

Appendix B

**FWC FISH AND WILDLIFE RESEARCH INSTITUTE
STATEWIDE NESTING BEACH SURVEY PROTOCOL**

1. **Survey Period:** There is no set period for Statewide nesting beach surveys, but ideally, all nesting activity is encompassed. Beaches with leatherback nesting usually begin by 1 March.
2. **Survey Time:** Surveys must be conducted in the early morning hours, preferably beginning at dawn in order to optimize crawl interpretation.
3. **Survey Frequency:** Most Statewide nesting beach surveys are conducted seven days a week, but some beaches, particularly remote ones, are surveyed on a less frequent basis. Ideally, survey frequency should remain constant. All crawls should be marked or “erased” daily to avoid duplicate counts on subsequent survey days. If surveys are not conducted seven days/wk, only emergences made during the preceding 24 hours should be counted on a survey day.
4. **Survey Boundaries:** Survey boundaries should remain the same from year to year. If changes are necessary, please contact FWC well before the nesting season begins. Boundaries should be permanent physical features.
5. **Crawl Identification:** All fresh crawls are identified to species and as either nests or false crawls based on observable crawl characteristics.
6. **Crawl Verification:** When a crawl does not have characteristics clearly indicating whether it is a nest or a false crawl, surveyors may dig with their hands at the probable location of the eggs to find the soft sand directly above the eggs. Digging should be a rare event. Probing for eggs is not permitted nor is the use of shovels.
7. **Data Reporting:** Data are reported on annual report forms supplied by FWC. The deadline for filing this report is 30 November.
8. **Significant Events:** If significant events occur that may affect turtles or their nests, please let FWC know about them. Significant events include habitat alterations such as beach nourishment, the placement of armoring or beach-access ramps, or erosion due to storms. Indicate date(s) and type of event in the comments section of the data form.
9. **Assistance:** Should questions arise or problems occur, contact Beth Brost at 1-727-896-8626, extension 1914, Fax 727-896-9176.