You Can Help Protect Sea Turtles and Their Hatchlings

Sea Turtles depend on beach habitat for reproduction. Nesting females will return to the same beach where they hatched to lay their eggs. With new development changes, this becomes a problem. Not only has nesting habitat changed beyond recognition, artificial lighting can disorient hatchlings, causing them to go towards land instead of the sea.

Do:

- Make sure all exterior lighting fixtures meet sea turtle code (keep it amber, shielded, and downward directed)
- Close blinds/curtains in windows from sunrise to sunset
- Fill in any holes and knockdown sandcastles that may entrap adults or hatchlings
- Keep pets off the beach. Pets can dig up nests, eat hatchlings, and frighten away nesting females

Don't:

- Use flashlights, cellphone lights, flash bulbs, or video camera lights on the beach at night
- Leave beach furniture or personal belongings overnight which may obstruct turtles' path, entangle, disorient, or even kill them

REMEMBER!

Marine Turtles are Protected by Law:

- Federal Endangered Species Act
- Florida Statute 379.2431 the Marine Turtle Protection Act
- Charlotte County Sea Turtle Protection Ordinance No. 98-41

To Report Violations, Dead, Disoriented, or Injured Turtles:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) at:

888.404.FWCC (3922)

*FWC or #FWC

Tip@MyFWC.com (text)

https://MyFWC.com/contact/wildlife-alert/

For more information on Sea Turtles:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/sea-turtle/

Sea Turtle Conservancy

Conserveturtles.org

Mote Marine Laboratory

mote.org

For any questions, please contact:

Charlotte County Parks and Natural Resources

1120 Centennial Blvd.

Port Charlotte, FL 33953

941.613.3220

Sea Turtles & Sharing Their Beach

****Sea Turtle Nesting and Hatching Season is May 1– Oct. 31****

Did you know that only **1 in 1,000** hatchlings actually survive to adulthood? We have a very important role in ensuring the success of these beautiful, threatened, or endangered animals who depend on the beaches to produce their next generation. The enclosed information is a quick guide to sea turtle biology, as well as sharing the beaches with these fascinating animals.

CHARLOTTE COUNTY
Parks & Natural Resources

Sea Turtle Biology

Charlotte County is home to three of the seven species of sea turtles: Loggerhead, Green, and Kemp's Ridley. Loggerheads are most common on Charlotte County beaches, and can be recognized by their large heads, for which they are named.

Pictured above: Loggerhead hatchling crawling to water

Sea turtles are air-breathing reptiles that spend most of their lives in the ocean. Like other turtles, they have a hard shell, or carapace, that protects them from predators. Unlike other turtles, they cannot pull their limbs or head into their shell, which can leave them vulnerable to predators. To help with this vulnerability, sea turtles have adapted to have a kind of camouflage called countershading to make them less visible in the water.

Sea turtles eat a variety of different foods including seagrasses, fish, jellyfish, sponges, and crustaceans. Depending on their diet, sea turtles can be seen in different offshore and near-shore habitats. While Green sea turtles usually hang out near-shore in seagrass beds, Leatherback sea turtles are most likely observed offshore where jellyfish are plentiful. Sea turtle nesting and hatching season is **May 1—Oct. 31.** Each nest can contain between 50-200 eggs, and incubates 45-60 days before hatching. Hatchlings will usually emerge at night when sands are cool, and rush towards the brightest horizon, which naturally is the water. Hatchlings live offshore for the first few crucial years of their life.

Reducing Light Pollution

New development must adhere to a coastal lighting review and inspection(s). Following requirements must be met:

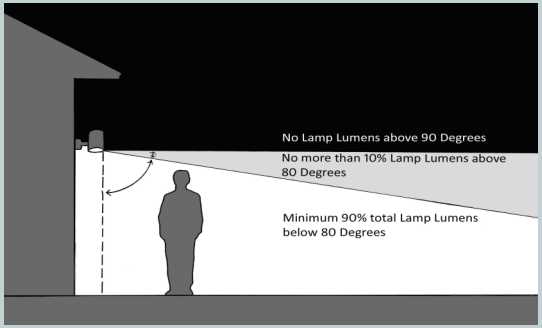
- Any light visible from the beach needs to be an approved FWC lighting fixture. This means fully shielded, downward directed, and fitted with a certified **SEA TURTLE APPROVED** bulb
- Tinted glass or film must have a visual transmittance (VT) value or 0.45 (45%) or less. This includes the seaward and shore-perpendicular sides of structure

Existing development may need to bring lighting fixtures or windows up to code.

- Exterior: turn off unnecessary lights, reposition/shield lights so they're no longer visible from beach, and replace existing lights with **SEA TURTLE APPROVED** fixtures and certified bulbs.
- Interior: move interior light fixtures away from windows, use block-out windows or add aftermarket window tint to glass to meet current VT standards (<0.45)

Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) permitting is required for development seaward of the established Coastal Construction Control Line (CCCL). This permit adds requirements and mitigates any adverse impacts on sea turtles and their nesting habitats.

Please see Charlotte County Sea Turtle Ordinance 98-41 for additional information



Coastal Lighting Night Inspections are conducted to investigate sea turtle disorientations caused by artificial lighting, to notify homeowners of lighting violations, and to bring existing lighting violations up to code.

FWC Approved Sea Turtle Lighting

All exterior fixtures on the seaward and shore-perpendicular sides of buildings, and landward if visible from beach, should be SHIELDED, DOWNWARD DIRECTED, FULL CUT-OFF types

FWC Sea Turtle Lighting Guidelines:
MyFWC.com/media/18510/updated-2018-fwc-sea turtle-lighting-guidelinesdoc.pdf

FWC Approved Lighting May Be Found At:
MyFWC.com/conservation/you-conserve/lighting/certified

THE FOLLOWING LIGHTS ARE NOT ALLOWED

Private balcony lights • Up lights • Tree strap downlights • Decorative lighting not necessary for human safety or security • Pond lights • Dune walkover lighting • Fountain lights on beach or shore perpendicular side of structure