



## Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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## Sea Turtles

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[American Crocodile](#)

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#### Sea Turtles

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#### Waterfowl

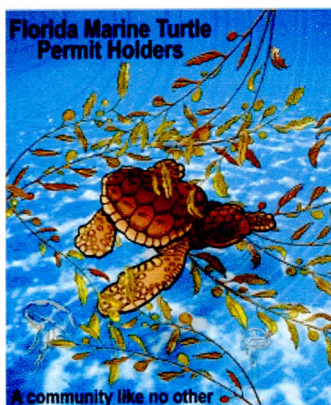
#### White-tailed deer

### Imperiled Species

### Nonnative Species

### Invasive Plants

### Captive Wildlife



## Marine Turtle Permit Rule Stakeholder Outreach Meetings were held May - June 2014

For a summary of comments from these meetings, please click the link below



Florida Fish and Wildlife  
Conservation Commission  
[MyFWC.com/seaturtle](http://myfwc.com/seaturtle)

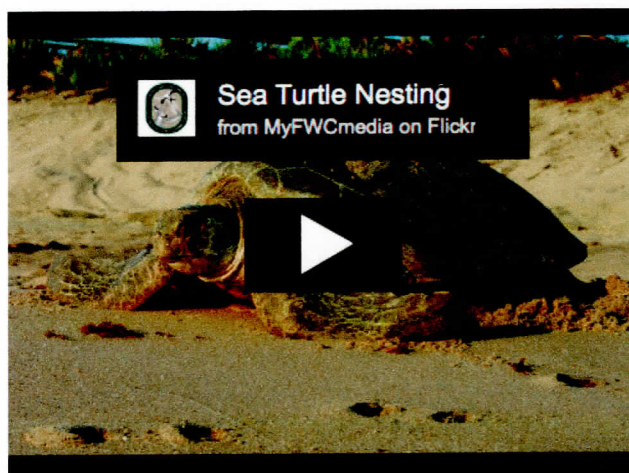
[Marine Turtle Permit Rule - Summary of Stakeholder Meetings](#)

Sea turtles, which are among the oldest creatures on earth, have remained essentially unchanged for 110 million years; however, they face an uncertain future. [Illegal harvesting, habitat encroachment, and pollution](#) (physical and light) are only some of the things sea turtles must face as each species [struggles to stay alive](#).

FWC helps to protect and conserve marine turtles and their habitat through:

- the [Division of Habitat and Species Conservation](#) - Imperiled Species Management Section (ISM),
- the [Fish and Wildlife Research Institute](#) (FWRI),
- and the [Division of Law Enforcement](#) (LE).

The management program (ISM) is primarily responsible for the management efforts of marine turtle recovery. Staff participate in decisions regarding coastal construction activities, land acquisition and management of [nesting](#) beaches and foraging habitats. Staff review and comment on permits for coastal construction activity, environmental resource permits, beach renourishment projects, [beach lighting ordinances](#), and [beach cleaning practices](#). Field evaluations of proposed and permitted activities are conducted to recommend and evaluate the success of marine turtle [protection measures](#).



**Wildlife Assistance**  
**Living with Wildlife**  
**Habitat Information**  
**Health and Disease**

Coordination of research and management activities is accomplished through various means, including the administration of a [marine turtle permit system](#). Through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the FWC reviews, issues, and administers permits for both [research](#) and management activities conducted with marine turtles within the state. Staff also monitors marine turtles held in captive/holding facilities.

**To report someone disturbing a sea turtle nest or  
 an injured, dead or harassed sea turtle -  
 Call: 888-404-FWCC (3922)  
 Cellular phone \*FWC or #FWC**



Learn more about the [Wildlife Lighting](#) criteria, the Certification process, and to view certified fixtures, bulbs and communities.

**FWC Facts:**

**Seagrasses are the principal food for endangered manatees and green sea turtles, help purify the water, and provide a suitable environment for a wide variety of marine life.**

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### Marine Turtle Stakeholder Meeting Summary

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#### Imperiled Species

#### Nonnative Species

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### Marine Turtle Permit Rule Summary of Stakeholder Workshops

Entities conducting conservation, research, and education activities involving threatened and endangered marine turtles and their nests in Florida must obtain a Marine Turtle Permit from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. FWC issues Marine Turtle Permits in accordance with a state statute, the Florida Marine Turtle Protection Act (Florida Statute 379.2431 (1)) and the Marine Turtle Permit Rule (Florida Administrative Code Rule 68E-1). While the Marine Turtle Protection Act gives FWC the authority to issue Marine Turtle Permits (MTP) and specifies who is eligible to receive a MTP, the Marine Turtle Permit Rule contains specific details on application procedures, permit issuance criteria, and requirements for conduct of all authorized activities.

FWC is considering amending the Marine Turtle Permit Rule. Prior to initiating the rule amendment process, FWC staff hosted a series of stakeholder workshops during May and June, 2014. Workshops were held in Tallahassee, St. Petersburg, Naples, West Palm Beach, Marathon, Vero Beach, St. Augustine, and Panama City Beach. The 114 attendees included Marine Turtle Permit Holders, their authorized personnel, and staff from local governments, conservation organizations, federal and state agencies, universities, and facilities that hold marine turtles for education and rehabilitation.

During the workshops, FWC staff presented a brief overview of the existing Marine Turtle Permit Rule and then asked participants to answer specific questions related to rule requirements, research topics, and the Marine Turtle Conservation Guidelines, which are incorporated by reference into the existing Rule. Stakeholders also had an opportunity to express other opinions on any issue related to Marine Turtle Permits. Individual cards with from three to seven questions for each topic (Rule, Research, Guidelines, Open) were distributed to each attendee at topic-specific stations - "corners" - around the room. After ten to fifteen minutes, cards were collected and a general discussion on the "corner" topic ensued for approximately 10 minutes. Participants then moved to the next corner and repeated this process. This "Four Corners" approach allowed individuals to express their opinions in a more informal setting. The specific questions on the cards for each topic, a summary of the responses for each, and the results combined for all participants (percentages), follow.

### Rules

#### Should Marine Turtle Permits be authorized for more than one year?

The majority of stakeholders surveyed (67.23%) agreed that marine turtle permits should be issued for more than one year, particularly for basic activities or certain organizations such as the Florida Park Service. A small number felt that annual renewal was not a problem (11.76%), and a longer permit period could be too long. Others were unsure (17.65%). Three participants did not respond on this issue (2.52%).

#### Should organizations/counties/ facilities be allowed to obtain permits in addition



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**to individuals?**

Many stakeholders surveyed (42.02%) indicated that organizations should be allowed to obtain permits in addition to individuals, but there would need to be a point person who met experience criteria and provisions to avoid conflict-of-interest situations. Other stakeholders were concerned about accountability and conflict of interest if permits were not dedicated to a single individual (29.41%). Others were unsure (28.57%) and expressed concerns about liability and indicated it depended on the type of permitted activity.

**Is more information needed on current training (nesting/stranding) requirements and opportunities?**

Many stakeholders surveyed (40.35%) felt that more information is needed on current training (nesting/stranding) requirements and opportunities. Stakeholders would like more nesting beach workshops at different times of the year or more specifics on all skills desired of Permit Holders and volunteers. Many were interested in the online training option. Other stakeholders felt that more information was not needed for training requirements and opportunities (29.41%), and while training is annual, accessible and FWC does a great job, having access to the PowerPoint presentation to use throughout the year would be good. Others were unsure (26.05%) and felt that more meetings and training for people that already know what they are doing isn't needed. Four participants did not respond on this issue (3.57%).

## **The Marine Turtle Conservation Guidelines**

**Are the reporting requirements clearly explained?**

The majority of workshop participants felt that the reporting requirements are clearly explained (73.95%), but expressed interest in online submittal and the potential for "apps" for data entry. A few participants did not agree that reporting requirements are clearly explained (1.68%) and others were unsure (15.97%). Five participants did not respond on this issue (4.72%).

**Are the reporting requirements cumbersome? (not project monitoring)?**

Most workshop participants felt that the reporting requirements were not cumbersome (excluding project monitoring) (55.93%). Fewer folks (11.86%) expressed concern about the reporting requirements indicating issues with multiple forms and "Mac-unfriendly forms". Many participants were unsure (22.87%) about reporting. Five participants did not respond on this issue (3.39%).

**Are you familiar with the FWC Marine Turtle Conservation Guidelines?**

Most (91.45%), but not all (5.13%), workshop participants were familiar with the FWC Marine Turtle Conservation Guidelines. Participants suggested the title of the document be changed to "Requirements" and others expressed support for updating the Guidelines. Three participants did not respond on this issue (2.56%).

**Is more guidance needed on when it is appropriate to relocate a nest?**

Many workshop participants felt that more guidance is needed on when it is appropriate to relocate a nest (49.15%) as the current language is vague or the existing policy is based on false assumptions. Fewer folks indicated such guidance was not needed (16.95%) as the requirements were pretty straightforward and the Permit Holder is responsible for proper training. Many participants were unsure about this issue (20.34%) due to differences for different projects. Others felt this issue was not applicable to them (7.63%). Seven participants did not respond on this issue (5.93%).

**Is more information needed on nest treatment techniques and methods like caging, light barriers, trenching, nest sitting, etc.?**

Most participants indicated there is a need for more information on nest treatment techniques (47.17%) such as who can sit by nests and wait for hatchlings to emerge to ensure they reach the water safely. Other respondents were not familiar with techniques such as trenching or use of barriers. A concern was expressed that nest manipulations should only be used in compliment to enforcement of local lighting ordinances. Other folks indicated such guidance was not needed (23.58%) as training by the Permit Holder should be sufficient. Many participants were unsure about this issue (18.87%) and others felt this issue was not applicable to them (6.60%). Four participants did not respond on this issue (3.77%).

#### **Should FWC adopt the FWS Standard Permit Conditions for Care and Maintenance of Captive Sea Turtles?**

The majority of participants was unsure about this issue (59.43%) and thought that such standardization was already required. Other stakeholders responded that FWC should not adopt the FWS Standard Permit Conditions for Care and Maintenance of Captive Sea Turtles as most Florida facilities cannot meet these guidelines. Other participants felt this issue was not applicable to them (15.09%), with a similar number indicating FWC should adopt these standards (15.09%). One participant did not respond on this issue (0.94%).

#### **Should more guidance be provided on the acceptable predator control methods and when they should be implemented?**

Many participants responding to this issue felt FWC should provide more guidance (45.28%), and recognized that a certain amount of predation is natural. Many predators are native species, and guidance is needed on the percentage of nests predated for predator control to be implemented. Guidelines should include specific control measures for specific predators. Other participants either were unsure (34.91%) or did not think more guidance was needed (12.26%). Permit holders may need assistance with workable solutions, as caging can be too time consuming and expensive on certain beaches. A few participants felt this issue was not applicable to them (5.66%) and two participants did not respond on this issue (1.89%).

#### **Should more guidance be provided on the use of vehicles during nesting beach surveys?**

The majority of participants responding to this issue felt that more guidance on vehicle use during nesting beach surveys is needed (49.06%), while a number of participants did not provide input (33.96%). Very few of the participants indicated they were unsure about this issue (1.89%), and some did not think more guidance was needed (12.26%) and referenced the existing sensitivity training. A few participants felt this issue was not applicable to them (2.83%).

## **Marine Turtle Research Activities**

#### **Do research activities occur in your survey area?**

The majority of the participants in the Stakeholder Workshops indicated that research activities occur in their nesting beach survey areas (53.77%). Other participants indicated no research occurred on the beaches they surveyed (21.70%) or they were unsure (19.81%) but would like to be informed. Three participants indicated this issue was not applicable to them (2.83%) and two did not respond (1.89%).

#### **Are you directly involved in research involving marine turtles?**

Thirty-seven of the participants in the Stakeholder Workshops were directly involved in research involving marine turtles (34.91%), and sixty-seven were not (63.21%). One participant indicated they may be involved and another indicated "not yet" (0.94%).

#### **Are reporting requirements for research projects clearly explained?**



Many participants responding to this issue were unsure about reporting requirements for research (44.34%), while others felt the reporting requirements were clearly explained (20.75%). Some stakeholders felt the reporting requirements were not clearly explained (4.72%) and many felt this issue was not applicable to them (29.25%). One person was unsure if this issue was applicable to them (0.94%).

#### **Are reporting requirements for research projects cumbersome?**

Many participants responding were unsure about this issue (38.68%), while others felt it was not applicable to them (31.13%). Slightly more respondents felt the reporting requirements were not cumbersome (16.98%) then felt they were (10.38%) and recommended coordination between FWC and NMFS on reporting requirements. One stakeholder commented the current form is now too short. One person was unsure if this issue was applicable to them (0.94%) and two folks did not respond (1.89%).

#### **Are the materials required to apply for a permit to conduct a research project clear?**

Most participants responding to this issue were unsure (57.55%), others felt that the materials were clear (29.25%). Fewer folks felt the materials were not clear (8.49%), especially for first time researchers, who may not know what needs to be detailed in the proposal. A few participants felt this issue was not applicable to them (4.72%).

#### **Would you like to see an annual summary of research conducted under Marine Turtle Permits?**

Most participants indicated they would like to see such a summary (86.79%), which could encourage collaboration, although others would not (2.83%). Some participants were unsure if they would like to see a summary (7.55%). One person indicated they would and would not (yes/no) like to see a summary (0.94%) and two folks did not think this was applicable to them (1.89%).

#### **Should FWC create a list of needed research?**

Most participants agreed with this concept (84.91%) but some stakeholders were unsure (15.09%).

#### **FWC Facts:**

**Whooping cranes eat aquatic invertebrates (insects, crustaceans and mollusks), small vertebrates (fish, reptiles, amphibians, birds and mammals), roots, acorns and berries.**

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