

## **Key Actions from**

REVIEW of the Sea Turtle Science and Recovery (STSR) Program  
Padre Island National Seashore  
July 2020

Excerpts

### **1. Cut Public Hatchling Releases**

“Reduce the number of public sea turtle release events to reduce costs and reduce the impact on staff from other divisions.” (p. 29)

“The number of public hatchling release events is a discretionary activity and should be reduced... Another possibility would be to identify one week of the year where turtle releases and related public events would occur (“Turtle Week!” or “Turtle Daze!”), thereby allowing staff to effectively plan for and conduct outreach and education activities.” (p. 26)

### **2. Deprioritize Work with Green and Loggerhead Turtles (both listed species)**

“The focus of the program should be constrained to Kemp’s ridley nest protection, followed by efforts to save stranded adult Kemp’s and green sea turtles (and other turtle species)... The collection, incubation, and release of green and loggerhead eggs should be discontinued. Correspondingly, project funds should not be solicited for the study and management at PAIS [Padre Island] of sea turtle species other than Kemp’s. (p. 15)

“Project funds should not be solicited for the study and management at PAIS of sea turtle species other than Kemp’s. PMIS#248312, which focuses on night-time protection and collection of green sea turtle eggs (FY21-23), should be cancelled and WASO [Washington Office – Park Service HQ] notified.” (p. 23)

“...funds should not be awarded to and used by PAIS for ongoing research and management activities for green sea turtles (PMIS#305534 for FY21). Projects must not support continuation of existing or operational activities and recurrent monitoring and surveys.” (p.23)

### **3. Confine Turtle Stranding Response to Inside Park Boundaries**

“Stranding response should be focused to inside the boundaries of PAIS and partners and other agencies should respond to non-NPS locations. This should be based on an assessment of NPS resources and capacity to carry out these activities.” (p. 18)

“Response activities should be delegated to other volunteers and entities rather than PAIS being solely responsible.” (p. 18)

“Program personnel should stop conducting management activities that occur outside PAIS boundaries and evaluate elimination of some duties that take park staff away from higher priority activities in PAIS. Documents and interviews with staff and other agencies indicate STSR personnel are conducting field activities (e.g. turtle stranding recovery, egg collection,

beach surveys, etc.) outside PAIS boundaries. This is a liability concern for the NPS. Other agencies or groups should assume these duties or activities outside PAIS boundaries. If others (for example, FWS, TPWD, NMFS) cannot or do not assume these activities then this would indicate a lower priority to those groups and thus not relevant to PAIS priorities.” (p. 25)

#### **4. Reduce Nest Relocations: Build Corrals on Beach**

“In down island areas that receive less beach driving, reductions in nest relocation should be the desired condition, including in situ nest protection where nests are marked, fenced, and traffic is diverted around them; similar to typical sea turtle nest management performed on beaches elsewhere in the country...If nests must be moved in this area, preference should be given to relocation to corrals.” (p.16)

#### **5. Eliminate Weekend Beach Patrols**

“Patrols on down island stretches should be reduced to five days per week (e.g. Thursday through Monday), 8- or 10-hour days, and one or two patrols per day (as was done in the past). Patrols can focus on protecting nests from beach driving and monitoring to assess the potential impacts of inundation and predation.” (p.16)

#### **6. Limit Scope of Scientific Research**

“Focus research towards efforts that directly improves management of the species within the park.” (p. 18)

“Contributing to scientific publications is appropriate and admirable, however, publishing should not be a driver of STSR program or individual success. The park should actively work with outside partners to identify and conduct future research that has in the past been conducted by NPS staff.” (ps. 18-19)

#### **7. Cut Program Funding**

“The funding level of the STSR program is not aligned with overall park priorities.” (p.26)

“Without additional funding the park still conducts sea turtle management and recovery activities (e.g. collection of turtle eggs, hatching and release) which serve as mitigation measures that are presumably related to BOs [Biological Opinions] issued by the FWS for projects along the entire Texas coast and well beyond the boundaries and administrative responsibilities of PAIS and the NPS.” (p. 20)

“The park should begin planning for what critical activities must be accomplished with a 30% reduction in funding resources available.” (p.24)

#### **8. Control Media Access**

“News releases and other media contact should be handled by the Park Public Information Officer (PIO). After consultation with the Park PIO, and in accordance with Superintendent guidance/policy, STSR staff members may do interviews with media.” (p. 29)

#### **9. Cut Staff Support; Sharply Limit Overtime**

“Supervisors should pre-schedule, and per NPS and other policies, supervisors must preapprove all overtime deemed essential to carry out critical program activities. Unless an actual emergency response is required (e.g. human health and safety), personnel should not be allowed or authorized to work overtime (including compensatory time) without prior written or documented approval. Overtime requests should clearly state the nature and justification for the overtime. “ (p. 22)

“Identify and institute measures for leveraging STSR staff capacity to address other park natural resource priorities such as bird strandings, habitat restoration, and beach cleanup (particularly outside of the Kemp’s nesting season). Also, the STSR administrative assistant can likely help other park divisions outside of the turtle nesting season.” (p.28)

### **10. Eliminate Separate Management for Sea Turtle Program**

“Integration of the sea turtle program within the resource management and science division would allow the park Superintendent to ensure that all priority ecosystem programs are addressed, modify the program as needed to implement adaptive management, address emerging priorities and issues, prioritize and allocate limited resources, and implement efficiencies by having staff work across programs based on seasonality and workload.” (p. 17)

### **11. Charge a Fee for Beach Driving**

“The park may consider a permit program to recover costs associated with implementation of the unrestricted off-road vehicle (ORV) program. A permit program could generate substantial cost recovery associated with the needs to protect sea turtles and other wildlife species while allowing for recreational beach driving.” (p. 24)

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