all beach cleaning activities
- All nests left in place shall be marked with a circle of tape or string having a radius of at least three (3) feet, centered at the approximated location of the clutch
- An additional marker shall be placed at the base of the dune or seawall to ensure that future location of the nests will be possible should the on-beach markings be lost
- No mechanical cleaning equipment is allowed inside of this circle

Clearwater – Treasure Island



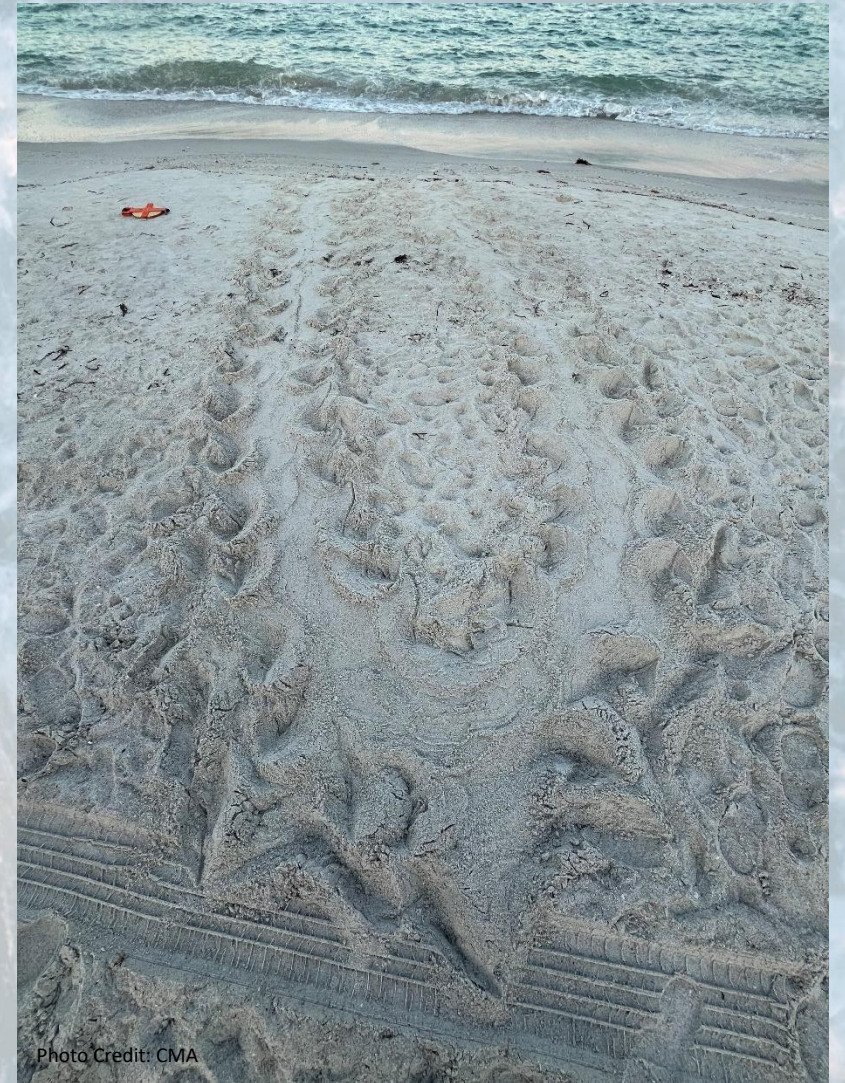
Credit: CMA

St. Pete Beach



Credit: Tampa Bay Times

Examples of Crawls



Permit Conditions



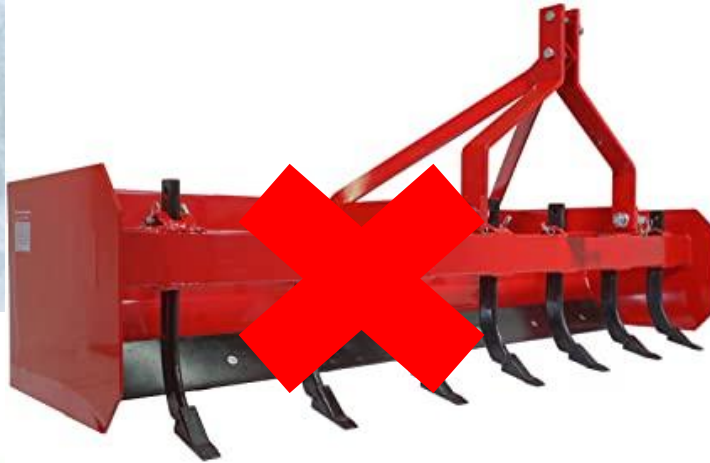
- In the event that on-beach nest markers are lost for any reason, including vandalism or high water conditions, **no** mechanical beach cleaning shall be conducted until the Marine Turtle Permit Holder identifies the nest and restores the markers
- In the event that the nest cannot be found and may have been lost during high water conditions, the permittee shall contact FWC staff at **(850) 922-4330** to determine if mechanical beach cleaning can resume
- All marine turtle protection conditions shall remain in effect unless specifically waived **in writing** by FWC

Permit Conditions

- In order to avoid adverse impacts in the event that cleaning accidentally occurs over a nest, mechanical beach cleaning equipment **shall not penetrate more than two (2) inches** into the surface of the beach
- Your permit authorizes the use of a vehicle with a maximum tire pressure of **10 p.s.i.**



Permit Conditions



- Box blades and front or rear mounted blades are **not** authorized
- No other types of vehicles or excavating equipment may be operated on the beach pursuant to this permit

Permit Conditions

- Mechanized beach cleaning shall be accomplished so that **no ruts** are formed on the beach



Permit Conditions

- Removal of biotic and abiotic debris is permitted from the area ten feet seaward of the vegetation line or toe of the primary dune or seaward of armoring structures
- Burial or storage of any debris (biotic or abiotic) collected is **prohibited**
 - FWC strongly recommends that no burial of debris occur during the nesting season to ensure you do not accidentally dig up a clutch of eggs
- Removal of accumulated debris from the beach must occur immediately after cleaning has been performed
 - All debris collected during beach cleaning activities must be removed landward of the primary dune, vegetation line or armoring structure immediately after cleaning has been performed



Permit Conditions

- Field permits for beach cleaning is for the express purpose of removing abiotic debris and normal, natural accumulations of marine vegetation in amounts not substantially covering the beach nor presenting a significant clean up problem
- In the event of an unusual natural phenomenon resulting in the deposition of excessively large quantities of marine vegetation on the sand beach, or any excessive biotic deposition event occurring as the result of a hurricane, red tide or high energy wave event, requires consultation with the FWC and a field permit containing conditions for the protection of marine turtles is required

Removing Dead Fish and Seaweed

- To evaluate a dead fish or seaweed removal effort, information is needed on the amount and location of debris, beach conditions, locations and conditions of construction access, type of equipment, times and dates of cleanup activities, and sea turtle nesting activities.
- Email this information to CCCL@FloridaDEP.gov with a request for assistance and include the Best Management Practices (BMPs) that will be applied to avoid potential harm to the beach and dune system and sea turtles.
- CCCL Permit Managers or applicants will need to consult with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) staff for specific recommendations on all cleanups within the sea turtle nesting season of March 1st through October 31st for Brevard, Indian River, St. Lucie, Martin, Palm Beach and Broward Counties, and May 1st through October 31st for all others.



Credit: National Science Foundation

BMPs for Removing Dead Fish/Seaweed



Credit: Tampa Bay Times

- Determine if dead fish and wrack accumulations are minor and capable of being handled using existing beach cleaning permit conditions (e.g. low pressure tires, maximum 2-inch depth raking into sand, no blades, buckets or other equipment)

BMPs for Removing Dead Fish/Seaweed

- Clean-up activities performed with hand tools, and with no mechanical equipment, sand removal, excavation or impacts to dune vegetation, is an exempt activity that does not require a CCCL permit.
- **Important Note: Please make sure your marine turtle monitor completes their morning survey prior to this work!**
 - Even rakes can obscure adult and hatchling sea turtle tracks

BMPs for Removing Dead Fish/Seaweed

- If additional equipment, heavy trucks or modified cleaning schedules and locations are needed beyond the scope of existing beach cleaning permits, develop a plan of action based on beach conditions, including stockpile areas, beach access routes, types of equipment needed, training of personnel for beach dune and coastal wildlife protection.



BMPs for Removing Dead Fish/Seaweed

- Other important notes:
 - Establish equipment storage, staging and debris stockpile areas off the beach and institute measures to separate the debris from sand to minimize sand removal.
 - Determine and mark with cones an access route for trucks and heavy equipment to enter the beach at existing beach access ramps.
 - Drive directly down to and along the water's edge, avoiding beach dune vegetation and the wrackline and staying off the dry sand sea turtle nesting beach as much as is possible
 - Before the end of the day, smooth out tire ruts and scrapes on the dry sand beach caused from removing material.
 - Properly dispose of collected debris landward of the dune system and CCCL. No debris can be spread on the beach or in the dune system without specific state approvals.

Who ya gonna call?!

- Your marine turtle monitors AND your shorebird monitors!



Permit Conditions



- Operators of mechanical beach cleaning equipment shall avoid all native, salt tolerant dune vegetation by a **minimum of 10 feet**

Permit Conditions

- Beach cleaning over native salt tolerant vegetation is **prohibited**



Permit Conditions

- This is a beach cleaning permit only
- Changes to the beach profile through beach excavation, scraping and the movement of beach sediments are **not** covered under this permit
 - This includes knocking down an escarpment!
- **Agent must obtain a separate CCCL permit for any sand grading activities**
 - It is in your best interest to contact FDEP both in marine turtle nesting season and out of nesting season for these types of activities
 - If in season, you must receive an “all clear” from your marine turtle monitor before you begin work
 - With new seabird/shorebird monitoring rules, you will likely need to receive separate clearance from a shorebird monitor as well

Sea Turtle Monitors: Who are they and how do I contact them?

Sea Turtles

Clearwater – Treasure Island

- Clearwater Marine Aquarium
 - Phone number to receive “all clear”:

727-479-5564

- Point of contact for anything else
 - Carly Oakley
 - 727-441-1790, x2224 (office)
 - 810-969-9274 (cell)
 - coakley@cmaquarium.org

St. Pete Beach

- Sea Turtle Trackers
 - Phone number to receive “all clear”:

727-501-5581



Sea Turtle Monitors: Who are they and how do I contact them?

Clearwater – Treasure Island



Credit: CMA



Credit: CMA



Credit: CMA

St. Pete Beach



Credit: Seaturtletrackers.org



Sea Turtle Monitors: Who are they and how do I contact them?

Sea Turtles

- Nesting surveys in Pinellas County will start on **April 15, 2026**
- Please contact marine turtle nest surveyors each morning starting April 15 (just in case sea turtles start nesting early!)
 - We have had nests before May 1 before!
- This also helps get all teams in the habit of communicating with one another before May 1
 - If you do forget, our team will approach you with a **single** friendly reminder 😊
- **Marine Turtle Permit Holders are the only entities that can provide the “all clear” to enter the beach**

Seabirds and Shorebirds!

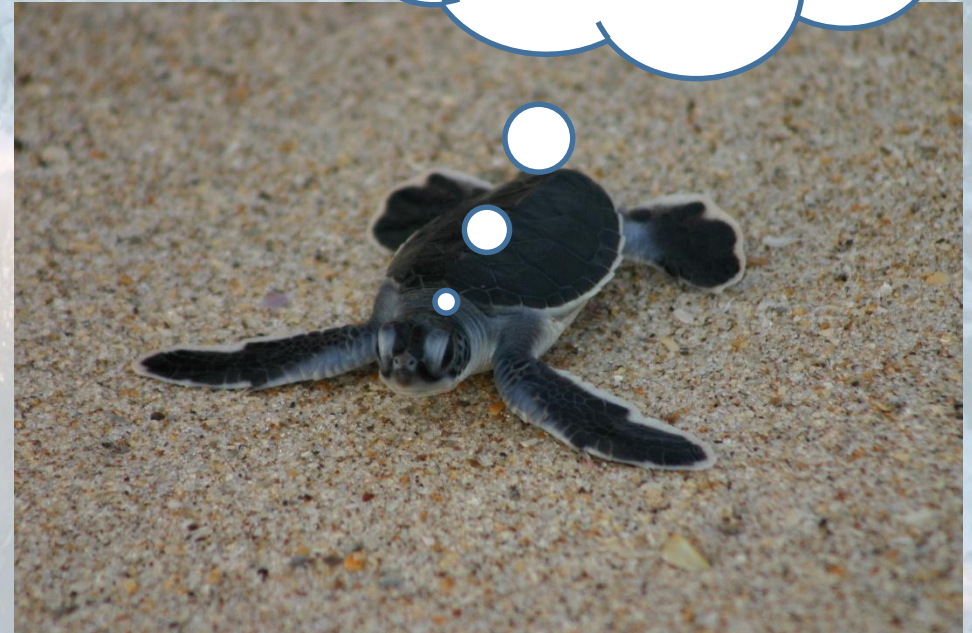
Kara Durda

Email questions to Carly Oakley at
coakley@cmaquarium.org

Thank you for
watching out for us!



Keep an eye out for
us too!



Phrase of the Day

“Nesting Season”

- You must email this “Phrase of the Day”, along with the list of people (full names please) from your team who attended the meeting to Carly Oakley (coakley@cmaquarium.org) no later than Wednesday, April 15th 2026. Please request a copy of the PowerPoint in this email, if needed.
- This will serve as your proof of attendance.

We look forward to seeing you out there for another great Nesting Season!

