



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Gulf Islands  
National Seashore

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## Gulf Islands News Release

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### National Seashore Implements New Sea Turtle Nesting Protocols

Gulf Breeze, Fla. – With sea turtle nesting season just around the corner, Gulf Islands National Seashore biologist and volunteers are implementing new sea turtle nesting protocols. The national seashore is coordinating efforts with state and local partners to use the least manipulative methods to protect nests. Specifically, national seashore biologists are responsible for sea turtle nests within the national seashore at Perdido Key, Fort Pickens, and Santa Rosa Areas, as well as, Pensacola Beach outside of the seashore boundary.

In order to provide consistent management, the national seashore is evaluating, adjusting, or eliminating management techniques used in the past including night-time beach activities and nest relocating and confinement. State and federal managers are striving to reduce interaction between humans and nests and hatchlings, and increasing efforts to minimize the effects of light pollution on hatchlings and nesting sea turtles. While these methods can be beneficial, they also have negative impacts on the sea turtles and other wildlife in the habitat. The protocols adopted by the seashore and outlined in the *Marine Turtle Conservation Handbook* provide the biggest benefit while mitigating negative impacts.

Gulf Islands National Seashore provides some of the best undeveloped, natural habitat for hundreds of species important to the local ecosystem including, nesting shorebirds and sea turtles. Park biologists and volunteers work hard to limit human impacts to these species. Sea turtles are either endangered or threatened (the loggerhead is the only species that has a population high enough to be only threatened in Florida). They are protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 and Florida's Marine Turtle Protection Act (379.2431, Florida Statutes).

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, including those conducted by the National Park Service, must be authorized under subsection 379.2431(1), Florida Statutes.

*About Gulf Islands National Seashore: Created in 1971, the national seashore stretches 160 miles along the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico in Florida and Mississippi, and includes barrier islands, maritime forests, historic forts, bayous, and marine habitat. Visit us at [www.nps.gov/guis](http://www.nps.gov/guis), on Facebook [www.facebook.com/GulfIslandsNPS](http://www.facebook.com/GulfIslandsNPS), Twitter [www.twitter.com/GulfIslandsNPS](http://www.twitter.com/GulfIslandsNPS), and Instagram [www.Instagram.com/GulfIslandsNPS](http://www.Instagram.com/GulfIslandsNPS).*