



## Beach Briefs - April 22, 2016

# Sea Turtle Nesting Restrictions Begin May 1

Each year beginning May 1 threatened and endangered sea turtles nest on Florida beaches as they have done for millions of years. Two months later, tiny hatchlings emerge from their sandy nests and scamper for the water using the seaward horizon as their guiding light. Artificial light visible from the beach confuses them and lures these tiny creatures inland away from the water. Thousands of hatchlings die because lights along the beach are not turned off or shielded properly.



Holes dug in the sand that are not filled in are another problem. Aside from unsuspecting walkers stepping in a hole and injuring themselves, these holes are a barrier to egg-laying sea turtles reaching their desired nesting area or hatchlings reaching the water. Please fill in your holes before you leave the beach.

Between May 1 and October 31, Captiva beaches are regularly monitored for sea turtle nesting and hatching success and for individual property owner compliance with lighting restrictions. No light source should be directly visible from the beach. Unshielded interior lighting, even from a single beachfront condominium, is enough to disrupt the normal sea-finding behavior of sea turtle hatchlings. Monitors also look for beach furniture and other impediments left on the beach overnight. Homeowners must correct the violations and citations may be issued.

Examples of 2015 lighting violations and their remedies include:

- **unshielded white lights** - change bulbs to amber LED, shield the light fixture, and turn off the lights during the nesting season;
- **bright white light reflecting off exterior wall** - change bulbs to amber LED and adjust the fixture to eliminate light reflected toward the beach;

- ***bright white lights on corner of roof shining on the beach*** - change bulbs to amber LED, shield the fixture, and direct the light away from the beach;
- ***white uplights illuminating palm trees and landscaping on seaward side of house*** - turn off lights during turtle nesting season;
- ***white exterior and interior lights shining seaward*** - change bulbs to amber LED, shield the fixture, and close the blinds;
- ***bright white ground lights illuminating sign at the entrance drive*** - change bulbs to amber LED and reduce the wattage;
- ***bright white stair, hall, and porch lights*** - change bulbs to amber LED and shield the fixture.

If there is any doubt whether a light is an issue, simply turn it off and keep it off between May 1 and October 31. For more information about lighting restrictions during nesting season and approved lighting fixtures, [click here](#).

## **Please Help Sea Turtles Get Safely to the Water**

From May 1 through October 31

- Shield sources of light visible from the beach. Lighting should not be directly visible.
- Use 25-watt yellow bug lights or amber LED lights.
- Retrofit with turtle-friendly fixtures and bulbs. Refocus them away from the beach.
- Close blinds/curtains after dark to eliminate light spilling out to the beach.
- Remove all beach furniture and equipment each night from the beach.
- Fill in holes dug in the sand.

## Sea Turtle Nesting Regulations and Guidelines

- Sea turtle nesting habitat must not be directly or indirectly illuminated by artificial lighting originating from existing development between May and October. Most beachfront lighting issues can be addressed by turning off all unnecessary lights, repositioning or modifying light fixtures, or closing blinds and drapes.
- Driving on the beach in a motorized vehicle is prohibited.
- Fires on the beach are prohibited.
- Stay clear of sea turtles and any marked nesting areas. It is a federal offense to disturb or
- interfere with a nest. It is illegal to disturb a nesting turtle with lights or noise.
- It is against the law to have in your possession eggs or any part of a turtle or to retain any threatened or endangered sea turtle hatchlings.
- If you encounter a sea turtle, keep a respectful distance, at least 150 feet, and watch quietly.
- You must remove furniture and other items from the beach at night and not put them back on the beach until daylight.
- Keep the beach and water free of litter. Sea turtle deaths have been caused by the ingestion of trash that they mistake for food.
- Level all sand castles and fill any holes. They pose a hazard at night both for females coming ashore and hatchlings trying to reach the water.
- Honor the leash law. In areas where dogs are allowed, they must be on a leash and not allowed to disturb nesting turtles or hatchlings.
- If you find lost hatchlings, call the SCCF at 472-2329. A licensed volunteer will pick up the turtles. While waiting, place them in a dry container with a little moist sand in the bottom and hold them in a shaded area.
- If you see a stranded turtle, check to see if there are orange marks painted on its shell. If so, this stranding has already been reported to the SCCF sea turtle program. If this is a new stranding, call Sea Turtle Coordinator Kelly Sloan at 239-472-2329.



**Marked Sea Turtle Nesting Site**