

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 – 2023 Season**

DATE: October 20, 2022

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, 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 through their Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Since that management action, nest predation has remained low, >1% to 3% nests per season.

Beginning in the 2020 nesting season and continuing into the 2021 nest season, predation rates increased, which presented the need for action. IRC contracted with USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services in November of 2021 in preparation to reduce predation activities during the 2022 nesting season. After USDA implemented the Work Plan, a noticeable reduction of nest predations was observed.

During the current 2022 sea turtle nesting season, morning surveyors from Ecological Associates Inc. (EAI) have documented 126 sea turtle nests predated by coyotes within a 3.1 mile (5 km) area in the northern part of IRC. These nests are located around the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge, Treasure Shores Park, and the Seaview Subdivision. While the 126 nests represent a lower number of nests predated than in the previous year, the need for continued action persists for the upcoming 2023 nesting season.

USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services has provided an update to the Cooperative Service Agreement outlining a Work Plan for a Wildlife Specialist to remove predators during the 2023 nesting season, for a total not exceeding \$10,747.00. 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	\$10,747.00

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board of County Commissioners (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 \$10,747.00. Additionally, staff recommends that the BCC authorize the Chairman to execute the attached agreement.

ATTACHMENT

- Indian River Cnty-CSA-23-7212-8144-RA