

## **CHAPTER 15: PLAN MANAGEMENT**

The HCP will be used by Walton County to manage its beaches in a way that will permit traditional and lawful beach uses while providing effective conservation of federally protected species within the Plan Area. In particular, the HCP takes into account the significant number of visitors to County beaches each year and the economic stimulus they provide to local communities. The Plan integrates many of the programs, policies, and regulations contained in the Beach Activities Ordinance (2003-07) and LDC. The goal of the HCP is to provide a unified approach to beach management in Walton County in a manner and extent compatible with the protection of federally listed species and migratory shorebirds.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Walton County shall be solely responsible for implementing this HCP in accordance with the terms and conditions of its ITP. The organizational structure described below is designed to enhance communication and coordination among the various County divisions and departments, the TDC, contractors, protected species monitoring personnel, regulatory agencies, concessionaires, and others involved in implementation of the HCP.

#### ***HCP Coordinator***

The HCP Coordinator, under the management of the Environmental Department, is the principal person responsible for directing implementation of the HCP and for monitoring the County's compliance with the terms and conditions of the ITP. Emergency permitting of shoreline protection activities, as well as all protected species monitoring activities and related conservation programs will be managed and/or coordinated by the HCP Coordinator. This position will operate under the supervision of the Environmental Manager and may be filled by a County staff person or through contractual agreement with an outside individual or firm.

The person assigned to the role of HCP Coordinator shall at a minimum have the following qualifications:

- A Bachelor's Degree in the biological or earth sciences or closely related fields and at least three (3) years of practical experience managing projects in the coastal zone;
- An understanding of the ecology of coastal systems and the biology and conservation of the protected species that utilize them;
- Knowledge of scientific data collection and analytical techniques;
- Familiarity with electronic databases and other data management applications;
- Practical experience preparing technical reports;
- Ability to develop and manage multi-faceted programs;
- Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing; and

**DRAFT 4**

- A good professional demeanor and the ability to effectively interface with diverse stakeholder groups.

Upon assuming the position, the HCP Coordinator will review and become thoroughly familiar with the HCP and ITP, as well as Chapter 161, FS and Chapter 62B-33, FAC, regarding rules and procedures for the State's shoreline protection program. The HCP Coordinator shall also review Federal recovery plans for the loggerhead, green, leatherback, and Kemp's ridley turtles and Choctawhatchee beach mouse, and other protected species within the Plan Area. The HCP Coordinator will establish and maintain good lines of communications with the FWC and USFWS and stay abreast of changes to State and Federal regulations germane to protected species covered under the ITP.

The purpose of the HCP Coordinator is to provide professional leadership to, and oversight of, all aspects of the County's beach management activities to ensure they meet the goals and objectives of the HCP and are compliant with the terms and conditions of the ITP. Specifically, the HCP Coordinator shall perform the following functions under the HCP:

- Direct implementation of HCP programs in accordance with established schedules;
- Review the activities of sea turtle monitoring personnel and provide recommendations for needed changes to data collection and reporting procedures to ensure that HCP objectives are achieved;
- Coordinate protected species monitoring of County Beaches with County staff, volunteers, contracted individuals and firms, and State and Federal agencies, as applicable;
- Provide protected species monitoring personnel with data sheets, field supplies, and other logistical support, as may be needed to effectively implement the HCP;
- Provide HCP training to all individuals and groups whose activities are regulated by the HCP;
- Interface with protected species monitoring personnel and the Coastal Engineer during emergency shoreline protection projects to ensure that the County's obligations under the HCP and ITP are being met;
- Review and log emergency shoreline protection permit applications and Coastal Engineer reports and forward to the building department with conditions for permit issuance;
- Document impacts to protected species causally related to activities authorized under the ITP, including shoreline protection measures initiated under the County's emergency authorization;
- Storage, management, and analysis of protected species data through a Countywide database;
- Transference of HCP data for incorporation into GIS work products;
- Develop a program to provide a practical and systematic approach to light management in the Plan Area that includes public awareness, nighttime lighting evaluations, and code enforcement;
- Assess the effectiveness of the HCP in achieving its biological goals;

**DRAFT 4**

- Develop public education and awareness materials and programs, as specified in the HCP, including a plan for distribution of educational materials to specific target audiences such as property management companies for beachfront rentals, local businesses, vendors, and visitors;
- Prepare data reports and HCP program evaluations and annual reports for submission to the USFWS in accordance with the terms and conditions of the ITP;
- Integrate the activities of the various County departments, divisions and offices, the TDC, contractors, protected species monitoring personnel, regulatory agencies, concessionaires, and others involved in implementation of the HCP;
- Ensure that personnel and equipment directed toward implementation of the HCP are sufficient to achieve program objectives;
- Develop annual operating budgets for required HCP programs; and
- Serve as the County's point of contact with State and Federal regulatory agencies regarding all issues related to the HCP and ITP.

If the position of HCP Coordinator is vacated at any time during the period that the ITP is in effect, Walton County will assign a responsible staff person to temporarily fulfill the duties of this position until a permanent replacement is selected. The County will act expeditiously in filling the position upon its vacancy. The USFWS will be notified of any changes to personnel in this position.

***Coastal Engineer***

The Coastal Engineer is the principal person(s) responsible for assessing physical beach conditions and directing emergency shoreline protection activities initiated pursuant to this HCP. This position may be filled by County staff or through contractual agreement with outside individuals or engineering firms.

The Coastal Engineer shall be a professional engineer duly licensed to perform engineering services in the State of Florida and has experience with coastal armoring. He/she may delegate HCP responsibilities to other County staff or independent contractors, provided such individuals possess the requisite professional skills needed to fulfill the responsibilities of the Coastal Engineer, as described below. As used throughout this HCP, the term Coastal Engineer shall refer to the collective management team of engineering professionals that will oversee emergency permitting activities.

The responsibilities of the Coastal Engineer under this HCP include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Conduct post-storm assessments of the Plan Area following State or local declarations of emergency;
- Coordinate with the County's HCP Coordinator following emergency declarations to establish priorities and schedules for site inspections;
- Conduct inspections of specific properties for which emergency permits have been requested to determine if temporary shoreline protection is warranted;

**DRAFT 4**

- If shoreline protection is warranted, provide the property owner with recommendations for the most appropriate type of emergency shoreline protection given site-specific conditions;
- Determine the most appropriate location relative to the threatened habitable structure for siting temporary shoreline protection structures;
- Provide photographic documentation of each property inspected;
- As requested by the HCP Coordinator, provide guidance to property owners applying for a FDEP permit to retain a temporary structure or install alternative protection following initiation of emergency shoreline protection measures;
- As requested by the HCP Coordinator, provide input and site-specific information to the FDEP to assist in their review of permit applications for the retention of a temporary structure or installation of alternative protection following initiation of emergency shoreline protection measures;
- Provide follow-up site evaluations to determine if authorized shoreline protection measures have been constructed in compliance with emergency permit conditions;
- As requested by the HCP Coordinator, conduct follow-up inspections to ensure that any damage to the beach/dune system resulting from the installation and/or removal of temporary emergency shoreline protection measures has been repaired to its pre-construction condition; and
- As requested, provide the HCP Coordinator with current information on erosion patterns and planned beach projects in the Plan Area for use in managing the HCP.

***Principal Permit Holders***

One or more PPHs will be responsible for monitoring County beaches in support of the HCP. These individuals may include County staff, members of non-profit organizations, unaffiliated volunteers, and/or independent professional biologists. As used here and throughout this HCP, sea turtle monitoring personnel shall mean those individuals listed on a valid Marine Turtle Permit issued by the FWC and having the necessary training and practical experience needed to fulfill their responsibilities under this HCP.

All monitoring personnel involved in activities described in this HCP must be listed on a Marine Turtle Permit issued by the FWC. They will be directly responsible to the PPH on whose permit they are listed. The PPH shall ensure that all listed personnel have sufficient training and practical experience to conduct their monitoring activities in accordance with the most current FWC Marine Turtle Conservation Guidelines and the procedures described in this HCP. Any discrepancies between FWC guidelines and the HCP shall be brought to the immediate attention of the HCP Coordinator and USFWS shall be notified. Until such time as those discrepancies are resolved, the FWC guidelines shall prevail. The PPH and/or HCP Coordinator shall communicate with the FWC, as necessary, to resolve conflicts between FWC guidelines and HCP requirements. The County will coordinate with the FWC to ensure that the PPHs involved in implementation of the Walton County HCP comply with all HCP and ITP requirements as a condition of their Florida Marine Turtle Permit.

**DRAFT 4**

The PPH shall be responsible for ensuring that data collected pursuant to the HCP are accurate, complete, and transmitted to the County in a timely manner. The PPHs will communicate regularly with the HCP Coordinator to discuss operational matters and will immediately alert the HCP Coordinator to known problems that could undermine the County's ability to meet its obligations under the HCP or ITP. The PPHs may periodically request the HCP Coordinator provide them with maps, data summaries or other database products to assist in their monitoring activities. Additionally, the County will provide other logistical support, as necessary. The HCP Coordinator will meet annually, or as otherwise mutually agreed upon, to review HCP programs and discuss Countywide nesting trends and issues affecting hatchling productivity. The FWC and USFWS will be invited to participate in these meetings.

***Tourist Development Council***

The mission statement of the Walton County TDC is “to direct and manage activities that will strengthen the position of the Beaches of South Walton County brand in the tourism marketplace, to manage and maintain our beaches as a primary attraction and as a responsible industry organization to take a leadership role in addressing issues that affect tourism and the quality of life in Walton County.” Through “bed taxes” collected from beachfront hotels and motels, the TDC conducts routine beach maintenance and sanitation services; staffs lifeguards at public beaches; provides the public with beach safety information and current beach conditions; funds and manages beach restoration and nourishment projects to combat erosion and maintain the County's beautiful sandy beaches and dune system; promotes tourism; and provides a variety of support services to the beachside tourism industry.

Under the HCP, the primary responsibilities of the TDC will be to:

- Conduct beach management and sanitation activities in a manner consistent with the goals and objectives of the HCP;
- Provide funding for protected species monitoring activities;
- Perform or manage rut removal operations during the sea turtle nesting season;
- Install native dune plants to enhance beach/dune restoration and nourishment projects and maintain the vitality of the coastal system;
- Assist in dissemination of HCP public awareness materials to constituent members within the Plan Area; and
- Provide other services as may be required from time to time to comply with the HCP and ITP.

***County Administrator***

The County Administrator or his/her designee shall be responsible for allocating sufficient personnel, material resources, and funding to ensure that the HCP can be effectively implemented. The County Administrator's Office will ensure that effective lines of communication and cooperation are maintained among County divisions, departments and offices involved in HCP implementation and will resolve any disputes

**DRAFT 4**

that may arise concerning responsibilities under the HCP. The County Administrator may periodically reassign responsibilities and/or personnel among County government units to ensure that HCP program management is properly integrated into the County's overall organizational structure and that available fiscal and personnel resources are most effectively utilized.

***Public Works Division – Environmental Department***

The Walton County Environmental Department, under the oversight of the Director of Public Works (PW), will provide logistical and administrative support for implementation of the HCP. The PW Director and Environmental Manager will be responsible for filling the positions of HCP Coordinator and Coastal Engineer and for allocating sufficient material and fiscal resources to ensure that these individuals are able to effectively fulfill their responsibilities under the HCP. The PW Director and Environmental Manager will also be responsible for ensuring the effective integration of HCP-required activities among the various divisions and departments within the County as described in this chapter to affect implementation of the HCP. The annual budget prepared by PW shall include a separate line item(s) that identifies HCP program expenses. Upon approval by the Board of County Commissioners, the HCP budget shall be provided to the HCP Coordinator for transmittal to the USFWS in accordance with the terms and conditions of the ITP.

The Environmental Department (or other government unit assigned to this task) will monitor beachfront lighting regulations and assist Code Enforcement in enforcing lighting regulations, as provided under County Code. During the first three years that the ITP is in effect, at least one staff person shall be devoted full-time, year-round to beachfront light management activities. The number of hours assigned to this position may be supplemented by contracted individuals/firms, provided the combined hours are equivalent to one full-time staff position. After three years, the number of hours devoted to light management shall be commensurate with the level of effort required to affect compliance with applicable lighting regulations.

The person(s) assigned to light management by the Environmental Manager (or other government unit assigned to this task) shall assist in implementation of the Light Management Plan developed by the HCP Coordinator and shall include, but is not limited to, the following activities:

- Develop and maintain a database of properties within the jurisdictional boundaries of the lighting ordinance, including addresses of properties, names and addresses of property owners, and names of the facilities, as applicable;
- In consultation with the HCP Coordinator, prepare and disseminate information regarding lighting regulations and compliance dates;
- Develop standardized method and forms for identifying and reporting non-compliant lighting, including photo documentation;
- Assign codes to problem lights (e.g., 1-5 representing the relative potential for disorienting sea turtles) to help prioritize light management efforts;

**DRAFT 4**

- Conduct County-wide nighttime lighting evaluations, as prescribed under the Light Management Plan;
- Conduct property-specific lighting evaluations based on public complaint or receipt of hatchling disorientation report;
- Issue advisory notices to property owners with non-compliant lights;
- In consultation with the HCP Coordinator, provide guidance to property owners to assist them in bringing problem lights into compliance;
- Conduct follow-up inspections to assess the effectiveness of light management efforts; and
- Coordinate with Code Enforcement in enforcing lighting regulations, as provided under County Code.

Geographic Information Systems

The HCP Coordinator will use all available County GIS resources necessary for the development and maintenance of data and maps related to protected species locations, coastal resources, and other features, as may be needed for inclusion in HCP reports and public information documents.

Methods of collecting protected species data will be developed by the HCP Coordinator in consultation with the FWC and USFWS. Walton County will use its GIS capabilities to develop maps and analyses of the data collected, as needed by the HCP coordinator and/or regulatory agencies, to assess trends and HCP program performance.

**Engineering**

The Engineering Department will assist the Coastal Engineer, as needed, in the permitting of emergency shoreline protection activities as may be directed by the PW Director. The Engineering Department and the Coastal Engineer will consult with the HCP Coordinator and will attach special conditions to the emergency permits, as required, to ensure compliance with conditions of the County's HCP and ITP.

***Building Division***

The Building Division will be responsible for issuing emergency permits for temporary shoreline protection activities approved and conditioned by the HCP Coordinator. The Building Division will also be responsible for reviewing lighting plans for new construction, enforcing emergency permit conditions and revoking emergency permits, in consultation with the HCP Coordinator and Coastal Engineer, as appropriate.

***Planning and Development Division***

**Planning Department**

The Planning Department will assist the HCP coordinator in reviewing the County's Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) for consistency with HCP provisions, making needed

**DRAFT 4**

changes to the Comp Plan to comport with the HCP, and shepherding needed changes to the County's Land Development Code through the Board of County Commissioners.

The person responsible for approving/issuing permits for special events on County beaches will consult with the HCP Coordinator and will attach special conditions to the permits, as required, to ensure event activities comply with conditions of the County's HCP and ITP.

**Code Enforcement**

Code Enforcement will enforce beachfront lighting regulations, as provided under County Code and will assist the HCP Coordinator in disseminating public awareness materials related to light management.

Code Enforcement shall assist in implementation of the Light Management Plan developed by the HCP Coordinator. Duties of Code Enforcement shall include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

- Assist the HCP Coordinator in preparing and disseminating information to coastal residents advising them of lighting regulations and compliance dates;
- In consultation with the HCP Coordinator, provide guidance to property owners to assist them in bringing problem lights into compliance;
- Conduct follow-up inspections to assess the effectiveness of retrofits;
- Issue notices of violations, as applicable; and
- Schedule and shepherd cases through Code Board hearings, as necessary.

In addition to light management, Code Enforcement will be responsible for approving permits for special events on County beaches. Code Enforcement will consult with the HCP Coordinator and will attach special conditions to the permits, as required, to ensure event activities comply with conditions of the County's HCP and ITP.

***Emergency Management and Public Safety Communications Division***

Walton County's Division of Emergency Management, under the management of the Sheriff's Office, will be responsible for storm tracking and emergency planning leading to a Declaration of Local Emergency. If conditions become threatening, the Division will draft a declaration for approval by the Board of County Commissioners. The Emergency Management Director will assign an individual within his/her office to serve as liaison with the HCP Coordinator. Once a Declaration of Local Emergency has been passed by the Board of County Commissioners, this individual shall notify the County's HCP Coordinator. The HCP Coordinator will then alert the Coastal Engineer to prepare for the potential issuance of emergency permits and will notify the FDEP of the declaration.

*Legal Services*

The Walton County Attorney, or his/her designee, will provide guidance and legal support to the HCP Coordinator to ensure that the County complies with the terms and conditions of its ITP, in accordance with prevailing law. In the absence of a staff attorney, Walton County shall retain the services of an attorney to serve as the County Attorney in matters related to the HCP and ITP. The County Attorney will:

- Assist in crafting new and/or revising existing regulations, inter-local agreements, and other legal instruments needed to affect implementation of the HCP;
- Advise the County Administrator and/or Board of County Commissioners of the County's legal responsibilities and obligations under the HCP and ITP;
- As directed by the County Administrator, provide legal guidance to all County departments involved in implementation of HCP issues; and
- Review contracts with outside parties involved in implementation of the HCP, as requested by the County Administrator.

Any changes to County regulations affecting covered species in the Plan Area will be complimentary to the programs and policies contained in the HCP and shall not affect implementation of the HCP or adherence to ITP terms and conditions. To ensure that any such changes are consistent with the terms and conditions of the HCP and ITP, the County shall consult with the USFWS prior to their adoption.

**HCP Coordinating Committee**

The HCP Coordinating Committee (HCPCC) will be comprised of representatives from the various units of Walton County government responsible for implementation of the HCP, including but not limited to, the County Administrator's Office, the County Attorney, Building Division, Planning and Development, Public Works, TDC, Emergency Management, Sheriff's Office, and Code Enforcement. The HCP Coordinator will serve as chair of the HCPCC. The primary function of the HCPCC is to facilitate inter-departmental communication and coordination among the various County divisions, departments, and offices that have responsibilities under the HCP.

The HCP Coordinator shall provide the USFWS with a list of persons that will serve on the HCPCC within three (3) months of issuance of the ITP, and will convene the first meeting within six (6) months of issuance of the ITP. Thereafter annual meetings will be held prior to the beginning of each sea turtle nesting season, and as-needed throughout the year. The HCPCC will discuss relevant issues involving protection of listed species in the Plan Area, address HCP program deficiencies, and/or review personnel and material resource allocations to ensure that the County is able to carry out its responsibilities under the HCP and ITP.

**Coordination with Regulatory Agencies**

Walton County will work with the FDEP, USACOE, and FWC to identify appropriate methods for allowing County input into permitting decisions relating to State and Federal shoreline protection projects on County beaches. The HCP Coordinator will take the lead role in this interagency coordination effort.