

RESOLUTION 2025-132

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA, ADOPTING THE NASSAU COUNTY BEACHES PROTECTED SPECIES MANAGEMENT PLAN; PROVIDING FOR FINDINGS; PROVIDING FOR ADOPTION OF PLAN; PROVIDING FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND APPLICABILITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, on August 11, 2025 the Board of County Commissioners adopted amendments to Chapter 23 ½ Recreation Areas, specifically amending Article II. Beaches of the Code of Ordinances by the adoption and passage of Ordinance 2025-037; and

WHEREAS, the Section 23 ½ -24, Protected Species Management Plan (PSMP) requires the Board to adopt, maintain, and enforce said plan in accordance with the Code requirements; and

WHEREAS, the County has engaged Coastal Conservation Group LLC (CCG) to provide expert advice on management of protected species on the beaches of Nassau County; and

WHEREAS, the County has further partnered with Amelia Island Sea Turtle Watch (AISTW) as the local Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) permitted nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of sea turtles for Nassau County beaches; and

WHEREAS, the input and recommendations of CCG and the AISTW have been incorporated into the development of the PSMP; and

WHEREAS, the Board now finds it in the best interest of the County and its citizens to adopt the policies and recommendations included in the Nassau County Protected Species Management Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOVLED by the Board of County Commissioners of Nassau County, Florida, as follows:

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

The above findings are true and correct and are hereby incorporated herein by reference.

SECTION 2. ADOPTION OF NASSAU COUNTY PROTECTED SPECIES MANAGEMENT PLAN.

The Nassau County Protected Species Management Plan, attached hereto as Appendix "A", and incorporated herein by reference (the "Plan") is hereby approved.

SECTION 3. IMPLEMENTATION AND APPLICABILITY.

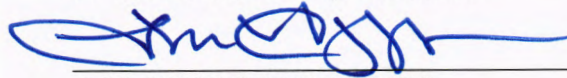
The Plan shall be enforced as provided in the Code of Ordinances, Chapter 23 ½ Recreation Areas, Article II. Beaches, Division 1 Generally.

SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its passage.

ADOPTED THIS 11th DAY OF AUGUST, 2025 BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA.

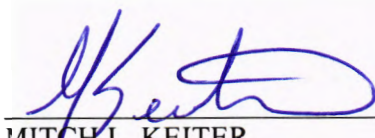
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA



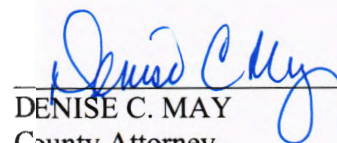
A.M. "HUPP" HUPPMANN
Its: Chairman

ATTEST as to Chairman's Signature:

Approved as to form:



MITCH L. KEITER
Its: Ex-Officio Clerk



DENISE C. MAY
County Attorney

APPENDIX A

NASSAU COUNTY PROTECTED SPECIES MANAGEMENT PLAN

Nassau County Beaches Protected Species Management Plan

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Protected Species Management Plan

The purpose of the Nassau County Beaches Protected Species Management Plan (PSMP or Plan) is to protect nesting sea turtles and their habitat from threats such as beach driving and parking, horseback riding, and other human related activities.

This approach provides a balance between protection of the dunes and wildlife while continuing to manage traditional public uses. It is recognized that values differ among beach users, and to be effective the Plan must provide for varied experience levels for beach users.

1.2 Nassau County Beaches

Vehicles have been authorized to drive on Nassau County beaches since the advent of the automobile. The beaches of Nassau County are a major and vital component of the local economy and a valuable local, state, and national resource. The beaches and dunes are also recognized as important habitat for protected species of sea turtles.

Nassau County is the most northeastern county in the state of Florida bounded on the north by Georgia and on the south by Duval County. The St. Mary's River forms the northern and western border with Georgia while the Nassau River separates Nassau County from Duval County to the South.

The vast majority of Nassau County's coastline consists of sandy beaches, with the exception of two inlets formed by St. Mary's river and the Nassau River.

The Nassau County Beaches includes those beaches in unincorporated county over which Nassau County exercises sole beach management and regulatory authority. Vehicular access and parking is further authorized by Chapter 89-445, Laws of Florida, on the State Park beach. County Beaches, inclusive of the State Park beach, consist of approximately 7 miles of sandy beaches. Vehicular beach access and parking are currently authorized on approximately 3.35 miles of County Beaches including the State Park beach. The County performs limited beach services and operates safety and/or emergency vehicles throughout the entire coastline in the County.

1.3 Economic Environment

Nassau County beaches and coastal waters are considered one of the prime economic resources of this area. In particular, the beach and the Intracoastal Waterway are valuable commercial, economic, and recreational resources.

1.4 Preservation of Customary Use; Private Property Rights

The Nassau County Board of County Commissioners is the local government trustee of the public's right of access to the beaches in Nassau County. In 1989, the Florida Legislature enacted Chapter 89-445, Laws of Florida, which specifically authorizes access and on-beach parking on specified Nassau County Beaches. The public has acquired through usage, which is ancient, reasonable, without interruption, and free from

dispute, the right to use the soft, sandy beaches throughout Nassau County for customary recreational purposes. It is the policy of the Board of Commissioners to preserve and protect such customary rights while recognizing, considering, and respecting the rights of upland property owners in the implementation and administration of the PSMP. Nassau County is committed to both protecting the public's traditional use of beaches and recognizing the rights of its citizens while aiming for a balanced approach in managing its important coastal resources.

2.0 DUNE AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION

2.1 Existing Dune and Wildlife Protection

Nassau County is committed to the conservation of dunes and wildlife. Support of these efforts may be found in the County's Beach Lighting Ordinance (Ord. No. 2008-01) (providing lighting restrictions to protect sea turtles); Section 23½-11 of the County Code (providing limitations on beach access and parking); Section 23½-12 of the County Code (limiting beach camping); Section 23½-14 of the County Code (limiting fires on beaches); and the County's Leave No Trace Ordinance (Ord. No. 2016-06) (prohibiting certain unattended personal property that would adversely affect sea turtles' access to the beaches). The County's intent is to incorporate protective additional measures that will decrease impacts to sea turtles and their habitat.

2.2 Sea Turtle Management

The purpose of this section is to provide additional protection to threatened and endangered sea turtles which nest along the beaches of Nassau County. The five species of sea turtles found on Florida's beaches are listed as either threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act which is managed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) works with the USFWS through a cooperative Agreement under Section 6 of the Act. This agreement makes FWC responsible for issuing Marine Turtle Permits (MTP), thus allowing for a comprehensive data collection system through a large community and organization based reporting system.

The loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), the green (*Chelonia mydas*), and the leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) nest regularly on Nassau County beaches. It is important to note that in addition to recording sea turtle nesting activities the number of false crawls is also recorded. A false crawl is defined when a female sea turtle comes ashore to lay her eggs but returns without depositing her eggs. Essentially, it is an abandoned nesting attempt that is caused by a number of factors that can disturb the sea turtle's nesting. Potential disturbances include the presence of people, vehicles, bright lights and obstructions like beach chairs and sand fencing.

Sea turtles will choose the sandy beach anywhere between the high tide line and the base of the dunes for nesting. The nesting season typically occurs between May and October with some early and late hatching activity outside of the standard sea turtle nesting season. Consistent with the requirements and permit conditions of the FWC Marine Turtle Guidelines, each nest will be marked and documented. Volunteers evaluate each nest to determine hatching success and hatchling emergence.

2.2.1 Sea Turtle Patrol

The beaches of Nassau County are patrolled by the Amelia Island Sea Turtle Watch (AISTW). The AISTW is permitted by FWC to conduct the following activities:

- Conduct nesting surveys
- Conduct stranding/salvage activities
- Relocating nests for conservation purposes
- Conduct hatch success evaluations.
- Maintain & display preserved specimens

Other conditions may apply to the AISTW's permits and may change from year to year depending on the demand for environmental circumstances and projects.

The AISTW has been collecting sea turtle nesting data since 1986. Average nesting numbers have fluctuated over time due to spikes in nesting events, but the number of nests recorded on all Nassau County beaches in 2024 was approximately 224 nests. The AISTW shares the data it collects with Nassau County to support the County's conservation efforts.

3.0 **BEACH DRIVING AND PARKING**

3.1 Introduction

The Plan creates programs and policies to improve protected species management on the beaches of Nassau County while maintaining traditional beach uses such as beach driving and parking, horseback riding, and recreational use. The goal is to continue to allow such activities without diminishing the quality of the resources, thereby reducing their environmental and economic value.

4.0 **BEACH ACCESS**

4.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of the Beach Access chapter is to identify existing methods of public access and the need for improvement. Beach access gives the public the ability to use the beach for enjoyment but also should be managed in a way that creates a balance between human use and the protected species we share the coastal environment with.

In this chapter beach access includes:

- A. Inventory of Beach Access
- B. Vehicle Beach Access Ramps (VBARs)
- C. Pedestrian Access Facilities
- D. Signage
- E. Handicapped Access
- F. Beach Vehicle Access Points

4.2 Inventory of Beach Access

Table 2. Inventory of Beach Access

Name	Management	Type	Park/Beach	Amenities
Beach Access 101	Nassau County BOCC	Pedestrian Access	Peter's Point Park	off-beach parking, bathrooms, showers, pavilions, dune walkover, ADA beach access, horse trailer parking/horseback riding
Beach Access 102	Nassau County BOCC	Pedestrian Access	Peter's Point Park	
Beach Access 103	Nassau County BOCC	Pedestrian Access	Peter's Point Park	
VBAR Peter's Point	Nassau County BOCC	VBAR	Peter's Point Park	VBAR access control gate and manned security guard booth, on-beach parking, horseback riding
Beach Access 104	Nassau County BOCC	Pedestrian Access	Scott Road Beach Access	off-beach parking, bathrooms, dune walkover
VBAR Scott Road	Nassau County BOCC	VBAR	Scott Road Beach Access	VBAR access control gate and manned security guard booth
Beach Access 105	Nassau County BOCC	Pedestrian Access	Summer Beach	dune walkover
Beach Access 106	Nassau County BOCC	Pedestrian Access	American Beach	dune walkover
VBAR Lewis Street	Nassau County BOCC	VBAR	American Beach	VBAR access control gate and manned security guard booth, on-beach parking
Beach Access Evans Rendezvous	Nassau County BOCC	Pedestrian Access	American Beach	dune walkover, off-beach parking, community building
Beach Access 107	Nassau County BOCC	Pedestrian Access	American Beach	dune walkover
Beach Access 107.5	Nassau County BOCC	Pedestrian Access	American Beach	natural path to beach
Beach Access 108	Nassau County BOCC	Pedestrian Access	American Beach	dune walkover
Beach Access 109	Nassau County BOCC	Pedestrian Access	Burney Park	off-beach parking, bathrooms, showers, pavilions, dune walkover, ADA beach access
Beach Access 110	Nassau County BOCC	Pedestrian Access	Southend Beach Access	off-beach parking, dune walkover
Beach Access AISP	State of Florida	Pedestrian Access	AISP (State Park)	off-beach parking, natural path to beach, fishing bridge, restrooms, bait shop
VBAR AISP	State of Florida	VBAR	AISP (State Park)	VBAR access control gate

5.0 VEHICLE BEACH ACCESS RAMPS (VBARS)

5.1 Existing VBARS

VBARS are located on public easements or lands that extend from public roads to the beaches. They primarily provide vehicles access for beach parking and driving as well as pedestrian access to the beaches.

Nassau County manages 3 Vehicle Beach Access Ramps (Image 1):

103 Peter's Point | 104 Scott Road | 106 Lewis Street



Nassau County operates up to 3 gated beach access points. The access point includes a booth to provide shelter to the security guard at the access point. Vehicles approach the booth and present identification to a security guard. An occupant of the vehicle must produce at least one (1) of the following: (i) a valid Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles Driver's License indicating Nassau County residency, (ii) a valid Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles Identification Card indicating Nassau County residency, (iii) a Nassau County Property Owner's Identification Card created by the county tax collector and indicating Nassau County Residency, (iv) a valid Armed Forces of the United States Geneva Conventions Identification Card (a.k.a. U.S. Common Access Card) or other valid identification card demonstrating active duty status or (v) a valid department of highway safety and motor vehicles disability parking placard or have a valid wheelchair license plate. The security guard then records the identification type presented, the make and color of the vehicle, and time of day.

Each of the Vehicle Beach Ramps is equipped with metal barricades that prevent vehicles from entering the beach without providing adequate proof of residency.

5.2 Pedestrian Access Facilities

Pedestrian Access Facilities include:

- (1) Walkovers – A combination of ramps and stairs over the dune system which are built on public lands or easements and link the beaches with off- beach parking facilities, public roads and rights-of-way.
 - a. Unimproved lands – Public easements or lands cut through the existing dune systems which permit pedestrian access to coastal beaches.
- (2) Vehicle Beach Access Ramps – Vehicle ramps that provides access to vehicles and pedestrians.

5.3 Signage

5.3.1 Existing Signage

Nassau County provides basic traffic control signs that display some of the more important regulations and general information to help beachgoers. The majority of the signs are displayed at entrances to the beach, but signs are also posted along the beach wherever deemed appropriate or necessary.

5.4 Handicapped Access

5.4.1 Existing – Handicapped Access

Few beach access facilities provide access for handicapped (specifically wheel chair bound) citizens, but VBARs do provide limited pedestrian access for the handicapped where grade and beach sand conditions are favorable.

6.0 CONSERVATION AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

6.1 Sea Turtle Management Plan

Nassau County recognizes that the sea turtle nesting season runs from May 1 – October 31 and during these times the following management activities will be implemented:

(1) Beach Driving/Parking:

- a. Establish beach driving hours from 7:30 am to 7:30 pm to reduce the potential impact of vehicles on nesting females and hatchlings. This will also prevent headlights on vehicles from deterring or drawing in sea turtles thus reducing any potential for disorientation of sea turtles.
- b. Beach driving and parking is prohibited within 10 feet of sea turtle nests.

(2) Conservation Zone:

- a. Mark and enforce a 10-foot-wide Conservation Zone (CZ) in the unincorporated area of the County (excluding State parks) on which beach access and parking is authorized. The CZ is a variable area that extends 10 feet seaward from the permanent line of native vegetation.
- b. No activity will be permitted in the CZ or landward of the CZ during any time of the year.
- c. Install appropriate signage indicating no activity beyond the marked CZ.
- d. Signage and markers will be made of materials that are easily installed but substantial enough to withstand environmental conditions on a beach.

(3) Monitoring and conspicuous marking of all sea turtle nests:

- a. Contract, if possible, with the local FWC-permitted sea turtle group, the AISTW, to create and maintain a uniform and consistent sea turtle monitoring program to collect the data needed to better quantify current natural and human-related impacts to sea turtles on the County's beaches. This information will be used to direct the County's limited resources toward those programs that are likely to have the greatest conservation value.
- b. The County will cooperate with the AISTW to maintain a Countywide sea turtle monitoring plan and assist the AISTW in marking sea turtle nests according to FWC guidelines with 4 stakes, orange flagging and an FWC issued yellow placard nesting sign. The AISTW will provide the County the following information during turtle season.
 - i. Nest identification including date, species, location, and nest identification number;
 - ii. Observed sea turtle disorientation activity;
 - iii. Observed interference with nesting activities; and reproductive success.
- c. Nassau County will mark nests reported by the AISTW with highly visible green cones and flagging outside of the perimeter of the initially staked area to create a 10-foot buffer of protection around the nests.
- d. Nassau County and the AISTW will determine methods for returning materials to the County.
- e. If a sea turtle nest is relocated due to a storm event or other disturbance, Nassau County will closely coordinate with the AISTW and record the locations of the original and relocated coordinates.

(4) Rut Removal:

- a. Implementation of a rut removal program starting at 45 days after the beginning of nest incubation and continuing until the stakes around the nest have been removed by AISTW.
- b. Rut removal to occur daily in a 30-foot area extending from the nest seaward to the high tide line.
- c. The County will coordinate the timing and method of rut removal with the AISTW.

(5) Adequate Education Materials:

- a. Provide adequate education materials at VBARs that include but are not limited to the following:
 - i. VBAR signage regarding sea turtle nesting season and their habitat needs
 - ii. Educational pamphlets
- b. Online educational programs for beach parking patrons

6.2 VBARs

To adequately track and assess vehicular access needs the following is recommended:

- (1) Implement beach driving hours from 7:30 am to 7:30 pm during turtle nesting season from May 1 to November 1.
- (2) Provide access control at each public vehicular access point to the beach which consists of guard booth, mechanical arm, and lockable barricade to ensure no unauthorized public vehicular access.
- (3) Develop traffic flow plans and signage placement strategies designed to facilitate access to the beach.
- (4) Existing vehicular access ramps should be improved as opportunities arise. These improvements may be enhancements such as consistent signage.

6.3 Pedestrian Access Facilities

Existing unimproved public pathways and improved walkways should be converted to dune walkovers, where practical.

Pedestrian facilities should be:

- (1) Built as walkovers, unless in conjunction with a Vehicle Beach Ramp
- (2) Located to reduce degradation of primary and secondary dunes and to reduce wind blowout.
- (3) Provided with parking, where feasible.

Regularly inspect, maintain, and ensure that spillover vegetation and other impediments be cleared for public use.

6.4 Signage and Public Awareness Material

Beach signage should be standardized and created to promote a clearly recognizable park-like theme. The sign plan should complement the public information program, to protect the beach user, the sea turtles and to reduce sign clutter.

Messaging should be in coordination with other County departments and their needs, communicate the proper information and be aesthetically pleasing to draw the attention of the user. Signage should include the following:

- (1) Lawful uses
 - a. Hours and dates of access
 - b. Speed limit
 - c. Beach Code language
- (2) Sharing the beach
 - a. Environmental education
- (3) Logos or icons to enhance recognition of use
- (4) Develop education kiosks at beach access points
- (5) Incorporate endangered species, common species and habitat language
- (6) Develop signage that is specific to that habitat or park
- (7) Offer ways the public can help

Developing and implementing a public awareness program that includes, but is not limited to, the following features:

- a. Developing and distributing public awareness materials containing information regarding driving regulations and protected species' issues to beach drivers as they access beaches.

6.5 Handicapped Access

Emphasis is placed on increasing the opportunities afforded to handicapped individuals by vehicular access to parking on the beach.

6.6 Beach Vehicle Access Points

Installing and maintaining traffic barricades at beach gate booths and ramps

- a. access control at each public vehicular access point to the beach which consists of guard booth, mechanical arm, and lockable barricade to ensure no unauthorized public vehicular access.