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2525 Estero Blvd., Fort Myers Beach, Fla. 33931

Sea Turtle nesting season starts May 1

Property owners encouraged to make sure lighting is ready

Fort Myers Beach, Fla. – Sea turtle nesting season starts on May 1 and runs through October 31, and early nesting activity has already been reported in Southwest Florida on Casey Key in Venice and Captiva Island here in Lee County.

It's time now to remind all property owners about the lighting that is required to help protect turtles and hatchlings during nesting season. Conventional lighting scares females from nesting and disorients hatchlings away from the Gulf, leading to exhaustion, dehydration, and death from falling into storm drains, passing cars, and predators.

Long wavelength bulbs in downward directed fixtures that shield the bulb from the beach are encouraged everywhere on the island, not just beachfront, because so many structures and vegetation that previously shielded light from the beach are gone due to Hurricane Ian.

Besides lighting, It is also just as important to draw curtains closed at night. When it comes to windows and glass slider doors, sea turtle biologists with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) have advised that "turtle glass" with 45% light transmittance may not be sufficient to adequately reduce light visibility to nesting and hatchling sea turtles. When installing new windows, choose a NFRC light transmittance specification of 30% or less.

Need professional help with bulbs and fixtures? The Sea Turtle Conservancy recommends Frontier Lighting and Synergy Lighting. Long wavelength bulbs can also be found online. Search for "sea turtle amber LED" and the bulb type that you need. It's important to verify that the spectrum specifications of the bulb indicate 560 nm or greater.

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The Town of Fort Myers Beach is on Estero Island off the southwest Florida coast of the Gulf of Mexico. The beach stretches for seven miles and the Town has a variety of parks and recreational facilities, shops and restaurants. The Town has been incorporated since 1995.

One of the cheapest FWC certified wildlife lighting options that staff have found online is the FEIT A19 Red Bulb that screws into classic Edison fixtures. Please note, filter wraps, gels, and colored “party bulbs” are not compliant because sea turtles are sensitive to the emit light.

The Town will be patrolling the beach at night to monitor light pollution on sea turtle nesting habitat. Efforts will focus on identifying problematic lights and educating property owners on solutions. Property owners are encouraged to be proactive. Take a walk on the beach to see if property lighting is visible from the beach and install wildlife friendly lighting now rather than waiting for warning letters and enforcement citations.

The Town’s Environmental Projects Manager Chadd Chustz is available for questions and light inspections. Contact him by email at chadd@fmbgov.com.

For more information about lights and keeping turtle hatchlings safe during nesting season, visit <https://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov/963/Sea-Turtle-Information>. Learn more about turtles and nesting season at www.turtletime.org

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