

ENJOY FLORIDA'S BEACHES, BUT PLEASE HELP PRESERVE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

In addition to Florida being a great place to enjoy the sun and surf, our beaches are important nesting areas for sea turtles and the sand dunes are home to many unique plants and animals. Dune vegetation (plants) like sea oats are very important. The roots and blades of these plants help hold the sand in place and reduce the amount of dune erosion. Sea oats are able to withstand harsh salty and windy conditions, but they cannot survive a great deal of trampling. Please help protect the sand dunes by using walkovers to access the beach rather than climbing over the dunes.

- Florida statute 370.041 prohibits harvesting of sea oats.
- Healthy, stable sand dunes help protect the houses from wind damage and prevent sand from blowing onto the road behind the dune.
- Vegetated dunes indicate to nesting sea turtles that they have reached the appropriate part of the beach for laying their eggs.



Please help protect Florida's sea turtles. Florida is the most important nesting ground for loggerhead turtles in the Western Hemisphere. The sea turtle nesting season in northeastern Florida runs from May 1 through October 31. During the sea turtle season, please remember a few simple things to help protect these magnificent creatures and their habitat:

- It is against the law to touch or disturb nesting sea turtles, hatchlings, or their nests. Sea turtles are protected by both the Federal Endangered Species Act and the Florida Marine Protection Act.



* Avoid going to the beach at night. If you must be on the beach at night, limit your walking and do not use flashlights or flash photography. The light may cause the female to abort the nesting process, or other sea turtles nearby may be discouraged from nesting if there are lights on the beach.

* While enjoying the beautiful beaches during the day, avoid disturbing marked sea turtle nests and please take your trash with when you leave the beach.

* If you see an injured or dead sea turtle, call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Division of Law Enforcement at 1-888-404-FWCC or contact Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Turtle Stranding Staff by Pager at 1-800-241-4653 (ID#274-4867). Please be prepared to answer the following questions: What is the exact location of the animal? Is the turtle alive or dead? What is the approximate size of the turtle? Is the turtle marked with spray paint? (This indicates that the turtle has been documented.) What is the location of the closest access point to the turtle?

- If you have any questions, please contact the Sea Grant Extension Agent at the University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service: 904-824-4564.