

**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA
BOARD MEMORANDUM**

**PUBLIC NOTICE
(INFORMATIONAL)**

TO: Jason E. Brown, County Administrator

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

THROUGH: James D. Gray, Jr., Coastal Engineer

FROM: Kendra L. Cope, M.S., Environmental Specialist

SUBJECT: **2017 Sea Turtle Nesting – Season Summary**

DATE: October 27, 2017

REQUEST

It is requested that the following information be given formal consideration by the Board of County Commissioners during the regularly scheduled meeting on November 7, 2017.

This is an announcement to inform the residents of Indian River County about the successful 2017 sea turtle nesting season. Additional information can be found on the Coastal Facebook page: @IRCcoastal and on the County website www.ircgov.com/coastal.

DESCRIPTION AND CONDITIONS

Indian River County is home to 3 species of nesting sea turtles (Loggerhead, Green, and Leatherback). In 2004, the County implemented a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) in order to establish a framework for sea turtle conservation in Indian River County through daily nesting surveys, nest protection during emergency shoreline protection construction, management of predator impacts, implementing programs to reduce human impacts, and local education. More specifically, to better understand and integrate protection measures, the County's objectives for protecting turtles on the beach are as follows; record the location of every turtle crawl on the beach from the previous night, mark off a sample of nests to determine hatching success and for educational programs, and record all impacts to nests including nest predations, tidal over wash and human impacts. Sea turtles are long-lived species and take up to 25-30 years to become mature adults. Long-term monitoring is vital to the understanding of their populations.

This is the 13th year of county-wide monitoring since the HCP program was implemented. Data collected over these years has helped the county protect nests during beach construction projects, decrease the number of nests effected by raccoons, and identify key areas impacting hatchling survival from artificial beachfront lights.

2017 SEA TURTLE NESTING SUMMARY

Annually, sea turtle nesting season in Indian River County is between March 1st and October 31st. As of this year, data collected from the county-wide nest monitoring program identifies Indian River County breaking more records this year. This was the County's 3rd record high green turtle nesting year in a row (setting a tone for upcoming seasons), and the County had record high number of total nests incubating on the beaches.

The 2017 sea turtle nesting activity above the high tide line as of 10/27/17 was:

- Loggerhead – 5,977 nests
- Green – 2,632 nests
- Leatherback – 37 nest

An additional 66 nests were laid below the high tide line. More detailed information and trends about nesting, including information about the Impacts of Hurricane Irma, will be available in the 2017 Annual HCP Report.

PUBLIC OUTREACH SUMMARY

Given the success and public interest, County staff continued to offer sea turtle education programs such as "Turtle Digs". Turtle digs provided an up close and personal opportunity for the public to witness how sea turtle reproductive success is evaluated while listening to an informative presentation. Average attendance for the 12 Turtle Digs were 104 attendees, doubling the amount of participants from last year. Staff was also able to assist FWC and community partners with three turtle releases this summer at County public parks with hundreds of guests at each release.

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation of staff is to include the above referenced public meeting notice on the November 7, 2017 Board of County Commission Agenda.

APPROVED AGENDA ITEM FOR: NOVEMBER 7, 2017