

**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA
MEMORANDUM**

TO: Board of County Commissioners

THROUGH: Richard B. Szpyrka, P.E. Public Works Director

THROUGH: Eric Charest, Natural Resources Manager

FROM: Quintin Bergman, M.S., Sea Turtle Environmental Specialist

SUBJECT: **Agreement with USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services**

DATE: October 29, 2021

DESCRIPTION AND CONDITION

On December 1, 2004 Indian River County (IRC) received an Incidental Take Permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) which required IRC to initiate the Habitat Conservation Plan: A Plan for the Protection of Sea Turtles on the Eroding Beaches in Indian River County, Florida (HCP). The primary goal of the HCP is to maintain a comprehensive plan to protect State and Federally listed sea turtle species within IRC. Through the HCP, the County has established a Sea Turtle Conservation Program that encompasses coordinating countywide nest monitoring, artificial lighting ordinance and nighttime surveys, various education and outreach activities, and coordination on responses to sick and injured sea turtles.

Occasionally sea turtle nests are eaten or destroyed by another animal. In the early 2000's when the HCP was first established, the raccoons were the most prevalent predator on sea turtle nests taking 5%-10% of the nests in a given area. The Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge, the only Refuge established for the protection of sea turtles, managed the raccoon predators under their Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Since that management action, nest predation has remained low, >1% to 3% nests per season.

During the 2021 sea turtle nesting season, morning surveyors from Ecological Associates Inc. (EAI) have documented 261 sea turtle nests predated within a 3.1 mile (5 km) area in the northern part of IRC as of October 14, 2021. Coyotes were identified as predating majority of these nests (226 nests). These nests are located around the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge, Treasure Shores Park and the Seaview Subdivision in the northern part of the County. The first predated nest occurred earlier in the season and have been occurring regularly up to the date of this agenda.

Table 1: 2021 Nesting Season Breakdown of Nest Predators in the Impacted Area (3.1 mi.).

Predator Type	Number of Nests Impacted
Coyote	226
Unknown	17
Canine/Dog	8
Crab	6
Raccoon	2
Bobcat	2
Total	261

USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services has provided a Cooperative Service Agreement outlining a Work Plan for a Wildlife Specialist to remove the current predators, for a total not exceeding \$10,364.00. Based on the Wildlife Specialist's review of provided data, it is believed that there may be 1-3 coyotes impacting the nests laid along the beach. The Wildlife Specialist has outlined the recommended removal techniques in the Work Plan.

FUNDING

Funding for Wildlife Services is budgeted and available in the Beach Restoration Fund/Other Professional Services (HCP) Account 12814472-033190-99007.

Account Name	Account No.	Amount
Beach Restoration Fund/Other Professional Services HCP	12814472-033190-99007	\$10,364.00

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the BCC authorize this Cooperative Services Agreement between Indian River County and the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) Wildlife Services (WS) in the total lump sum of \$10,364.00. Additionally, staff recommends that the BCC authorize the Chairman to execute the attached agreement.

ATTACHMENT

- Predation Map
- Frequency of Predated Nests
- Indian River Cnty-CSA-21-7212-8144-RA