



THE FLORIDA BEACHES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN

A Collaborative Effort



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INTRODUCTION

Beaches are home to a wide variety of wildlife, including many species that are protected by the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA). In Florida, this includes five species of nesting sea turtles; loggerhead, green, leatherback, hawksbill, and Kemp's ridley. Beaches are also utilized by a large and growing population of seasonal and year-round residents, who place an increasing burden on coastal resources. Construction and other activities that may impact the beach-dune system typically require a Coastal Construction Control Line (CCCL) permit. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) endeavors to condition these permits to avoid harm to marine turtles, but unintentional (incidental) impacts to these and other listed species may still occur. For this reason, FDEP is preparing a statewide coastal Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) to support application for a Federal Incidental Take Permit (ITP) that will ensure full compliance with the ESA. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has been tasked with coordinating the development of this HCP. The purpose of the Florida Beaches HCP (FBHCP) is to ensure that impacts to protected species resulting from authorized CCCL activities are avoided, minimized and mitigated to the maximum extent practicable.

BACKGROUND

Initiated in 2007

- ❖ Record storm seasons resulted in significant shoreline erosion and increased emergency coastal armoring projects
- ❖ DEP was approached by NGOs, FWC and USFWS with concerns for the immediate and long term impacts of CCCL-regulated activities to nesting marine turtles and nesting habitat including cumulative impacts



CCCL Program

- ❖ Sets forth criteria for the preservation and protection of state's beaches (CCCL to Mean High Water Line (MHWL))
- ❖ Regulated activities include:
 - ✓ New Construction or Rebuilding
 - ✓ Armoring
 - ✓ Post-Storm Emergency Activities
 - ✓ Dune Restoration
 - ✓ Mechanical Beach Cleaning
 - ✓ Special Events
 - ✓ Miscellaneous Minor Activities



This statewide beaches HCP is the first of its kind and covers approximately 825 miles of sandy beaches in Florida. Stakeholder involvement and broad support for the plan is not only desirable, but essential to the overall success of the FBHCP as the future of some of Florida's rarest natural resources rests in the balance



Benefits

- ❖ Ensure agency compliance with the ESA
- ❖ Obtain protection from potential 3rd party lawsuits
- ❖ Obtain regulatory assurances from the USFWS
- ❖ Develop standard environmental protection measures (i.e.- restoration activities during post-storm emergency situations)
- ❖ Ensure property owners of ESA compliance
- ❖ Opportunities to streamline the permitting process & reduce the application processing time
- ❖ Remove uncertainty from the regulatory process
- ❖ Promote and improve healthy beaches for recreation, tourism, and wildlife
- ❖ Address impacts to listed species & their habitats comprehensively, rather than piecemeal—parcel by parcel

PLANNING PROCESS

- ❖ The FBHCP integrates development and land use activities with conservation by providing a framework for the preservation and management of the state's critically important but spatially limited natural resources. Its development is being funded by a Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), as provided under Section 6 of the ESA.
- ❖ A Work Group, consisting of staff from the FWC, FDEP, USFWS and several FDEP contractors (Coastal Technology Corporation, Ecological Associates Inc., Florida Natural Areas Inventory, Geodesign Technologies), is compiling requisite data for inclusion in the FBHCP. The Work Group is also assembling, reviewing, and summarizing background information on substantive policy issues affecting FBHCP development and implementation.
- ❖ Key policy issues, along with Work Group recommendations, are presented to a Steering Committee for consideration. The Steering Committee was appointed by the Secretary of FDEP and consists of representatives from FWC, FDEP, Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI), Florida Association of Counties and Florida League of Cities, Lee County Tourism Development Council, Audubon Society and Sea Turtle Conservancy, and Humiston and Moore Engineers. The Steering Committee discusses and debates key policy matters, and makes recommendations to the FDEP Secretary, who will make the final decision on all policies and programs proposed for inclusion in the FBHCP.

The Draft Plan Includes

- ❖ Identifying Activities for Take Authorization
 - All activities requiring a CCCL permit
- ❖ Identifying the Plan Area
- ❖ Identifying the Covered Species
 - 5 species of marine turtles, 5 species of beach mice, and 2 species of shorebirds
- ❖ Estimating Impacts (Take Assessments)
- ❖ Identifying Threats to Listed Species
- ❖ Developing Minimization and Mitigation Measures
- ❖ Developing an Implementation Strategy



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