

During nesting the season (May 1 – October 31 in Pinellas County), female sea turtles will emerge from the water at night to locate the perfect spot to nest. To help our turtles complete the nesting process, we ask visitors to keep our beaches as clean, flat, and dark as possible. Doing so will help create an ideal habitat for sea turtles to nest on!

Keep the beach clean: Trash, such as plastic bags and balloons, can end up in the water and be swallowed by sea turtles. Trash and other items like toys, chairs and tents left on the beach overnight can also act as an obstacle to turtles, and prevent them from nesting and hatching successfully. Help avoid this by properly disposing of any trash you bring to the beach and taking all your beach furniture back with you.

Keep the beach flat: Sand castles and holes may seem harmless to us, however to nesting mothers and hatchlings, sand castles and holes become unknown objects they have to navigate around to find a suitable nesting site or to find the ocean. Holes are also hazardous to sea turtles, as they may crawl into it and not be able to get out, making them vulnerable to predators and the heat of the sun after daybreak.

Keep the beach dark: It is also important to remove the influence of artificial light on the beach. This includes flashlights, flash photography and even the glow from a cell phone. Turtles look for the brightest horizon in order to return to the ocean after the nesting process, and any competing light sources can cause them to get lost on their way (called a disorientation). When the sea turtles follow artificial light, they end up in places like major roadways, pools, parking garages, and storm drains! **The best way you can help prevent disorientations is by following these three rules for sea turtle-friendly lighting:**

- 1) **Keep it long. Use LED light bulbs** that emit long wavelength light, greater than 560 nm, like those in the amber, orange, or red spectrum.
- 2) **Keep it low.** Lights should be mounted low to the ground to reduce light transmittance onto the beach and utilize the lowest lumens or wattage for the necessary purpose, and
- 3) **Keep it shielded.** All light sources should be covered with an opaque shield so that the bulbs cannot be seen from the beach. **If you ever come across a sea turtle that is crawling away from the water, please call Florida Fish and Wildlife Alert Hotline (1-888-404-3922) or the CMA Rescue Hotline (727-441-1790 ext. 1) and a permitted biologist will instruct you on what to do.**

Thank you for being a part of our sea turtle nesting journey!