

MARINE TURTLE PROGRAM ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
(Current as of 2007)

FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Executive Director's Office

Division of Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI)
Director

Wildlife Research Section
Section Leader

FWRI Marine Turtle Program Staff:

St. Petersburg Office – (727) 896-8626

Sr. Research Scientist – Statewide Nesting Beach Survey
program coordinator

Biological Scientist II – assists with compilation of SNBS & INBS data and
staff research

Wildlife Technician – assists with west coast stranding activity and staff
research

Wildlife Technician – coordinates in-water research statewide

Administrative Assistant

Jacksonville Field Office – (904) 573-3930

Assistant Research Scientist – coordinates Florida Stranding and Salvage
Network

Melbourne Beach Field Office -- (321) 674-1801

Associate Research Scientist – coordinates Index Nesting Beach Survey
(INBS)

Research Staff – assists with staff research

Tequesta Field Office – (561) 575-5407

Wildlife Technician – assists with east coast stranding activity and staff
research

Wildlife Technician – assists with east coast stranding activity and staff
research

Tallahassee Office – (850) 922-4330

Division of Habitat and Species Conservation (HSC)

Imperiled Species Management Section (ISM)
Section Leader

ISM Marine Turtle Program Staff:

Tallahassee Office – (850) 922-4330

Biological Administrator III – supervises ISM Marine Turtle Program staff

Environmental Specialist II – reviews coastal construction project permit
applications for marine turtle impacts

Environmental Specialist II – assists with review of coastal construction project
permit applications for marine turtle impacts

Environmental Specialist I – assists with review of coastal construction project
permit applications for marine turtle impacts

Environmental Specialist I – assists with review of coastal construction project
permit applications for marine turtle impacts

Administrative Assistant

Tequesta Field Office – (561) 575-5407

Environmental Specialist II (ISM) – coordinates review & processing of marine
turtle permits, tracks captive facility activity

Environmental Specialist (ISM) – coordinates coastal lighting issues
statewide

SECTION 1 – GENERAL INFORMATION FOR PERMIT HOLDERS

GENERAL PERMIT INFORMATION

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) issues permits for activities involving marine turtles in Florida under authority granted to the state through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) under Section 6 of the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA). All activities relating to marine turtles must be authorized under subsection 370.10 (1), Florida Statutes. To qualify for a marine turtle permit, the applicant must have the appropriate knowledge and experience and demonstrate that the proposed activity adds to the conservation of marine turtles.

Each permit consists of a principal permit holder, authorized personnel, and a list of authorized activities, construction monitoring projects and research projects. Every permit holder is authorized to conduct specific activities depending upon their experience, the area of investigation, and demonstrated marine turtle conservation needs. Only those activities and projects specifically listed on the permit are authorized. The permit holder is expected to know the conditions and responsibilities associated with their permit and to work according to these guidelines.

All authorized personnel should carry a copy of their FWC permit at all times while conducting authorized activities. You should also carry identification that will verify that you are the permit holder or one of the authorized personnel. Wildlife or public safety officers may approach you, in plain clothes, and ask to see a copy of your permit. You may also be approached by concerned individuals who perceive that your activity is harmful or unlawful. Please ensure that your response to such situations is thoughtful and reflects the special responsibilities associated with your permit.

Your permit does not allow you to act as an agent of FWC with powers vested in a public employee. Please do not represent yourself as a wildlife or conservation officer unless you are one. Distinctive identifying clothing is encouraged and should display the logo or name of your organization, not symbols associated with FWC. In other words, avoid the appearance of a uniformed public employee unless you are one.

Marine turtle permits are not transferable. Persons wishing to apply for a permit must submit a FWC Marine Turtle Permit Application. Applications may be obtained by contacting the Imperiled Species Management Section (ISM) at (561) 575-5407. Each application must identify the principal permit holder; up to 24 additional volunteers can be included per permit. If there are more than 24 additional people involved with the permitted activity, FWC can issue more than one permit to a principal permit holder for the activity and individuals involved. However, the principal permit holder is still responsible for training and oversight of all volunteers.

GUIDELINES

These guidelines provide instruction to Florida marine turtle permit holders on acceptable research and conservation techniques. Additional copies of the guidelines can be obtained from FWC or downloaded from the agency web site

<http://www.myfwc.com/seaturtle/Guidelines/MarineTurtleGuidelines.htm>. Permit holders are authorized to conduct only those activities specifically listed on their marine turtle permit.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

All activities and research projects (see below for coastal construction monitoring projects) authorized under a marine turtle permit, as well as the results, must be reported on an annual basis to the FWC. The reporting requirements for all activities described in these guidelines are identified at the end of each section. Issuance of subsequent authorizations is contingent upon following appropriate reporting procedures (or satisfying reporting requirements).

TRAINING

Principal permit holders are expected to be proficient in the activity (ies) that they are authorized to conduct. The principal permit holder is responsible for ensuring that all personnel listed on the permit are thoroughly and properly trained to conduct the activities authorized on their permit. Nest survey training requires that the permit holder spend sufficient time with personnel on the beach, identifying crawls. Permit holders must work with inexperienced personnel until they are confident of their ability to distinguish nests from false crawls and to identify the differences in crawl characteristics between species.

FWC turtle staff provides periodic workshops to permitted personnel to ensure that approved conservation practices are well understood and employed. These workshops are generally designed as refresher courses and are not intended as complete training for persons with no prior survey experience. Due to logistics the workshops do not generally offer much, if any, field training. It is imperative that the principal permit holders spend as much time as necessary providing on-the-beach training for personnel to accurately identify crawls.

MONITORING FOR COASTAL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Under existing state law, certain construction activities may occur along or on your survey beach during the marine turtle nesting season. Under subsections 370.12(1) and 161.053, Florida Statutes, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has implemented specific requirements that condition the nature, timing, and sequence of coastal construction activities to protect nesting marine turtles, hatchlings, and their habitat. All such activities require a DEP permit, which must be kept at the site. Coastal construction projects are reviewed by FWC and the appropriate local governing body (ies).

In general, only those activities that have minimal impacts to nesting turtles, their nests, and hatchlings can occur during the nesting season. These types of activities include dune planting, beach cleaning, and special events. Such activities can only occur if a nesting survey has been ongoing since the beginning of the nesting season or 65 days prior to the event, whichever comes later, and all nests in the project area are clearly marked. Standardized conditions in the DEP permit require the person conducting the work/event to coordinate with the marine turtle permit holder for

a given beach. No work is allowed to commence until after completion of the nesting survey each day. Fences, overnight storage of equipment, water drainage from pumps, lights, and heavy equipment are prohibited on the nesting beach unless specifically authorized in the permit document.

If you are approached by a local contractor, individual, or other entity and asked to conduct a nesting survey or relocate nests in conjunction with any coastal construction or recreational activity (e.g., mechanical beach cleaning, beach nourishment, construction of a crossover, dune restoration project, volleyball tournament, beach driving, etc.), please contact the FWC Imperiled Species Management Section (ISM) immediately. **Marine turtle permits issued by FWC do not authorize nest relocation for any coastal construction project unless incidental take and additional authorization for such relocation has been granted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the FWC.**

Should you agree to provide marine turtle monitoring services for a project, we recommend that you enter into a written agreement whereby both parties fully understand the services expected of each. Permits for beach restoration activities require a report of marine turtle nesting activity for the project area (Appendix A – Beach Restoration Project Monitoring). Under certain circumstances, another marine turtle permit holder may be authorized to conduct marine turtle nest survey and nest protection activities associated with a construction project even if the project is within your permitted survey area. Generally, the DEP permitted entity will be instructed to contact the permitted marine turtle survey person for that area first, then to work with other permit holders if the original permit holder cannot conduct the work.

Beach nourishment projects, in particular, are reviewed by FWC, DEP, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and USFWS. The USFWS may, under the provisions of Section 7 of the ESA, issue incidental take authorization for the project. Permit holders authorized to relocate nests for conservation purposes may be restricted from doing so by a Section 7 Biological Opinion as follows: **marine turtle permits issued by FWC do not authorize nest relocation for any coastal construction project on which a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Section 7 Biological Opinion has been logged unless the permittee receives official written agency (FWC) confirmation that the project is being conducted in a manner consistent with the Section 7 Biological Opinion and Section 370.12 and Chapter 120 Florida Statutes.**

ISM is working to involve marine turtle permit holders in the review of beach nourishment permits. Every beach nourishment project requires that the construction entities conduct a pre-construction meeting that includes the FWC and the marine turtle permit holder.