Update from the Chair

To our members,
The past weeks have been long, difficult and uncertain for many of us. As our community – and the world – struggles with the effects and impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, the thoughts of our STPS Board of Directors continue to be with all of those affected.

As our community deals with the effects and impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Sea Turtle Preservation Society has canceled meetings, presentations, programs and training events through the end of April, and will extend this longer if needed. Our Turtle House in Indialantic and our Turtle Nest kiosk are closed as well.

Please know that STPS continues our sea turtle conservation mission during this difficult time. The hotline, stranding and salvage, and transport programs continue to operate within safety protocols. The nesting survey program is working to adapt to
the protocols now in place. The STPS Board of Directors and other program committees are meeting remotely, and volunteers are working remotely to plan, adapt and continue our education and other conservation programs.

In addition, we have started a Pay It Forward post on our Loggerhead Lowdown blog. As we learn of needs within the community that our STPS team may be able to help with, we will add them to the post. Right now, area healthcare workers are in need of reusable masks and are looking for volunteers to sew these items. If you would like to help with this project or know of other similar needs, please email Sarah at volunteer@seaturtlespacecoast.org.

Please check our STPS website at seaturtlespacecoast.org for updates or follow/like us on Facebook or Instagram. We will also email our membership as updates are available.

For any questions or concerns, please email the chair@seaturtlespacecoast.org or the board@seaturtlespacecoast.org.

Take care,
Susan

Susan Skinner
STPS Board Chair
Director of Communication
What’s Happening in STPS

Turtle Krawl 5K
The 2020 Turtle Krawl race is scheduled for Sept. 12 at Nance Park in Indialantic. Registration for the event begins May 1 at turtlekrawl.com. More information will be coming soon.

Amazon Smile
Doing lots of online shopping these days? If you're on Amazon, then please try Amazon Smile. It's the same deals with the added bonus that you'll support the Sea Turtle Preservation Society. And ask your friends and family to smile for STPS, too. To date, STPS has received $1,671.41 from Amazon through this program.
Volunteer Fair
This year’s annual STPS Volunteer Fair was a huge success with more than 50 people attending to learn more about the opportunities available. Representatives from each program were on hand to answer questions and guide everyone through the process of becoming a volunteer. The event was held Feb. 22 next door to the Turtle House in Indialantic. If you were not able to attend but are interested in volunteering, please email our Volunteer Coordinator at volunteer@seaturtlespacecoast.org or visit our website, seaturtlespacecoast.org and select the volunteer tab at the top left for more information and an online application.

Tracking Sea Turtles
The STPS Board of Directors has approved $10,000 to fund two satellite transmitters in 2020 as part of UCF Marine Turtle Research Group researcher Dean Bagley’s work with male green sea turtles. In 2019, STPS funded transmitters for Jack and Apollo, two male green sea turtles that STPS members were able to track throughout the summer and fall thanks to regular updates from Dean Bagley.

Fundraising
While upcoming events on the calendar have been canceled or postponed, there’s still plenty of planning to do on the STPS Fundraising committee, including organizing the first STPS Gala. If you would like to find out more or get involved with fundraising, please contact Noelle at fundraising@seaturtlespacecoast.org.

Member News
As of March 31, our total membership is 1,010 members.
New monthly social gatherings for our members and volunteers were added as a perk beginning in January. The events, which are held at different restaurants around the county, have proven popular. Our Membership and Volunteer teams have been excited by the response and look forward to resuming these gatherings when it is safe to do so.
The Membership Committee is looking for some assistance in these areas:
Membership Event Coordinator – this will include setting up member meetups, member day trips, etc. Setting everything up including reserving venues, travel arrangements, and taking the events all the way through. They would also be required to get volunteers to help which they can have added to VIC but would be responsible for making sure they
have enough volunteers.

**Membership Benefits Coordinator** – someone to look at our member pricing and make sure we offer the best rates for what we offer, actively search for member benefits we can include in membership, work with businesses, and keep up to date with agreements, etc.

**Membership Recruitment/Retention Coordinator** – someone to look at membership trends, look for opportunities to grow membership, develop programs to welcome members to STPS, a forum where members can ask questions and voice concerns, find opportunities to make members feel welcome and wanted to continue to be part of this great sea turtle community.

If you are interested in helping in these areas, please contact Jax at membership@seaturtlespacecoast.org.

**Insurance Advisory Committee**

We are looking for members with an insurance background to join the newly created Insurance Advisory Committee to periodically review our STPS coverage and options. If you would like to lend your expertise to this committee, please contact Susan at stpschair@seaturtlespacecoast.org.

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**Shop on our online STPS Store**

While both of our physical locations are closed, the STPS online store has plenty of sea turtle merchandise available. Check it out on our website, seaturtlespacecoast.org, and select the store tab.

[Shop Now]
IT'S NESTING SEASON

Nesting season has arrived in Florida, but before we start tallying this season’s nest activity, let’s take a look at the 2019 statewide totals.
Statewide 2019 nesting numbers:
106,650 loggerhead nests
53,105 green nests
1,105 leatherback nests
11 confirmed (and 6 pending) Kemp’s Ridley nests
No Hawksbill nests
These totals were presented by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission staff during the state Marine Turtle Permit Holders meeting held in January 2020 in Panama City Beach, FL.

The Statewide Nesting Beach survey data for 2019 was gathered on 229 beaches, or 846 miles, that were surveyed by 2,900 volunteers statewide.

In addition to these totals, FWC staff presented research on loggerhead nesting trends. The conclusions of this work:

- Florida is the most important nesting area for loggerheads in the world (hosting more than 40 percent of the nests laid globally).
- Annual loggerhead nest counts fluctuate widely in the most abundant management units and appears to be increasing in the smaller management units.
- Even though nest count has been increasing in recent years, there is NO clear evidence of a female population change.
- Strong population recovery has not occurred.
Please keep it clean, dark, and flat on the beaches for sea turtles.

Lights out
Sea turtles dig the dark
May 1st - Oct 31st

Pick up beach furniture
Don't touch
Knock over sandcastles

Leave only footprints
No flashlights
Fill in any holes

©Mission: Clean Beaches
Residents and visitors can help to make our area as turtle friendly as possible by remembering to keep beaches clean, flat and dark from May 1 through Oct. 31. County ordinances prohibit visible lights of any type, including cellphones, at night during this time. It’s also important to remove beach chairs and other obstacles each night as well as to knock down sandcastles and fill in any holes that may block or trap sea turtles.

Beachgoers and residents alike can help make sure sea turtles have a safe journey to and from the ocean during this important season:

**Turn off beach lights or use turtle friendly lights at night.** Ensuring that turtles have the potential for a safe journey to and from the ocean is one of the biggest contributions that residents can make to help sea turtles. Brevard County has a Lights Out ordinance effective May 1 – October 31 that requires all lights visible from the beach to be either covered, blocked, moved, or turned off from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. It also bans the use of any lights that are not turtle friendly, including flashlights, cameras or recorders with a flash feature, floodlights, beach lights, or any other artificial lighting.

**Put away beach chairs, umbrellas, and any other obstacles** to help avoid the potential risk of turtles getting stuck when venturing inland or to the water after nesting. Larger turtles can easily get stuck underneath beach chairs or in the slats, and they become trapped. If you see a section of beach marked for a potential nest, keep beach furniture far away from it.

**Pick up trash.** Waste such as plastic bags and food containers can end up in the water and be ingested by sea turtles. Trash also can become an obstacle for nesting mothers as well as hatchlings. Leftover food debris can attract unwanted scavengers, including raccoons, dogs, birds, and coyotes who may find the nests and eat the eggs. Help avoid this by properly disposing of food waste, plastic, and any other trash you bring to the beach.
Stay away, and avoid contact with, nesting turtles, nests, or hatchlings. It is illegal to touch sea turtles or hatchlings on the beach. It may seem like a nice idea to help a hatchling make its way to the water, but in the end it is best to leave nature on its own. Turtles imprint on the beach that they hatch on and, if female, return there as an adult to lay their own eggs. Picking them up could interfere with this natural process. It is best to simply admire their beauty from afar.

**Fill in sand holes and knock down sandcastles.** Sandcastles and holes dug in the sand can pose a threat to nesting turtles and hatchlings. Not only can hatchlings fall into the holes, but they can get blocked by large sandcastles.

**Know the local number for sea turtle stranding and assistance.** This is the easiest way to be prepared in case you ever encounter a sick, injured, or stranded sea turtle. You also can report the harassment or disturbance of sea turtles and their nests to FWC. **In Brevard County, call the Sea Turtle Preservation Society’s emergency response line at 321-206-0646. You can also call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission hotline at 888-404-3922 or on a mobile phone at *FWC or #FWC, depending on the provider.**

**Get involved.** Residents and beachgoers can participate in local beach cleanups and walks to help provide a safe and clean environment for nesting turtles and hatchlings.
Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).