

Leave the Beach the Way You Found It

We know everyone loves playing in the sand, especially families with children. We want you to have fun, however there are certain activities that are causing harm to our sea turtle population. We strongly encourage everyone to leave the beach the way you found it.

Knock over sandcastles that can cause obstructions for nesting sea turtles. Also, be sure to fill in holes. Not only can they be a danger to beachgoers, they cause serious threats to sea turtles. If a sea turtle falls into a hole, they can flip over and won't be able to turn themselves upright to complete the egg laying process. They can also get entrapped. When digging holes, you are urged to dig shallow holes because digging deep holes increases the risk of damaging or exposing nests that have not been identified or marked.



Holes are a safety hazard to humans, nesting sea turtles and their hatchlings

How You Can Help

Below are some guidelines that residents and guests should remain cognizant of to protect Nassau County's sea turtle population.

- Keep beachfront lighting turned off, particularly lighting used for decorative purposes
- Keep pool and cabana lights off
- Reduce light reaching the beach by lowering shielding, recessing or redirecting light sources
- Outdoor light fixtures should have yellow, amber or red bulbs
- Place security lighting on motion-sensitive switches to keep them off when not needed
- Apply dark window tenting to windows visible from the beach and draw curtains and blinds after dark
- Avoid using flashlights that emit white or short wavelength light. Use turtle friendly flashlights or red filters when walking on the beach at night.
- If you see a sea turtle or hatchlings, try to distance yourself to where you cannot be seen. Remain quiet and keep all lights turned off (flashlights, cell phones, flash photography and video equipment)
- Ensure that all litter and debris is removed from the beach upon leaving
- Do not leave behind fishing line or fishing nets
- Knock over sand castles and fill in all holes before leaving the beach
- Learn more about sea turtles by visiting www.ameliaislandseaturtlewatch.com



Leave only your footprints



Sea Turtle Protection

Help preserve Amelia Island's sea turtle population



U.S. Endangered Species Act

Certain species of sea turtles are endangered and protected by Florida Statute and by the United States Species Act of 1973. Florida Statutes, Chapter 379.2431 states, “A person, firm, or corporation that illegally takes, disturbs, mutilates, destroys, causes to be destroyed, transfers, sells, offers to sell, molests, or harasses any marine turtle species or hatchling, or parts thereof, or the eggs or nest of any marine turtle species, commits a third degree felony, punishable by law.

Amelia Island is home to several species of threatened or endangered sea turtles including loggerhead, green and leatherback. Residents and visitors are encouraged to do their part in protecting our sea turtle population.

Turtle Nesting Season

Turtle nesting season takes place every year from May 1st to October 31st. During this time, additional efforts are made locally to protect expectant mothers, their nests and baby hatchlings.



When a turtle nest is located, the area is roped off for protection

Artificial Lighting

Disorientation occurs when artificial lighting disrupts the ability of nesting females and hatchlings to find the sea from the beach. According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, disorientation from artificial lighting is a significant sea turtle conservation problem in Florida. When choosing a nesting site, females may be deterred from areas that are too bright. This can lead them to select a less suitable location to lay their nests. Sometimes, it can cause the female to abandon their nesting attempt all together. They can also become disoriented when attempting to return to the ocean and end up traveling hundreds of yards in the wrong direction, winding up in parking lots, swimming pools, or busy thoroughfares.

When hatchlings are emerging from their nests at night, they rely on lighting over the ocean to lead them to the water. However, artificial lighting can cause them to move away from the sea and can lead to death from exhaustion, dehydration and predators.

In 2008, the County adopted a beachlighting Ordinance to safeguard hatchlings from sources of artificial light. It sets restrictions on existing and new development and provides guidelines on illuminating areas with shielded lighting or eliminating lighting all together during turtle nesting season.

It is unlawful for any person to violate the Ordinance. A violation shall be subject to a fine. The full Ordinance can be found at



Leave No Trace

Items left on the beach unattended after certain hours are a safety hazard and adversely affect the sea turtles and other protected species.

In 2016, the Board of County Commissioners adopted an Ordinance regulating personal property unattended on Atlantic Beaches in the unincorporated area (Peters Point south to the State Park).

Any personal items left on the beach between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. are collected and discarded. Personal property includes, but is not limited to: tents (including tent frames), cabanas, umbrellas, beach chairs and other furniture, picnic tables, grills, floats, surf boards, kites, water crafts, beach toys, nets, coolers, and other general items used for beach recreation.

Obstacles on the beach can block nesting mothers and prevent them from finding an ideal nesting spot. They can also make traveling to the ocean much more difficult for recently-emerged hatchlings.



Obstacles left on the beach can cause a threat to nesting mothers and newly emerged hatchlings