

## City of Treasure Island Beach Stewardship Committee

April 9, 2003

1:30 PM

COMMITTEE PRESENT: Robert Minning, Barbara Blush, George Greenfield, Sully Lowe, Rick Raus; Skip Davis; Cliff Truitt, Coastal Tech;

Guest: Glen Harmon, Clearwater Marine Aquarium

Chairman Robert Minning called the Beach Stewardship Committee meeting to order at 1:35 PM in the City Hall auditorium, 108th Avenue, Treasure Island, Florida.

1. The draft minutes of the March 12, 2003 meeting were distributed and reviewed. Upon appropriate motion the minutes were approved as drafted.
2. There were no additions to the proposed agenda; without objection proposed agenda item 4, a discussion of wildlife activity related to the beach, was moved to be next on the agenda.
3. Lynn Rosetti, City Planner, introduced the wildlife discussion item by showing a newly created information piece about 'lights out' for marine turtle protection. The 3-minute video was developed by Lynn with Carol Kitts' help and will play continuously on Channel 15 during the nesting season. It is expected that the video will be edited throughout the season to add footage of actual nests and hatchings.

Glen Harmon, a biologist with Clearwater Marine Aquarium (CMA), provided the Committee with a presentation of information about marine turtle nesting and protection. He described the identifying characteristics, nesting habits and conservation issues for the five main turtle species found on the Gulf coast: Loggerhead, Kemp's Ridley, Green, Hawksbill and Leatherback. CMA monitors nesting on most of Pinellas County's beaches including Treasure Island. Since 1993 there has been an overall slight increase in total nesting numbers in the County, but the year-to-year fluctuations are very large; last year's nesting was generally below average. In a typical year there are 15-20 turtle nests on Treasure Island with most of them located on the north and south beaches and very few at mid-island.

Glen noted several 'direct' and 'indirect' problems that can adversely affect nesting and hatching success. Artificial lighting may deter females from nesting and may cause disorientation in hatchlings; objects such as beach furniture and fences may block nesting females; vehicles, equipment and drainage onto the beach can destroy nests prior to hatching; and, issues associated with erosion control projects such as fill quality or the formation of escarpments in the fill can adversely affect turtles.

Solutions to problems arising from lighting include adopting and enforcing lighting ordinances such as has been done in Treasure Island and Indian Rocks Beach. Dune restoration

and re-vegetation projects are also helpful in shielding nests from the residual lighting 'glow.' Public education and information is a valuable component in a protection program.

There were questions for Glen and discussion by the committee on the effects of artificial lighting on the beach compared to natural light sources such as the moon. Also, Dr. Davis asked if there was any data on nesting success along developed versus undeveloped beaches. Glen replied that there does seem to be data indicating a preference for less developed beach stretches. Barbara Blush mentioned the 'Adopt-a-nest' program sponsored by CMA and Glen described how interested people may financially support the aquarium's turtle program while receiving information and 'progress updates' for a turtle nest in their area.

4. Cliff Truitt reported on the status of the Sand Sharing project permit application. No other Committee comments have been received to the letter Cliff had drafted in response to the Corps' Project Manager for Treasure Island statements of concern about the scope of our sand sharing proposal and the Corps' schedule for maintenance. The letter will be finalized and forwarded by Don Hambidge. The next step will be for the Corps to request comments and a revised Biological Opinion from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

5. Committee Member Remarks:

Dr. Greenfield asked if there was any new information about the status of beach funding in the proposed legislative budget. Barbara Blush reported that Representative Carassas in the House and Senator Jones in the Senate have filed bills to protect the Trust Fund. The final outcome still remains in doubt.

Sully Lowe recalled that Heidi Horak had raised questions at the last meeting about the seaweed raking procedures the City was using. She asked if anyone had looked into it and Rick Raus replied that he confirmed with the equipment operator that care would be taken to ensure that no trash would be raked back into the Gulf.

Dr. Greenfield noted that there are other forms of beach wildlife besides marine turtles. He showed a photograph of pelicans taking flight and asked that the Committee take some interest in shorebirds and their habitat. He suggested inviting someone in the field to speak to the committee at a future meeting. Robert Minning also recalled a similar suggestion by Heidi Horak to Chuck Coward who had replied that the Committee might want to review its enabling resolution before expanding its interest into such topics. Mr. Minning said he had reviewed the resolution language and sent a note to Chuck Coward to the effect that the 'mission' language seemed very broad. Chuck had suggested that a memo be sent to the City Commission to keep them informed.

Rick Raus reported that the Sunset Vista Trail Park project was still on schedule and the end of the month was still a likely date for interested Committee members to observe the dune vegetation planting process. There is no new news on the NOAA grant.

Dr. Davis mentioned that the Coastal Sediments '03 technical conference will be held in Clearwater in May.

Mr. Minning reported that there would be a March 14<sup>th</sup> presentation of the dune education piece to the Isle of Capri association; the Paradise Island presentation last month seemed to very well received.

There were no further remarks.

6. The next regular Committee meeting date was set for May 14, 2003 at 1:30

The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 PM.