



Jekyll Island Environmental Assessment Procedure (EAP):

Date of EAP Committee meeting: 2/18/2020

EAP Committee members

Yank Moore, Land Manager, JIA
Cliff Gawron, Director of Landscape and Planning, JIA
Dennis Gailey, Director of Public Safety, JIA
Terry Norton, Director and Veterinarian GSTC, JIA
Breanna Ondich, Research Specialist, JIA
Tim Keyes, Bird Biologist, Georgia DNR
Abby Sterling, Shorebird Biologist, Manomet, Inc.
Aaron Bell, Resident

Actions under consideration

Establish criteria and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for official-duty driving on the beaches of Jekyll Island by both internal and external partners to protect wildlife, their habitat, natural shoreline protection from sand dunes, beach-user safety and enjoyment, and authorized driver/vehicle safety. Consider establishing new policy restricting routine authorized motor-vehicle traffic to areas north of the island's southernmost water tower with exceptions for critical needs and circumstances. The purpose of the proposed no-routine-driving-zone policy is to establish an area of Jekyll Island beach where natural resources and wildlife habitat are given even higher priority than elsewhere on the island and to provide Jekyll Island visitors the ability to experience a beach with the lightest possible footprint of human activities.

Summary Assessment

The committee was broadly supportive of the SOPs that are described in detail in this document. Participants agreed that these SOPs should go into effect immediately for all authorized beach driving with the exception that the Georgia Sea Turtle Center (GSTC) will need additional time to gradually adapt their operations and make sure appropriate equipment, training, and procedures are vetted and in place to ensure personnel safety in transitioning to any new modes of transport (such as bicycles) in the motor-vehicle restriction area. GSTCs transition also is contingent upon coordination with Georgia DNR Wildlife Resources Division staff in accordance with the Sea Turtle Cooperator Permit. Due in part to budgetary and personnel limitations associated with the COVID19 pandemic, the earliest GSTC would be able to fully conform with these SOPs would be the 2021 sea turtle nesting season.

Procedures

❖ Vehicle Access Points

- There are 5 vehicle-beach access points on Jekyll Island
 - Clam Creek, Driftwood Beach, Great Dunes, South Water Tower, and St. Andrews
 - Great Dunes is the preferred access for all routine-patrols unless tidal or temporal limitations prohibit
- Be careful and observant of speed when approaching either end of the accesses

❖ General Driving Protocols

- Speed
 - 20mph max April 1st – July 31st
 - 25mph max August 1st – March 31st
 - Always go slower around beach-users, especially children
- Wrack-lines
 - Never drive continuously over a wrack-line to avoid harming hidden wildlife or damaging tires due to hidden debris
- North of Beach Access #25 (Holiday Inn)
 - No vehicles other than ATV/UTVs are allowed in this area without explicit permission from the Executive Director or his Designee
 - This area includes Driftwood Beach and Clam Creek
 - Responsible parties for vehicles that enter this area are operating at their own risk with no guarantee of assistance from JIA should a vehicle be at risk of loss.
- Lights
 - Use of headlights at night is required for safety. However, any vehicle lights emitting wavelengths of light shorter than 560nm would be out of compliance with the beach lighting ordinance if used on the beach before dawn or after sunset between May 1 and October 31 (sea turtle nesting season).
 - Any authorized vehicle needing to access the beach at night during sea turtle-nesting season, outside of critical, non-routine circumstances, should be equipped and operated with red-LED headlights.
- Stuck Vehicle Procedures
 - Notify current preferred recovery contractor immediately
 - At the time of preparation of this report, that is Landon's Towing and Recovery, 797 E. Cherry Street, Jesup, GA, 31546, (912) 427-4430
 - The JIA Executive Director and Chief Operations Officer must be notified immediately of a vehicle stuck on the beach and NO rescue

- missions of any type are allowed without explicit permission by JIA Executive Director or Designee
- NO civilian vehicles are allowed on the beach, even in a “Good Samaritan” type situation, including personal vehicles of JIA employees
 - JIA vehicular or equipment assets will not be used to remove a stuck vehicle without explicit permission by Executive Director or Designee
 - The JIA Chief Operations Officer or his Designee shall lead any recovery efforts and notify DNR, GSP, and JIA Conservation
- Tide Zones (Figure 1)
 - Green – preferred zone for driving operations
 - On wet-sand beach between the most recent high tide wrack line and current water level
 - Yellow – Tide-aware driving operations if essential
 - Routine patrols should adjust schedules around high-tide and operate in the green zone to the greatest extent practicable
 - Only essential activities that cannot adjust scheduling should operate vehicles in this zone taking care to stay seaward of the spring-tide wrack line and as close to the current water level as possible
 - Red- No operation (except emergencies and wildlife rescue operations for sea turtles or marine mammals).
 - No-one except vehicles responding to an emergency or sea turtle / marine mammal rescue should be on the beach during the peak of a spring-tide event
 - Trash Pick-up
 - Under current SOP, trash pick-up is limited to the zone between Days Inn and Holiday Inn
 - Senior management to assess yearly and communicate any recommended adaptations to the boundaries of this zone based on observations and results of current SOP.
 - GSTC - Wilson’s plover nesting-season night driving
 - Must-have at least 2 crew members in each vehicle
 - One focused on driving and the other acting as a spotter looking for plover chicks and adults
 - Daily communication between night drivers and Conservation team on plover chick sightings is paramount
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 - General Vehicle Presence on Beaches
 - Routine patrols should communicate with other departments to limit the number of vehicles present on the beach at one time
 - JIFD will patrol Clam Creek and the Sandbar as routine patrols

- Clam Creek patrols will be from 30 minutes after high tide to 2 hours after high tide
- The Sandbar will be patrolled from 30 before low tide until 2 hours after low tide
- Trash pick-up is usually 700am and 2pm
- GSTC Dawn Patrol begins at 645am and typically runs until noon
- Park Ranger beach patrols from May to August are 7AM to 7PM, dialed back according to visitation in other months.

❖ **No-routine-driving Zone**

- Area
 - All beaches south of the South End Water Tower (31.025413°, -81.417608)
- Restrictions
 - No motor-vehicle access at all except for emergency response, sea turtle / marine mammal rescue, or critical exceptions explicitly approved on a case-by-case basis by one of the following JIA senior staff people (Executive Director, Chief Operations Officer, Director of Public Safety, Director of Conservation, or Director of the Georgia Sea Turtle Center).
- Exceptions
 - Emergencies (Police, Fire, or EMS only)
 - Clean-up and removal of large debris or contaminants that pose a public safety or pollution hazard
 - Wildlife carcasses that are too large to be removed under human power and have a compelling reason that necessitates removal from the beach
 - Outside (November – February) of plover nesting and sea turtle nesting season (March – October), any sea turtle necropsies that can be done in the field should be performed in-place and then deposited out of site in the adjacent dunes
 - Glynn County beach profile data collection

❖ **External Partners Currently Approved for Beach Driving**

- Georgia State Patrol
- GADNR
- Public mosquito control services
- Research Partners on a case-by-case basis, with appropriate approvals
- Contractors on a case-by-case basis, provided regulatory approvals

Figure 1. Tidal zones as they relate to where operators should drive on the beach

