



Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ Tourism Standards

A project of the Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network (WFEN)

Introduction

The ancestors of today's sea turtles, which first appeared in the world's oceans over 150 million years ago, coexisted with and, in some cases, pre-dated the dinosaurs. But today, multiple anthropogenic threats are impacting the world's sea turtles, making it critical that conservationists use every tool in their toolkits to secure a future for these ancient mariners.

Sea turtles have been important throughout human history for economic, cultural and spiritual reasons. Moreover, as keystone species they provide essential ecosystem services to support healthy functioning of marine habitats. This includes helping to maintain coral reefs and seagrass beds that serve as breeding and nursery grounds for many commercially-important fish and invertebrates. Sea turtles are also indicator species for the overall health of the marine environment and the associated benefits that these oceans, reefs, and coastal areas provide for local human communities, for the tourism industry, and for local economies.

Overview of the World's Sea Turtle Species

Common and scientific names, geographic range, and status according to the IUCN Red List (<https://www.iucnredlist.org/>).

Sea Turtle Species	Scientific Name	Geographic Range	Global IUCN Red List Status	Status Definition
Hawksbill	<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>	Tropical and some sub-tropical waters of the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans. Nesting in at least 70 countries and inhabiting coastal waters of over 108 countries. ¹	Critically Endangered	Extremely high risk of extinction in the wild

¹ Mortimer, J.A & Donnelly, M. (IUCN SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group) 2008. *Eretmochelys imbricata*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2008:e.T8005A12881238. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2008.RLTS.T8005A12881238.en>. Downloaded 26 Sept 2019.

Sea Turtle Species	Scientific Name	Geographic Range	Global IUCN Red List Status	Status Definition
Kemp's Ridley	<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>	Primarily Gulf of Mexico and along Atlantic coast of the U.S. Nests mainly in the Western Gulf of Mexico. ²	Critically Endangered	Extremely high risk of extinction in the wild
Green	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>	Highly migratory through mainly tropical and also subtropical waters of the world. Nests in over 80 countries and found of coastal waters of over 140 countries. ³	Endangered	Very high risk of extinction in the wild
Loggerhead	<i>Caretta caretta</i>	Throughout the subtropical and temperate regions of the Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic Oceans and the Mediterranean Sea. ⁴	Vulnerable	High risk of extinction in the wild
Leatherback	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>	Nesting sites on tropical beaches. Foraging ranges extending into temperate and sub-polar latitudes. ⁵	Vulnerable	High risk of extinction in the wild
Olive Ridley	<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>	Nests throughout tropical water and migrates in tropical and some subtropical areas. Nests in nearly 60 countries and migrates in coastal waters of over 80 countries. Not known to move between ocean basins. ⁶	Vulnerable	High risk of extinction in the wild
Flatback	<i>Natator depressus</i>	Extant to Australia. Found in the eastern Indian Ocean and Pacific Oceans surrounding the continent. ⁷	Data Deficient	Insufficient information necessary to evaluate risk of extinction

² Wibbels, T. & Bevan, E. 2019. *Lepidochelys kempii*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2019: e.T11533A142050590. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2019-2.RLTS.T11533A142050590.en>. Downloaded 26 Sept 2019.

³ Seminoff, J.A. (Southwest Fisheries Science Center, U.S.) 2004. *Chelonia mydas*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2004: e.T4615A11037468. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2004.RLTS.T4615A11037468.en>. Downloaded 26 Sept 2019.

⁴ Casale, P. & Tucker, A.D. 2017. *Caretta caretta* (amended version of 2015 assessment). *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2017: e.T3897A119333622. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2017-2.RLTS.T3897A119333622.en>. Downloaded 26 Sept 2019.

⁵ Wallace, B.P., Tiwari, M. & Girondot, M. 2013. *Dermochelys coriacea*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2013: e.T6494A43526147. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2013-2.RLTS.T6494A43526147.en>. Downloaded 26 Sept 2019.

⁶ Abreu-Grobois, A & Plotkin, P. (IUCN SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group) 2008. *Lepidochelys olivacea*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2008: e.T11534A3292503. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2008.RLTS.T11534A3292503.en>. Downloaded 26 Sept 2019.

⁷ Red List Standards & Petitions Subcommittee 1996. *Natator depressus*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 1996: e.T14363A4435952. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.1996.RLTS.T14363A4435952.en>. Downloaded 26 Sept 2019.

All seven species of sea turtles are exposed to many hazards during their complex and long lives, of which much is still not completely mapped or understood. They are globally distributed and highly migratory, spending most of their lives in coastal waters and the open ocean. A relatively small yet critical part of their life cycle is spent on land as well, when females return to their natal nesting beaches to lay their eggs.

Creative and innovative solutions are urgently needed to address and mitigate the threats, both on land and in the sea, which are pushing local sea turtle populations towards the brink of extinction. These threats include: beach loss to rising sea levels, solid wastes such as plastics, poorly planned and unrestricted beachfront development (including the use of inappropriate lighting), fisheries interactions and unsustainable harvests of both turtles and their eggs. *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* is one response to these issues.

Global Threats Facing Sea Turtles

While responsible government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been implementing various conservation and research programs for over six decades around the world, many factors continue to contribute to a decline in sea turtle populations. Major categories of threats to sea turtles are described below, and those most closely related to the tourism industry are indicated with a **T**:

Direct mortality

- Turtle and turtle egg poaching
- Harvesting (including poaching) of turtles and turtle eggs for local consumption and cross-border trade
- Harvesting for sale into the wildlife trade, including harvesting of turtle shell for the curio trade (often made into combs, guitars, frames for eyeglasses, and other souvenirs) **T**

Accidental mortality

- Incidental catch by domestic and foreign fishermen
- Injury and mortality due to boat strikes **T**
- Entanglement in “ghost” or abandoned fishing gear
- Mortality due to ingestion of plastics **T**

Other threats

- Poorly planned development on, and mining of, nesting beaches **T**
- Improper lighting choices which affect nesting behavior **T**
- Climate-change related impacts including loss of beaches, coral reefs, and feminization of hatchlings **T**
- Changes in food availability due to habitat alteration and climate change **T**
- Security and civil conflict issues in important sea turtle habitat
- Weak law enforcement
- Harassment, often related to the tourism industry **T**

The Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ Approach

Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ is a species-specific initiative of the Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network (WFEN), which sets expert-driven standards and certifies conservation-conscious enterprises around the world. WFEN's other programs include Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Products, Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism, Certified Gorilla Friendly™ Tourism and Park Edge Products (a collaboration with the International Gorilla Conservation Programme, a coalition programme of the World Wide Fund for Nature, Fauna and Flora International, and Conservation International), and others.

The *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* standards for tourism address the major threats to sea turtles, either directly or indirectly. By using market forces for the uptake of expert-recommended best practices, and by engaging tourists, and the tourism industry, including tour operators and the hospitality sector, as partners in sea turtle conservation, *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* will assist both international and domestic travelers in selecting a hotel or excursion with confidence that they are supporting local and regional conservation efforts.

The *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* program is voluntary. The standards do not supersede international, national, or local regulations, and it is expected that *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises will meet all relevant legislative requirements. It must be noted that interactions with endangered and protected species (including turtle watching) may require a government permit, licensed guides, and may need to meet other conditions.

Understanding the Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ Standards

Please read each standard carefully.

Required standards are those which say that something must or must not be done or that something is prohibited. The requirements of these standards must be met before certification under the *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* standards can be granted, and maintained in order to keep certification. Unless a standard specifies that it is Recommended (see below) it is a mandatory requirement of the program.

Some **Required** standards are additionally marked with this symbol: **C** which indicates the standard is critical to achieving the aims of *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™*. Failure to meet a standard marked as being critical will result in certification being denied or suspended until the standard is met.

Certification may be granted to applicants that fail to meet one or more required standards as long as these standards are not designated as “critical” (see above) AND the applicant provides a written compliance plan with acceptable actions and timelines to resolve outstanding issues.

Recommended standards say that something “should” be done. These standards are highlighted as **Recommended** alongside the heading and reflect the aims and principles of the *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* program but are not mandatory in order for certification to be granted under the *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* standards.

This document lists all standards for tourism businesses involved in *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ Tourism*. Entities that may become certified under this program include, but are not limited to: lodges, resorts, hotels, tour guides, tour operators, tour agencies, vacation rentals, residential communities, non-profit tourism offerings, and others

The term “WFEN-approved conservation organization or entity” is used throughout this document to refer to an entity deemed to be qualified and experienced to carry out and/or advise on the conservation activities required for certification, as determined by the WFEN Certification Committee during the application process. This entity may consist of a) the applicant itself, in the event that the enterprise employs permanent internal staff biologists or conservation experts, b) a local or regional sea turtle conservation group, c) a marine protected area manager, d) a relevant government agency to ensure a positive impact on sea turtle conservation, or e) any other entity deemed to be qualified by the WFEN certification committee.

Acknowledgements

Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST)

WFEN ensures that the Sea Turtle Friendly™ program is in sync with international best practices by maintaining a strong partnership with the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST). Founded in 1981, WIDECAST is comprised of sea turtle experts in more than 40 Wider Caribbean nations and territories and, as a Regional Activity Network of the UNEP Caribbean Environment Program, is tasked with facilitating and documenting sea turtle recovery and sustainable management throughout the Central Western Atlantic region. WFEN has benefitted greatly from WIDECAST's technical materials, peer-review of our Standards, and support for our local programming.

This document was produced based on best practices established by WIDECAST and expert opinion from practitioners and stakeholders. The primary reference used for this document is: Choi, Ga-Young and Karen L. Eckert. 2009. Manual of Best Practices for Safeguarding Sea Turtle Nesting Beaches. Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST) Technical Report No. 9. Ballwin, Missouri. 86 pp. Other references are shown in Appendix 4.

Global Sustainable Tourism Council

In developing these standards, the requirements of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) have been taken into account and incorporated as REQUIRED or RECOMMENDED criteria whenever possible. For the information of readers, standards that cover GSTC requirements have ^{GSTC} in superscript at the end of the standard.

Note: WFEN endorses and recommends adoption of the GSTC Industry Criteria. The full GSTC Industry Criteria (for Hotels and Tour Operators) and associated Indicators can be viewed and downloaded for reference here: <http://www.gstccouncil.org/en/gstc-criteria-hotels-tour-operators-destinations/sustainable-tourism-gstc-criteria.html?id=1298>

Reviewers

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1 Conservation

1.0 Sea Turtle Conservation

1.0.1 *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must be able to work effectively to ensure a positive impact on sea turtle conservation by having in place one of the following options:

- Employment of suitably qualified staff biologists or conservation experts; or
- Long term partnerships with a WFEN-approved local or regional sea turtle conservation group, marine protected area manager; or
- Partnerships with a relevant government agency.

1.0.2 **C** Certified enterprises must not carry out any actions that may reduce or otherwise negatively impact sea turtle habitats.

1.0.3 Sites where sea turtles nest and forage must be protected from poachers through surveillance and reporting to the relevant authorities any evidence of poaching.

Note: Surveillance in this standard could include the use of night guards/security guards to protect nests.

1.0.4 **C** Certified enterprises must not utilize, offer for sale (directly or via third party) any sea turtle parts, meat, eggs, shell or by products.

1.0.5 Certified enterprises must sign the relevant Sea Turtle Policy Statement in Appendix 1 and post it in a public location.

1.0.6 **Recommended**

Hotels, resorts and tour operators should collaborate with and/or support the activities of local sea turtle conservation groups

Note: Support could be monetary – e.g., paying conservation groups to provide talks or displays on their work for guests, or subsidizing transport/fuel costs – or as other benefits such as housing or simple meals for beach patrollers during the peak nesting season and promotion of the conservation group's work through in-room materials or other corporate outreach.

1.0.7 **Recommended**

Guests should be encouraged to participate in citizen science opportunities managed by expert partners, such as the monitoring of biodiversity and wildlife behavior.

1.1 Conservation Plan

A template to guide the development of the conservation plan required by this section can be found in Appendix 2. The conservation plan will be reviewed as part of the WFEN certification process.

1.1.1 Each *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprise must have a documented conservation plan. This plan must include:

1.1.1.1 A map of the area managed by the certified enterprise, including the main site and surrounding grounds and their position relative to the beach, as well as any buildings or temporary or permanent equipment such as picnic areas, sun beds etc. on the beach.

1.1.1.2 A list of the certified enterprises' existing and potential direct and indirect effects on sea turtles and their environment. ^{GSTC}

Note: This list should include all hotel activities which take place on the beach front and in the nearshore; e.g., bonfires/barbeques, placement of beach umbrellas, mechanical beach cleaning, Jet Ski rides, etc.

1.1.1.3 An assessment of habitat important to sea turtles including both the area (the size of the habitat) and the quality of such habitat.

Note: This standard covers nesting habitat/vegetation on land (beaches), as well as reef systems and sea grasses in the marine area used by the resort for recreational activities. Habitat areas can be shown using GIS or hand drawn maps.

1.1.1.4 How any disturbance of natural ecosystems that may occur from the operations of the certified enterprise will be avoided, minimized and/or mitigated for. ^{GSTC}

1.1.1.5 **Recommended**

The plan should also include a long-term sustainability management system that is suitable to its reality and scope, and which addresses environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, health and safety issues. ^{GSTC}

1.1.2 The conservation plan must be developed with the assistance of a WFEN-approved local or regional sea turtle conservation organization, government agency, university, or experienced in-house sea turtle conservation expert

1.1.3 The conservation plan must be reviewed at least annually by the certified enterprise for continuing applicability and updated as required.

1.1.4 The conservation plan must be communicated to all relevant staff members.

Note: See also section 1.2: Employees and Sea Turtle Conservation.

1.1.5 Certified enterprises will be required to report on any changes to conservation activities during the mandatory reporting process to WFEN, as described in the certification agreement.

1.2 Employees and Sea Turtle Conservation

1.2.1 **C** The certified enterprise must appoint a member of staff to act as a Sea Turtle Steward to be responsible for management of any activities and training that could impact on sea turtles.

Note: This person will also act as the main contact with WFEN for certification and audit questions.

- 1.2.2 The Sea Turtle Steward must work in collaboration with any partner sea turtle conservation agency or government agency identified at Standard 1.0.1.
- 1.2.3 All employees must receive training on these standards including the certified enterprise's conservation plan as detailed in section 1.1, to ensure they not only have seen/read these but understand them and their part in ensuring that these are met.
- 1.2.4 Employee training must emphasize that tourist satisfaction must not be given priority over turtle wellbeing and conservation.
- 1.2.5 All employees must be trained to identify the following and who to report it to.
- Suspicious human behavior relating to sea turtles (e.g., poaching, harvesting of eggs)
 - Distressed or injured turtles

Note: It is expected that reports from staff should go to the Sea Turtle Steward who can ensure it is passed to the appropriate agency.

- 1.2.6 Training must include the potential positive and negative impacts of sea turtle tourism.
- 1.2.7 Training for employees must include their roles and responsibilities with respect to environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, health and safety issues. ^{GSTC}
- 1.2.8 **Recommended**
Employee training should include basic sea turtle biology and behavior.
- 1.2.9 **Recommended**
Employee training should include language skills for the most common languages of a site's tourists.
- 1.2.10 **Recommended**
Employee training should include first aid.
- 1.2.11 Those delivering training, whether directly employed by the *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprise or external trainers must be competent as recognized by the partner sea turtle conservation agency identified at Standard 1.0.1.
- 1.2.12 Records of initial and ongoing training must be kept.
- 1.2.13 Training refreshers must be provided to all staff at least annually.
- 1.2.14 **Recommended**
Training refreshers should include an assessment of staff's understanding and perception of sea turtle conservation, to review whether employee training is effective.

1.3 Affiliated Businesses Entities and Sea Turtle Conservation

- 1.3.1 If certified enterprises allow an external business entity to operate on part of their resort area (e.g., a bar or retail area) or other assets (e.g., a vessel), there must be a clause in any new or renewed tenancy agreements requiring tenants to familiarize themselves with and agree to abide by these standards.
- 1.3.2 Any tenants of the certified enterprise must sign the relevant Sea Turtle Friendly™ Policy Statement, which must be kept on file by the certified enterprise (see Appendix 1).
- 1.3.3 **Recommended**
If an enterprise applying for certification is sub-contracting or working with other tourism businesses, all linked lodging and tour operator businesses must meet these standards in order for the applicant to achieve certification.

Note: For hotels and resorts, as well as cruise ship companies, this includes any tours or excursions that they arrange.

- 1.3.4 The applicant or certified enterprise must stay apprised of the practices of any businesses that they contract with, and also to communicate that they *are Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* and to educate these other businesses and help them to meet the *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* standards.
- 1.3.5 All contracted businesses in the tourism sector (such as those providing excursions) must sign the relevant Sea Turtle Friendly™ Policy Statement which must be kept on file by the certified enterprise (see Appendix 1).
- 1.3.6 **Recommended**
Any contracted tour operators or other tourism-related businesses linked to the certified enterprise should apply for Sea Turtle Friendly™ certification in their own right.

1.4 Turtle Tagging and Monitoring

- 1.4.1 Tagging and any other physical interactions (e.g., measuring) must only be carried out by or under the supervision of staff of WFEN-approved conservation organizations, government entities, research institutions, or experienced in-house sea turtle conservation experts.
- 1.4.2 Permits must be acquired from the appropriate government agencies prior to tagging and any other physical interactions with turtles.
- 1.4.3 Complete information on any tagged turtles must be submitted through the Sea Turtle Steward to the appropriate national sea turtle database.

- 1.4.4 A record must be kept of any tagged turtles that are observed, or any found tags that are turned in to the Sea Turtle Steward, and an attempt must be made to contact the organization that tagged the turtle.

Note: Every tag has a return address physically located on the tag itself.

- 1.4.5 Outreach and awareness-raising should ensure that loose tags found on the resort property or by resort guests or employees are reported to the Sea Turtle Steward.

Note: Information should be provided to guests in the welcome packet to explain what a tag is.

1.4.6 **Recommended**

Certified enterprises should collaborate with scientists and research groups (e.g., universities, NGOs) to collect and share data on sea turtle behavior and ecology and other biodiversity.

Note: Examples of collaborations might include recording of existing tag numbers for long-term demographic studies, use of photo ID technology, and sightings of turtles affixed with a satellite tag.

- 1.4.7 Certified enterprises must collect standardized data on the dates and number of sightings of the following on their properties and (where possible) in surrounding waters. This information must be shared with the partner sea turtle conservation organization identified at Standard 1.0.1:

- Sea turtle tracks (including width of the track leading to the pit or nest site, to help identify the species of turtle);
- Nests (with witnessed egg-laying) including GPS coordinates;
- In-water sightings.

1.4.8 **Recommended**

Guests should be encouraged to report sea turtle sightings (via a logbook, app, or other means) to help provide up-to-date information to scientists and government agencies.

Note: This information, if collected, must be submitted to the partner sea turtle conservation organization identified at Standard 1.0.1.

1.5 Wildlife, Feral and Pet Animals.

NOTE: This section refers to wildlife other than sea turtles

- 1.5.1 The certified enterprise cannot harvest, sell, display, consume, or distribute any animal (living or deceased), animal part, or animal product unless such products are **not** of key species and the display, sale, or distribution of such items is legal, with minimum negative conservation impact. ^{GSTC}

Note: The display of the remains of key species may be permitted as part of an educational display as long as the collection of such remains did not impact on

species survival. Harvesting, sale, or consumption of non-key species, such as lionfish in the Caribbean region where they are invasive, is permitted.

- 1.5.2 Wildlife must not be held captive, except for properly regulated activities, in compliance with local and international law. ^{GSTC}
- 1.5.3 Living specimens of protected and wildlife species must only be kept by authorized or licensed facilities that are equipped with trained staff to house and care for them humanely. ^{GSTC}

Note: WFEN does not certify any tourism entity where the primary activity involves animals being kept in captivity and marketed for tourism purposes, e.g., dolphinariums, tourism-focused sanctuaries and rehabilitation facilities, etc.

- 1.5.4 During the nesting and hatching season pet dogs must only be permitted on sea turtle nesting beaches when they are under control and on a lead.
- 1.5.5 The enterprise must not engage in activities that could attract wildlife or stray cats and dogs that could prey on sea turtles and hatchlings or disturb their natural behavior.

Note: See also standard 5.3.3 relating to trash/litter as a possible predator attractant. This standard doesn't expect all enterprises to be able to completely exclude all animals, but they must not be doing anything that would attract them

- 1.5.6 If stray dogs and cats are present in the area managed by the certified enterprise, steps to humanely reduce their numbers must be included in the conservation plan.
- 1.5.7 If undertaken, humane removal of stray animals must be done in partnership with the appropriate local authority, with all appropriate permits and best practices in place.

1.6 Cultural Diversity

- 1.6.1 Historical and archaeological artifacts must not be sold, traded or displayed, except as permitted by law. ^{GSTC}
- 1.6.2 *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must contribute to the protection and preservation of local historically-, archeologically-, culturally- and spiritually-important properties and sites, and must not impede legitimate access to them by local communities. ^{GSTC}
- 1.6.3 **Recommended**
Certified enterprises should educate guests regarding the historic use of, and relationship with, sea turtles in the region.

2 Light

2.0 Reducing Light Pollution

Light pollution is an ongoing challenge. Light pollution is the presence of artificial light in the night environment. It is exacerbated by excessive, misdirected or obtrusive use of light, but even carefully used light fundamentally alters natural conditions.

At nesting beaches, light pollution is known to modify sea turtle behavior. For example, artificial lighting onshore can discourage egg-bearing females from coming ashore to nest. Beachfront lighting also strongly affects nesting sea turtles and sea turtle hatchlings, disorienting and misdirecting them inland and away from the sea, causing them to waste valuable energy reserves, and exposes them to potential threats after nesting.

Light surveys detailed in the standards below will be carried out by the certified enterprise with guidance from WFEN and/or the partner sea turtle conservation organization identified at Standard 1.0.1. This program is designed to help certified enterprises ensure that their beaches serve as dedicated dark areas for sea turtle nesting. During nesting and hatching season no lights should be visible from the nesting beach.

2.0.1 A survey of light from the hotel property must be carried out as part of the initial application to become *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly*[™] and at least annually, in the month preceding the start of the nesting season.

2.0.1.1 The survey must include the GPS location of light, the type of light source and the intensity and color of the light.

2.0.1.2 The area to be surveyed must be clearly defined, so the survey is repeatable, and must cover all areas owned or controlled by the hotel or resort.

2.0.1.3 A preliminary daytime inspection to determine the exact locations of light sources must be carried out.

2.0.1.4 **Recommended**

The night-time inspection should be carried out on a moonless night.

2.0.1.5 A written report must be produced following the night-time inspection that includes locations of direct and indirect light sources visible from the beach, as well as photographs and sketches of the area.

Note: A bulb or glow from a light is a direct light source; an illuminated building or landscaping is an indirect light source.

2.0.2 **Recommended**

A follow up night-time inspection should be carried out two weeks after the initial inspection to identify any lights that may have previously been missed.

2.0.3 **Recommended**

Supplementary inspections during peak nesting and hatching periods should also be carried out each year.

- 2.0.4 Each enterprise must implement a rolling five-year plan that demonstrates continuous improvement of lighting to meet Sea Turtle Friendly™ requirements.
- 2.0.4.1 The lighting improvement plan must be reviewed and updated each year.
- 2.0.4.2 The lighting improvement plan must take into account the result and recommendations of the light survey.
- 2.0.4.3 If applicable, the lighting improvement plan must detail seasonal changes to lighting – for example time restrictions on lights visible from the beach during nesting and hatching seasons.
- 2.0.4.4. If certain lights are unavoidable, the lighting improvement plan must detail steps taken to ensure that these lights are in compliance with the Sea Turtle Friendly™ program. For example, additional care must be taken to locate and rescue confused hatchlings that may emerge in the vicinity of certain security lights.
- 2.0.5 After changes are made following recommendations from light surveys, a further night-time inspection must take place to verify the effectiveness of the changes.
- 2.0.6 **Recommended**
During nesting and hatching season no lights should be visible from the nesting beach.
- Note: Standard 2.0.6 requires [a] dark area[s] but accepts that there may be illumination on other areas of the nesting beach. This recommended standard goes a step further to recommend stopping the use of all light visible from the nesting beaches.*
- 2.0.7 There must be a program to replace any metal halide and/or high pressure sodium vapor lights that are visible from the beach within two years of certification.
- 2.0.8 There must be a program to replace any green or cool-toned light filters within two years of certification.
- Note: Although standard 2.0.4 sets a five-year program for improvements to lighting; the types of lighting described in standards 2.0.8 and 2.0.9 are so problematic for turtles they must be replaced within the first two years of certification.*
- 2.0.9 **C** When new or replacement lights are installed either low pressure sodium lights, or true wavelength amber/red LED lights must be used.
- Note: Sea turtles are less sensitive to certain types (and colors) of lights. Low pressure sodium lights or the true wavelength amber/red LED lights (not simply an amber/red filter) listed above are the best choices if light is necessary.*
- 2.0.10 Lights that exist for decorative or aesthetic purposes, that are not necessary for security, or when there is already sufficient light to meet safety and security needs must be removed or addressed following the guidelines provided in Standard 2.0.11.

Note: See <https://myfwc.com/media/18510/updated-2018-fwc-sea-turtle-lighting-guidelinesdoc.pdf> for further information.

2.0.11 Where lights are necessary for safety or security reasons, they must cause as little light pollution that could affect turtles as possible. At least two of the following options must be met:

2.0.11.1 Lights are mounted as low as possible.

Note: The most visible lights are those mounted high on buildings or poles.

2.0.11.2 Lights are directional.

Note: Fixtures can be added to lights to direct the light downwards and away from areas visible from the beach.

2.0.11.3 Lights are shielded.

Note: Metal screens, vegetation (such as ornamental hedges) or using basket shades, recessed lighting or wall sconces can all help to shield light. If vegetation is used, native plant species suitable for the site should be chosen.

2.0.11.4 Motion sensitive lights are used.

Note: Using lights with motion detectors reduces their detrimental effect on sea turtles because of the relatively brief duration of their illumination.

2.0.12 Light from windows must be minimized.

Note: Black out drapes, heavy opaque curtains, shade screens and/or using tinted/shaded film on windows are all options to achieve this.

2.0.13 If reduction of light from windows when interior lights are on involves the guests closing curtains, shades or drapes, they must be reminded to do this (for example using stickers on light switches or informational door hangers) with explanations as to why such action is necessary.

2.0.14 If the hotel has a turn down service, this must include closing the curtains, shades or drapes of beach facing windows.

2.0.15 During sea turtle nesting and hatching season fires must not be lit by the certified enterprise or their guests on the beach nor at any location where they are clearly visible from the beach or nearshore waters

Note: Fires can distract nesting turtles, attract hatchlings, and damage / threaten kill nearby nests.

2.0.16 **Recommended**

Lights should not up-light vegetation or buildings.

- 2.0.17 Lights must not illuminate the water including in locations where there is no beach present.

Note: Illuminated water can disorient hatchlings and prevent them from leaving the nearshore for the open ocean. It may also increase predation significantly as they attract fish and the increased visibility improves their hunting efficiency.

2.0.18 **Recommended**

Parking lots and roadways (including any paved or unpaved areas where vehicles will operate) should be positioned or screened from the beach so that headlights from approaching vehicles do not cast light onto the beach at night.

2.0.19 **Recommended**

The enterprise should talk to their neighbors about making changes if neighboring light sources are identified as problematic.

3 Encounters with Sea Turtles

Certified enterprises may offer a variety of opportunities for guests to encounter sea turtles, such as beach walks or diving excursions. Certified enterprises may also offer activities – for example kayaking or snorkeling – where sea turtle encounters are not the primary aim of the activity, but such encounters may occur. These activities may occur on areas managed by certified enterprises, or led by certified enterprises in Marine Protected Areas or nearby beaches or waters. In either case, guests must be made aware, as per the standards below, of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.

3.0 Sea Turtle Watches and Encounters - Overall

This section 3.0 applies to all sea turtle watches and encounters whether these take place on land or sea. Further sections below have specific requirements for different types of encounter.

- 3.0.1 If *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises offer sea turtle programs/activities to their guests/customers, they must be informative and low impact.

- 3.0.2 **C** Guests/customers must not be permitted to touch eggs, nor to touch, chase, catch or ride hatchlings or adult turtles.

Note: The only exception to the standard above is if guests/customers are participating in a licensed volunteer program, endorsed by WFEN-approved sea turtle conservation organization or entity.

- 3.0.3 Guests/customers must be provided with information on the various species of sea turtles, their life stages, what foods they eat, threats affecting their survival, and other relevant information.

Note: The partner sea turtle conservation organization identified at Standard 1.0.1 will be able to provide this information if it is not already known by the enterprise.

- 3.0.4 Information sheets describing the certified enterprise's turtle friendly policies must be available to guests/customers either on paper or online.

- 3.0.5 If turtle walks to view nesting adults or emerging hatchlings, or organized trips to swim or dive with sea turtles are offered, participating guests must be accompanied by trained local experts or guides during the entire activity.

Note: Local experts could include people from partner sea turtle conservation organization identified at Standard 1.0.1, or other conservation group or government wildlife officers. Other people (for example hotel staff, or those running independent turtle walks) may be acceptable for this standard. At minimum, those guiding guests must have read or had explained to them the requirements of these standards, and understand why they must be met.

- 3.0.6 **C** Local experts or guides must be monitored by the certified enterprise's Sea Turtle Steward and any information packages checked to ensure they are suitably trained, the information they provide to guests is accurate, and their practices meet the standards outlined here.

- 3.0.7 The ratio of guests/customers to guides must be appropriate in relation to the type of activity involved and the local context and be agreed with the partner sea turtle conservation organization identified at Standard 1.0.1.

- 3.0.8 Guides must ensure that they have control of their group, and are able to keep everyone together behind them.

- 3.0.9 An attending adult must take responsibility for any minor under the age of 18.

- 3.0.10 Dogs and other pets must not be brought to sea turtle watches and encounters.

- 3.0.11 Alcohol, firearms or other weapons (including machetes) must not be brought on tours by any participant.

3.0.12 **Recommended**

Plastic bottles and bags should not be brought on, or distributed during, sea turtle encounters.

Note: Plastic waste is a major threat to turtles and other wildlife. See Section 8.1 for more information.

- 3.0.13 All trash – including food waste – must be secured and properly disposed of at the end of the encounter.

- 3.0.14 Guests/customers must be advised not to use insect repellents containing DEET prior to or during on land or in water sea turtle encounter.

- 3.0.15 Guests/customers must be advised not to use sunscreens containing oxybenzone and octinoxate prior to or during any in-water sea turtle encounter.

Note: see also Section 8.3.

3.0.16 **Recommended**

Guests should be instructed to apply any spray sunscreens directly into their hands and then apply to their body to reduce environmental contamination.

3.1 Sea Turtle Watches and Encounters on Land

3.1.1 Guests must be discouraged from going onto the beach at night on their own during the nesting and hatching season and instead, if they wish to view sea turtles, they must be encouraged to sign up for organized tours or encounters.

3.1.2 **Recommended**

Guests should be encouraged to wear dark clothing to minimize any disturbance of turtles.

3.1.3 Before the sea turtle watch or encounter begins, the guide must familiarize the guests on the entire nesting process, and clearly explain the rules for guests.

Note: Familiarization with the nesting process includes the nesting female emerging from the water, crawling up the beach to select a suitable site to dig her egg chamber, digging body pit and egg pit; oviposition; covering the egg pit and body pit, and crawling back to the sea. This can be covered by a briefing prior to the watch or encounter. Video or photos can be a useful tool for this briefing.

3.1.4 Guides must keep guests in an organized formation behind them to ensure their group does not surprise or frighten a female emerging from the sea or hatchlings heading to the sea.

3.1.5 **Recommended**

Groups should be kept off the beach until another guide or turtle spotter indicates that there is an opportunity to view egg laying or hatchling emergence.

Note: This technique minimizes the number of people on the beach who may (inadvertently) stop a female nesting or get in the way of emerging hatchlings as well as reducing sand compaction through reduced footfall. However, there is a risk that guests/tourists will get bored during the wait and this must be managed – for example opportunities for Q&A on turtle life cycle and turtle conservation work – to ensure the overall experience for guests is still good. This is a good opportunity to show a video, or to sell food or handicrafts.

3.1.6 Guests must not be allowed to block the movement of hatchlings or adult turtles.

3.1.7 Cell phones must be switched to silent and remain in pockets during turtle encounters.

3.1.8 Flash photography must not be used. Cell phones may be used to take non-flash pictures only when the guide indicates that it is appropriate to do so.

3.1.9 Flashlights must use true wavelength red LED bulbs.

3.1.10 Flashlights must not be shone so that they illuminate the head of the turtle.

3.1.11 **Recommended**

Only one flashlight per group, held by the guide, should be used once the group has reached a turtle.

3.1.12 Noise must be kept to a minimum – guests/customers must be instructed to speak quietly.

3.1.13 Movement around the turtles and hatchlings must be minimized – guests/customers must be instructed to move slowly.

3.2 Sea Turtle Watches and Encounters on Land – Nesting Females

3.2.1 **C** Guides must not allow guests/customers to approach a turtle until she has started laying eggs and is less likely to be disturbed by the presence of people.

3.2.2 Guests/customers must be kept at least 1.5 meters (5 feet) away from the turtle

- When the turtle starts to dig the nest guests/customers must be kept behind the front flippers of a nesting turtle and away from her head.
- Once a turtle has begun camouflaging the nest, guests/customers must be instructed to keep further back.

Note: The only exception to the standard above is if guests/customers are participating in a licensed volunteer program, endorsed by a WFEN-approved sea turtle conservation organization or entity

3.3 Sea Turtle Watches and Encounters on Land – Hatchlings

Hatchlings are often viewed as especially “touchable” and guests will need to be managed closely to avoid this happening. See Standard 3.0.2.

3.3.1 **C** Nests must not be excavated for the purpose of allowing tourists to see hatchlings: Hatchlings must be allowed to emerge naturally.

3.3.2 **C** Hatchlings must be allowed to crawl to the sea without being disturbed.

3.3.3 Guests must be organized so they stand behind the nest and away from the hatchlings’ path to the sea.

Note: This should minimize the chance of anyone inadvertently stepping on a hatchling.

3.3.4 Once hatchlings enter the sea, guests must stay back from the water and must not assist or “right” any hatchlings that are washed back onto shore.

3.3.5 If lighting outside the control of the certified enterprise is misdirecting hatchlings action must be taken to mitigate this.

3.3.5.1 If effective, guests should be positioned so as to shield the hatchlings from the light so they can orientate themselves to find the sea.

3.3.5.2 If the actions in 3.3.5.1 will not be effective, the certified enterprise must contact their partner local sea turtle conservation organization to arrange transport of hatchlings to a nearby dark beach for release.

Note: Lighting within the control of the enterprise must meet the standards in section 2.0 and should therefore not be misdirecting hatchlings.

3.4 Sea Turtle Watches and Encounters at Sea

- 3.4.1 **C** Turtles (and other wildlife species) must not be provisioned or otherwise offered food.

Note: Feeding wildlife can condition them to human food and have lasting negative impacts including habituation and poor nutrition. This is a critical requirement and any enterprises that are observed to be provisioning wildlife, either through audits, in social media posts by visitors, or by any other means, will not be able to participate in the program.

- 3.4.2 Any trash, fishing line, or other debris found floating in the water must be removed and properly disposed of.
- 3.4.3 Vessel speeds may not exceed 5 knots within 500m of a turtle foraging area, or if a turtle is sighted from the vessel.
- 3.4.4 Damage to coral must be avoided. Collecting pieces of coral, bumping into it with boats or standing on it are all prohibited.

3.5 Sea Turtle Watches and Encounters at Sea – Requirements for Boats, Personal Water Crafts (PWCs) and Non-Motorized Craft.

Marine vessels operating in coastal waters can kill or seriously injure sea turtles. Turtles can be struck by the hull and/or suffer propeller wounds, as evidenced by body lacerations and shell damage. These injuries can affect vision, movement and buoyancy, and may increase the chance that the turtle, now debilitated, will be struck again or attacked by a predator. Sea turtles can also become stressed, and their behaviors can change, if followed too closely or approached.

Boats referred to in this section include those taking guests to points where they can swim, snorkel or scuba dive, speed boats used to take guests on inflatable rides such as tubes and banana boats. or those taking people on boat trips to fish or simply to look at the scenery and the wildlife.

PWC refers to Personal Water Craft – otherwise known as Jet Skis, Sea-Doos, jet boards and other motorized craft.

Non-motorized craft refers to kayaks, paddle boards, rowing boats and other similar craft.

3.5.1 Recommended

For enterprises that utilize or manage a marine area, a vessel free zone (for both motored and non-motorized craft) should be demarcated as part of the conservation plan for the enterprise.

Note: There may be existing, marked channels through shallow water to allow boats to be launched and landed and the use of these is acceptable.

- 3.5.2 **Recommended**
Motorized craft should use four stroke rather than two stroke engines in areas where sea turtles forage.
- 3.5.3 In shallow areas where sea grass is growing, boats must lift their motors and drift, or pole the boat to avoid damaging the plants.
- 3.5.4 Any fishing activities coordinated by the certified enterprise, or that take place in areas managed by the enterprise, must be managed to avoid any adverse effect on turtles.
- 3.5.4.1 Fishing activities must abide by all relevant local and national regulations;
- 3.5.4.2 Spear fishing or pot fishing must be the only techniques used;
- 3.5.4.3 Any unwanted or broken fishing gear must be collected and disposed of safely.
- 3.5.5 Signs must be posted explaining the restrictions on the use of boats, PWCs and non-motorized craft and the reasons for these.
- 3.5.6 Guests must sign a form to say they understand the risks that PWCs can cause to turtles and that they will meet the restrictions on PWC use outlined in this section before they are permitted to use them.
- Note: This undertaking could be part of a guest waiver signed at check-in or a specific additional form if guests decide to use PWC.*
- 3.5.7 Boats, PWCs and/or non-motorized craft must respect closed areas designated as “turtle refuges” or closed marine reserves where all water traffic is prohibited.
- 3.5.8 **Recommended**
Propeller guards should be used.
- 3.5.9 Boat engines must be switched off once the boat is secured.
- 3.5.10 If anchors are used, they must be laid away from coral reefs and seagrass beds.
- 3.5.11 Mooring buoys must be used in preference to laying anchor when these are available.

3.6 Sea Turtle Watches and Encounters at Sea – Viewing Turtles from Boats, PWCs and Non-Motorized Craft.

Definitions of boats, PWCs and unpowered craft as shown in section 3.5 above. This section applies for planned excursions to see sea turtles as well as chance encounters with turtles at sea.

- 3.6.1 Turtles must be viewed from a distance of at least 10 meters (32 feet) at all times while the vessel is underway.

Note: The only time this distance may be less is when a turtle chooses to approach the boat.

- 3.6.2 **C** Turtles must never be circled, chased or harassed by boats, PWCs and/or non-motorized craft in any way.

Note: This can lead to stress and injury for the turtles.

- 3.6.3 No more than two boats, PWCs and/or non-motorized craft must be close to a single turtle at any one time.

Note: this may be difficult to manage if multiple tourism enterprises are operating in the same area. If there is frequent vessel crowding in an area where sea turtles are present, the certified enterprise must work with the relevant local organizations and agencies to address acceptable limits of use.

- 3.6.4 Boats, PWCs and/or non-motorized craft waiting to observe a turtle must maintain a distance of at least 45 meters (150 feet).
- 3.6.5 Turtles must always have a clear route to leave the area if they choose. Boats, PWCs and/or non-motorized vessels must not approach the turtle from the front, blocking its direction of swimming.
- 3.6.6 Boat operators must comply with local regulations for the safe number of passengers for the size of boat and provision of life jackets.

3.7 Sea Turtle Watches and Encounters at Sea – In-Water Activities (Swimming, Snorkeling, Scuba Diving)

Guests/customers should not be permitted to interact with sea turtles in the water as this runs the risk of disturbing or causing them harm. However, it is understood that this is a big draw for potential guests/customers and may be an integral part of the holiday package offered by hotels and resorts. It is also recognized that in areas where foraging turtles are common that guests/customer may encounter turtles when on their own and/or when on tours offered by external non-Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ companies. This section of the standards covers swimming, snorkeling and scuba diving.

- 3.7.1 Guests must sign a form to say they will meet the standards on appropriate behavior when a sea turtle is encountered before they are permitted to swim, snorkel or scuba dive.

Note: This undertaking could be part of a guest waiver signed at check-in or a specific additional form if guests decide to go swimming or snorkeling. Guest must be reminded of the key relevant standards, particularly that no attempt must be made to touch turtles (see Standard 3.0.2). This standard applies when the intent is to swim/dive with turtles and also when any encounter will be accidental.

- 3.7.2 Snorkeling and diving vessels operated by the certified enterprise must fly the universally-recognized dive flag to notify nearby vessels that there are people in the water.

3.7.3 Group leaders for organized in-water activities must be easily recognized.

Note: This could be by wearing colored bandanas or t-shirts.

3.7.4 For vessels with over 20 passengers, certified enterprises must implement strategies to limit the number of people in the water at one time; for example by providing educational activities for half the group while the other half is in the water, and switching after a designated period of time.

3.7.5 Swimmers, snorkelers and scuba divers must minimize noise and splash when entering the water.

Note: For example "giant stride" entry for scuba divers should be avoided.

3.7.6 Enterprises must carry out random checks on guests that are carrying out unsupervised swimming, snorkeling or scuba diving in all areas utilized by sea turtles to ensure they are abiding by these standards.

Note: The frequency of checks depends on the numbers of guests swimming, snorkeling or diving. Enterprises should let guests know that they are being observed to ensure these guidelines are followed, and that anyone not abiding by these standards will be asked to leave the water.

3.7.7 Guests must follow the instructions of swimming guides, dive masters or other supervisors of water activities involving turtles.

3.7.8 Diver propulsion vehicles (DPVs) are prohibited.

3.7.6 If guests encounter turtles when swimming, snorkeling or scuba diving they must maintain a minimum distance of at least two human body lengths.

3.7.9 Swimmers, snorkelers or scuba divers must not swim on top or position themselves above turtles especially when the turtle is swimming to the surface to breathe.

3.7.10 If there is more than one person in the water they must all approach the turtle from one side to avoid enclosing it. There must be one direction that the turtle can use to leave the area without being trapped between swimmers, snorkelers, scuba divers, vessels, or other obstacles.

Note: if it is surrounded by swimmers, snorkelers or scuba divers, the turtle may be prevented from going to the surface to breathe. Ideally the turtle should be approached from the shallow side so it can escape to deep water if it chooses.

3.7.11 Flash photography of turtles in the water is prohibited.

Note: Guests should be discouraged from carrying heavy and cumbersome camera equipment unless they have sufficient mastery of buoyancy and other basic skills in the water.

- 3.7.12 If night swimming, snorkeling or scuba diving takes place, flashlights must never be pointed directly at turtles.
- 3.7.13 Swimmers, snorkelers or scuba divers must not enter areas that are designated as vessel-free and recreation-free zones.
- 3.7.14 Inappropriate behavior of other guests must be reported to the swimming or snorkeling guide, dive master, park ranger or other supervisor, or if none of these are available, the resort.

Note: This could include guests that are getting too close to turtles, reaching out and touching turtles, feeding turtles or otherwise not meeting the standards in this section.

4. Response to Disoriented Sea Turtles

4.0 Inspection of Sea Turtles and Nests

- 4.0.1 During the sea turtle nesting and hatching seasons the grounds of the property must be inspected in the early morning to rescue any adults or hatchlings that may have crawled inland and got stuck under trees, chairs or similar obstacles.
- 4.0.2 **Recommended**
During the sea turtle nesting and hatching seasons, the grounds of the property should additionally be inspected during the night to rescue any adults or hatchlings that may have crawled inland – but care must be taken to avoid disturbing nesting turtles.
- 4.0.3 Any incidents of injury, entanglement or disorientation must be immediately reported to the appropriate management agency or the partner sea turtle conservation organization identified at Standard 1.0.1.

Note: As per standard 1.2.5 it is expected that initial reports of any injured or distressed sea turtles will be made to the Sea Turtle Steward, who would then inform the appropriate agency.

- 4.0.4 **C** Relocation of eggs must only be carried out where eggs would otherwise be lost – for example from illegal collection, uncontrollable predation, erosion or high tides. Relocation must not be carried out where the main aim is to create a tourist attraction.
- 4.0.5 If nest excavation and/or relocation is deemed necessary, it must only be carried out by a WFEN-approved sea turtle conservation organization or entity, and in accordance with internationally-recognized best practices.

4.1 Response When Turtles are Found - General

- 4.1.1 Suitable names and contact numbers for WFEN-approved sea turtle groups, the certified enterprise's Sea Turtle Steward and/or relevant government agencies or veterinarians working with sea turtles must be easily available.

- 4.1.2 If injured turtles are found and there are no experienced veterinarians or first responders with competency in management of injured turtles available, an appropriate agency (as per Standard 4.1.1) must be contacted.
- 4.1.3 If disorientated turtles are found, their health and probable cause of disorientation must be assessed by a qualified representative of the WFEN-approved sea turtle conservation group, government official, or other expert as recommended by the local WFEN-approved sea turtle group.
- 4.1.4 If a veterinarian or rehabilitation center recommends that the turtle is held for rehabilitation, the certified enterprise must not use it as a tourist attraction and tourists must be kept away from the area where it is held.
- 4.1.5 If a turtle is held under the Standard 4.1.4, it must be kept in accordance with best practices agreed with the WFEN-approved local sea turtle conservation organization identified at Standard 1.0.1 as regards cover to reduce direct exposure to sunlight, containers, medium within containers and other factors.
- 4.1.6 If a veterinarian or rehabilitation center recommends that the turtle is released, this must be carried out according to their instructions without delay.
- 4.1.7 If a veterinarian or rehabilitation center cannot be reached, the turtle must be released back into the water.
- 4.1.8 If the turtle is to be released key information must be noted to include, but not limited to:
- Species
 - Curved carapace length and width (CCL and CCW)
 - Tag number (if available)
 - Presence and details of injury if present
 - Date/Time/Location
 - Short description of the event and circumstances
- 4.1.9 When releasing a sea turtle any lights, including flashlights, paraffin lights and flash cameras, must be turned off to help the turtle regain its bearings.
- 4.1.10 If turtles are released on land someone must be positioned landward of the turtle to avoid it moving away from the sea.
- 4.1.11 If turtles are released on land any obstacles must be cleared from the turtle's path back to the sea.
- Note: If sargassum weed is present on the beach, turtles may need to be moved offshore to currents away from sargassum accumulations to ensure that it does not impede the turtle's return to the sea.*
- 4.1.12 If the turtle is a nesting female or hatchling, it must be allowed to crawl back to the sea unassisted.

Note: If sargassum weed is present on the beach, turtles may need to be moved offshore to currents away from sargassum accumulations to ensure that it does not impede the turtle's return to the sea.

- 4.1.13 The progress of the turtle must be monitored until they re-enter the sea if released on land or until they start swimming if released in the water.

4.2 Response When Turtles Are Found – Release of Hatchlings

- 4.2.1 Hatchling release must only be done in conjunction with, and the agreement of, the partner sea turtle conservation organization identified at Standard 1.0.1.
- 4.2.2 Hatchling release must take place at dusk or under cover of darkness. It must never be based on the best time for tourist opportunities, nor be in the middle of the day.

Note: It is understood that each enterprise will be aware of the challenges facing hatchlings on their site and can best adjust release times to avoid these.

- 4.2.3 Hatchlings must be allowed to crawl to the sea unassisted and must not be placed directly in the surf.
- 4.2.4 Anyone handling hatchling must not wear DEET or sunscreen, or must wash hands prior to handling.
- 4.2.5 **C** Hatchlings that are rescued during the daytime when the sun and sand are hot must be placed in a shaded bucket or cooler with damp beach sand and no water.

Note: Hatchlings must not be kept in water prior to release as they will swim constantly and use up the energy reserves that they need to reach the sea once they are released.

- 4.2.6 Hatchlings must not be washed off prior to release.
- 4.2.7 The container used to temporarily house hatchlings must not have contained any hazardous materials such as pesticides, petroleum, paint, raw meat or similar.
- 4.2.8 The container holding the hatchlings must be kept in a shaded area at room temperature. Hatchlings must never be kept in an air-conditioned room.

Note: Sea turtles cannot regulate their body temperature and may die if they are cold or overheated for a prolonged period.

- 4.2.9 If held for a prolonged period hatchlings may become still and go to sleep. Hatchlings must only be released when they are awake, alert and moving.
- 4.2.10 Hatchlings must not be released near piers or lighted offshore structures.
- 4.2.11 **C** Live hatchlings must never be kept for guest entertainment, kept captive for display or sold/gifted as pets or for display.

5. Beach Management

5.0 Beach Furniture

5.0.1 **Recommended**

Beach furniture, recreational equipment and other large objects should be placed away from turtle nesting zones or removed from the beach before nightfall.

- 5.0.2 If beach furniture, recreational equipment and other large objects in or close to sea turtle nesting zones, cannot be completely removed from the beach they must be stacked at the end of the day during the nesting/hatching season with the shortest side facing the water.

Note: Furniture left on the beach can trap nesting females. Furniture can also deter females from reaching nesting areas above the high water line and/or confuse hatchlings attempting to find the sea.

- 5.0.3 Beach furniture, recreational equipment and other large objects must be removed manually whenever possible.

Note: The use of vehicles to remove these objects can compact sand and crush incubating eggs.

- 5.0.4 Beach umbrellas must either be attached to other furniture or placed in permanent holders. Umbrellas must never be thrust directly into the sand.

5.1 Access to Beaches

5.1.1 **Recommended**

Pedestrian access to beaches should be confined to specific locations and strictly regulated to minimize destruction of the beach or beach forest by trampling which if unchecked will limit the area of the natural beach accessible to nesting sea turtles.

5.2 Nest Location on the Beach

- 5.2.1 An experienced staff member must monitor the beach each morning during the nesting season to note the position of new nests and block those areas off before beach furniture and other items are replaced on the beach and before guests are active.

- 5.2.2 Nesting locations and activity must be reported to the appropriate sea turtle conservation partner identified in Standard 1.0.1.

- 5.2.3 If poaching is **not** a threat, nest locations must be physically marked and signed to ensure beachgoers keep chairs and umbrellas at least 2 meters (6 feet.) away from the nests.

Note: This will help prevent the accidental puncture of eggs or compaction/crushing of the nest.

- 5.2.4 If poaching **is** a threat, nest locations must not be physically marked, unless they are monitored 24 hours a day until the nest hatches.
- 5.2.5 If poaching **is** a threat, nesting crawl marks must be erased with palm frond or rake before the beach starts to be used each day.

5.3 Litter and Debris on the Beach

Litter and debris along the coast, including on sea turtle nesting beaches, soon makes its way to the sea where turtles and other marine creatures may consume it and be injured or killed as a result. Litter and debris can also be a barrier to nesting, as well as a barrier to hatchlings making their way to the ocean. Since both sea turtles and the tourism industry – not to mention the marine ecosystem – benefit from clean sandy beaches, it is important to remove (and dispose of) litter and debris in an environmentally sound way.

- 5.3.1 Beaches must be regularly cleaned and litter and debris collected and removed.
- 5.3.2 Wildlife proof trash/litter bins must be provided and placed for convenient disposal of garbage.
- 5.3.3 Trash/litter bins must be emptied regularly.

Note: If trash receptacles are not emptied regularly they will look unsightly and also form an attractant to predators that could then take sea turtle eggs or hatchlings.

5.3.4 Recommended

Support should be given to community or conservation group efforts to carry out beach clean-ups.

Note: Support could be through offering free prizes or food for those that participate or through sponsorship of transportation or equipment such as garbage bags for volunteers.

- 5.3.5 Enterprises must remind guests to place trash in bins or take it with them when leaving the beach or resort.

Note: Signs should be posted on the beach to remind visitors of the impact of waste on sea turtles and other marine species. It is understood that handling of recycling can be a challenge on some resorts, particularly island resorts, and the solution may be to provide guests with the means to take their recycling with them when they leave if they are likely to pass through locations with recycling facilities.

5.3.6 Recommended

Staff should be hired to collect and dispose of trash/litter left by visitors.

- 5.3.7 Guests must be reminded to refill any holes that they or their children dig in the sand as these can become obstacles for both nesting adults and hatchlings.

5.4 Sargassum

Pelagic sargassum is a brown alga, or seaweed that floats free in the ocean and never attaches to the ocean floor. Since 2011 there have been massive strandings of sargassum on many coastlines across the Caribbean. In the ocean sargassum offers a habitat that provides shelter and food for sea turtles, but large amounts of sargassum on beaches can entangle sea turtles. Sargassum accumulations entangle sea turtles, obstruct free passage, and produces a foul odour. See www.gcfi.org/sargassum-influx for further information. Some of the standards in this section are drawn from *Doyle, E. and Franks, J. 2015. Sargassum Fact Sheet. Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute* which can be found at the link above.

5.4.1 Sargassum must not be collected from the sea.

Note: Collection of pelagic sargassum from the sea threatens the marine organisms living within the sargassum ecosystem.

5.4.2 During the sea turtle nesting season, beach cleaning (as needed) must be carried out by non-mechanized raking and litter removal.

Note: Any enterprise which feels it will have difficulty complying with this requirement due to the volume of sargassum on their beaches should contact WFEN.

5.4.3 Beach cleaners must be trained to recognize and report any evidence of sea turtle crawling, nesting, egg poaching, or hatching before the evidence is disturbed by raking.

5.5 Vehicle Use on the Beach

In some areas, beach driving has become a popular activity. However, driving on beaches can seriously degrade the coastal environment by damaging beach vegetation, compacting sand, crushing incubating eggs, creating deep ruts and tire tracks that can trap hatchlings trying to reach the sea and accelerating erosion (potentially resulting in the loss of nests to the sea). Vehicles can also strike and kill hatchlings crawling to the sea, or frighten females away from nesting. Hatchlings huddled just below the surface of the sand (waiting to emerge later in the evening, when the sun sets and the beach surface cools) are particularly vulnerable to being crushed by passing vehicles.

5.5.1 Motorized vehicles, other than authorized patrol or emergency vehicles, must not drive on sandy beaches except at authorized boat haul-out sites.

5.5.2 The certified enterprise must contact authorized beach patrol or emergency vehicles that must have access to the beach, to request that they drive below the high-tide line so they will have less of an impact on critical sea turtle habitat.

5.6 Beach Vegetation

The Hawksbill sea turtle often selects a nest site within the shelter of woody vegetation. The loss of vegetation can mean that a female must crawl further onshore in search of suitably vegetated areas. Other species prefer to nest on the open beach platform in front of vegetated areas, using the dark vegetation backdrop as an important ambient cue. After egg laying is complete, vegetation can be important in safeguarding sea turtle nests by helping

to maintain the natural beach structure, reducing compaction of sand grains, moderating diurnal temperature changes, and reducing erosion. Native vegetation is critical in ensuring protection of natural beach topography which safeguards beaches and eliminates the need for artificial stabilization or replenishment, which can be quite costly. Healthy native plant communities in coastal areas also help to minimize the on-shore impacts of storm events.

Mangroves are included in this section on beach vegetation. These plants are critically important as fish nurseries and in protecting the land during storms. They also provide a climate friendly role by sequestration of carbon. Many species including hawksbill turtles have been found living in and around mangroves.

- 5.6.1 Existing native vegetation, especially any woody vegetation such as mangroves, must not be removed.

Note: Vegetation helps to stabilize the beach zone. It must not be removed purely to meet a vision of "beautification." Some sea turtles prefer to nest in the vegetation, and others tend to nest in front of the vegetation – the farther the vegetation is cleared from the water, the further an egg-bearing female has to crawl to reach a favorable nesting site. Removal of vegetation can also increase sand temperature which can influence the sex ratio of hatchlings. Generally, eggs incubated in warmer sand produce more females, and those in cooler sand produce more males.

- 5.6.2 Efforts must be made to restore native vegetation and natural habitat.

Note: Planting beach gardens, even when native species are used, does not replace the requirement to protect existing beachfront/maritime forest.

- 5.6.3 Measures must be taken to avoid the introduction of invasive alien species. ^{GSTC}

- 5.6.4 Native species must be used for landscaping and restoration wherever feasible, particularly in natural landscapes. ^{GSTC}

Note: It is strongly encouraged that mangroves are planted in areas where they have been removed in the past, and where they would be well-suited to help provide coastal resilience.

- 5.6.5 Non-native plants must not be planted **on** or **near** beaches where sea turtles are likely to nest.

- 5.6.6 **Recommended**

When planting **away** from beaches the use of non-native vegetation for landscaping should be avoided and native vegetation should be prioritized.

- 5.6.7 Dense ornamental grasses or vines that may prevent sea turtles from successfully digging a nest must not be planted, or allowed to extend to the beach boundary.

- 5.6.8 The choice of plants for landscaping must take into account light pollution and nesting habitat.

Note: For example newly planted trees, taller plants and flowering shrubs can help block light pollution and may also provide nesting sites.

- 5.6.9 The certified enterprise must cordon off sensitive native plant habitat in fragile coastal areas and limit access to authorized personnel only.

Note: Raised walkways or other designated pathways can help to guide beachgoers while keeping them off sensitive areas.

5.6.10 **Recommended**

Signs should be posted to communicate to guests and visitors the importance of coastal planting and habitats and the need to keep to designated paths.

5.7 Seagrass and Coral Reefs

Much has been documented regarding the importance of **coral reefs** in dissipating wave energy, stabilizing the shore, and safeguarding life and property in the face of storm events that in recent years, have become stronger and more frequent. **Marine vegetation** also reduce erosion pressure. Plants create drag in the water current, which slows the current and deposits suspended particles in the seagrass bed – the result of this process is that seagrass promotes sediment-building that acts to protect the shoreline.

Marine vegetation is also critical to the survival of sea turtles. Moreover, seagrass communities are intricately tied to coral reef systems. Sea turtles often feed on organisms that live within, or depend upon, both seagrass and coral reefs. Sea turtles also use the reef for sleeping and shelter.

- 5.7.1 **C** Seagrass meadows and coral reefs in nearshore waters must not be damaged or removed.

Note: Dredging, chains, anchors, propellers, even swimmers can cause damage by uprooting seagrass, scarring the seabed, reducing water quality and destabilizing sediments which, in turn, inhibits seagrass growth, reduces fish and wildlife habitat, and can threaten entire coastlines. See also sections 8.4 Wastewater and 8.7: Harmful Substances and Chemicals for further standards on water management and reduction of use of pesticides and fertilizers that could affect sea grass growth.

5.8 Environmental Pollution Management

- 5.8.1 There must be an emergency plan to cover possible pollution risks by hotels, lodges, and vessels associated with the certified enterprise. The plan must include:

5.8.1.1 Who must be contacted in the case of a pollution incident and their relevant contact details.

5.8.1.2 What are the priority tasks in case of an incident and who are the individuals, offices or department responsible for each task.

5.8.1.3 Who does what in the case of a pollution incident.

5.8.1.4 Procedure for the protection or evacuation of guests if necessary.

5.8.1.5 Procedure of public warning and information.

Note: The emergency plan should cover a clearly identified procedure, in the case of an emergency. An emergency could result from oil spills, hazardous/toxic waste spills entering the beach from the sea, discharge of storm water, hurricanes, algal blooms that could be dangerous, etc. An emergency in this context would be defined as an event that leads to a large-scale impact on the beach.

- 5.8.2 An up-to-date inventory of all hazardous chemicals used and/or stored on the property must be kept.
- 5.8.3 Staff involved in the handling and/or storage of hazardous chemicals must be trained in accordance with industry best practices.
- 5.8.4 *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must minimize pollution from noise, light, runoff, erosion, ozone- depleting compounds, and air, water and soil contaminants.
GSTC

6 Information provision

An informed public can be a powerful force in promoting the protection of sea turtles, and in endorsing and seeking to support sustainable choices made by the hospitality sector in general.

Public involvement ranges from influencing legislation and policy to volunteering (monitor and protect nests, report sightings or infractions, etc.) and donating to conservation causes. Raising public awareness of the plight of sea turtles is crucial to sea turtle survival. Perhaps the most important aspect of guest/client education and outreach is that informed guests/clients are likely to be more responsive to and accepting of the various conservation actions taken by the resort, including modified lighting regimes, enforcing “no-wake” zones, moving sunbeds off the beach at night, restricting bonfires and vehicle traffic in nesting zones, etc.

6.0 Information for Guests

- 6.0.1 *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must notify guests of the times of year when sea turtles and hatchlings may be present.
- 6.0.2 Guests must sign a form to show that they have read information provided by the resort describing appropriate and inappropriate behavior around turtles and hatchlings.

Note: Certified enterprises must ensure guests understand that if they get too close and/or harass sea turtles – intentionally or unintentionally – they could frighten a female from nesting, damage an existing nest or otherwise adversely affect turtle survival. This undertaking could be part of a guest waiver signed at check-in, an online quiz prior to arrival, or as part of an innovative educational program.

- 6.0.3 There must be signage to direct foot traffic away from sensitive areas and alert tourists to regulations protecting sea turtles and their nesting grounds.

Note: In areas where poaching is a risk, enterprises should be discreet regarding the locations of nesting beaches.

- 6.0.4 *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must reinforce sea turtle conservation messaging: for example, through a hotel’s in-house TV channel, in guest orientation/welcome packages, materials placed in hotel rooms and during organized tours and walks.
- 6.0.5 Visitor feedback and satisfaction surveys relating to their experience at the *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* hotel or resort must be carried out. ^{GSTC}

Note: See Appendix 3 for an example visitor survey.

6.1 Environmental Programs

The best environmental programs are those developed and coordinated with local partners skilled in conservation, such as WFEN-approved sea turtle conservation organizations or other appropriate expert partners. Environmental program offerings of certified enterprises can focus on biodiversity (e.g., bird walks, botanical displays, coral reef diving), fishery management, marine protected areas, coastal and underwater cleanups, cultural or historical aspects, or “green” community partnerships such as touring an organic farm or fair trade agricultural area that supplies food to the hotel. Hands-on experiences are the most memorable and might include such things as guided scenic tours, Sea Turtle Summer Camps for young guests, Coastal Biodiversity Adventures, special evening presentations or films, Story Hour with local authors or cultural historians, star-gazing with an entertaining storyteller, and interactive expos or craft fairs.

6.1.1 **Recommended**

Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ enterprises should work with their partner sea turtle conservation agency (as identified at Standard 1.0.1) other experts to develop and deliver scheduled activities and/or presentations.

Note: Visit <http://www.widecast.org/educators> for education and outreach materials focused on sea turtles.

6.1.2 **Recommended**

Some activities and/or presentations should be targeted at and/or open to local people as well as guests/customers.

6.1.3 **Recommended**

Signs, social media updates, website pages, or other forms of communication should be displayed to provide updates on the number of nests incubating on the beach.

Note: providing this information online is beneficial in supporting long-term conservation engagement with a broad audience by engaging current, future, and past guests as well as non-guests both locally and overseas.

6.1.4 Signs and other information must be in English, plus local languages if English is not commonly understood locally.

6.1.5 Signs and other information must be reviewed at least annually to ensure the information provided is accurate and up to date.

6.1.6 Signs must be maintained so they are always legible.

- 6.1.7 Leaflets, brochures and other information provided to guests must be attractive and in good condition.

Note: Leaflets and other printed material must be in good condition so guests will want to pick them up and read them. Creased, stained, torn or otherwise damaged material should be replaced.

6.1.8 **Recommended**

The reliance on paper brochures and leaflets should be reduced by providing information via website and other social media. If hardcopy information is required, reusable billboards or poster boards should be used.

6.2 Websites and Advertising

- 6.2.1 Websites and advertising for *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must provide suitable visitor information on *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* tourism and visit expectations.

- 6.2.2 **C** Media, photos, images, and video that include close contact or touching of turtles must not be used in promotional materials.

- 6.2.3 Websites and advertising must clearly state that guests on turtle watching walks or tours may or may not see turtles and if they do see turtles they may not see them clearly. Websites and advertising must not give the impression that viewing sea turtles is 100% guaranteed. If the enterprise involves sea turtles that may be seen at close quarters, websites and advertising must not give that impression that they may be touched or handled.

Note: While there may be some locations where currently, at least seasonally, it can be guaranteed that tourists will see turtles, it may be helpful to shift marketing towards visiting turtle habitat and learning more about turtles rather than suggesting that every guest will definitely see a turtle.

- 6.2.4 Websites and advertising must highlight the regions' other wildlife and natural habitats as well as other tourist opportunities such as bird watching or cultural tours.

6.2.5 **Recommended**

Websites should include guidance on how tourists who participate in activities related to turtles are expected to act.

6.2.6 **Recommended**

Websites should provide information on ongoing national, regional and international actions to conserve marine turtles, helping visitors to see what their contributions can be to the more global efforts at conservation of the species.

- 6.2.7 Information about and interpretation of the natural surroundings, local culture, and cultural heritage must be provided. ^{GSTC}

- 6.2.8 Information must be provided on appropriate behavior while visiting natural areas, living cultures, and cultural heritage sites. ^{GSTC}
- 6.2.9 Websites for *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must show the *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* logo and provide a link to the website and the full *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* standards.
- 6.2.10 The use of the *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* logo must comply with the *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* style guide

7 Working with Local Communities

7.0 Employment and Remuneration

- 7.0.1 All *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must provide local employment opportunities, including management positions. ^{GSTC}
- 7.0.2 All *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must offer equal employment opportunities to women, local minorities and others, including in management positions. ^{GSTC}
- 7.0.3 All *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must have outreach programs for recruitment of women, local minorities and others.
- 7.0.4 There must be no child labor. ^{GSTC}

Note: Child labor, as defined by the International Labor Organization, refers to work that:

- *is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and*
- *interferes with their schooling by:*
 - *depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;*
 - *obliging them to leave school prematurely; or*
 - *requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work*

- 7.0.5 **Recommended**
Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ enterprises should sign and follow the code of conduct at www.thecode.org to ensure there is a policy against commercial, sexual or any other form of exploitation and harassment, particularly of children, adolescents, women and minorities. ^{GSTC}

7.1 Partnership and Equity with Local Communities

- 7.1.1 *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must purchase and offer local services and goods, following fair-trade principles. ^{GSTC}
- 7.1.2 *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must offer opportunities to local small entrepreneurs to develop and sell sustainable products that are based on the area's nature, history and culture. ^{GSTC}

Note: Products could include food and beverages, soaps and spa products, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.

- 7.1.3 *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must promote *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* products when they are available.
- 7.1.4 **Recommended**
There should be a documented and implemented code of conduct for activities in indigenous and local communities that has been developed and implemented with the collaboration and consent of the affected community. ^{GSTC}
- 7.1.5 The activities of the *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must not jeopardize the provision of basic services, such as food, water, energy, healthcare or sanitation, to neighboring communities. ^{GSTC}
- 7.1.6 Tourism activity must not adversely affect local access to livelihoods, including land and water resource use, rights-of-way, transport and housing. ^{GSTC}

8 Sustainability

8.0 Sustainability Protocols

- 8.0.1 **Recommended**
Ways to reduce the purchasing and use of disposable and consumable goods should be investigated. ^{GSTC}
- 8.0.2 **Recommended**
Purchasing policies should favor locally appropriate and ecologically sustainable products, including building materials, capital goods, food, beverages and consumables. ^{GSTC}

Note: Purchasing policies for sustainable food should consider excluding, for example, marine species whose populations are locally or globally vulnerable.

8.1 Plastics

Plastic waste is a threat for sea turtles and other marine life. As well as meeting the standards in this section certified enterprises should endeavor to stop any plastic from ending up as refuse in the ocean.

- 8.1.1 The use of single use plastic bags, cups, straws, toiletry containers, and other disposable items that can be replaced with non-plastic alternatives, must be phased out within 3 years of certification.

Note: This standard excludes disposable water bottles – see Standard 8.2.2. Refillable containers – for example ceramic bottles for shampoo and other toiletries – must be used instead of disposable products. Bended straws made of stainless steel, paper, or when absolutely necessary, plastic, may be kept on hand to provide for disabled individuals upon request.

- 8.1.2 **C** Balloons, sky lanterns, plastic confetti, polystyrene balls (fake snow) and other similar non-degradable items must not be used or released by *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* Enterprises.

Note: Sea turtles have been known to die after eating deflated balloons and other similar items that end up in the sea.

- 8.1.3 Information must be provided for guests on the effects of plastic waste on turtles and reasons for the enterprise's decision not to provide single-use plastics.

Note: An example could be table tents in restaurant/cafes explaining why plastic straws and cups are not provided.

8.2 Drinking Water

- 8.2.1 Bottled water must not be sold or provided by the certified enterprise unless the local water cannot be consumed for health reasons. However, bottled water may be stockpiled as a preparedness measure in case of emergencies.

- 8.2.2 If bottled water must be sold or provided as described in Standard 8.2.1 the bottles must be refillable rather than disposable.

8.2.3 **Recommended**

Water filters, and five gallon filtered water dispensers, should be placed in strategic locations around the enterprise (at resorts, on vessels).

- 8.2.4 Water sourcing, including for bottled drinking water if this must be provided for health reasons, must be sustainable, and must not reduce the available water for neighboring communities .^{GSTC}

- 8.2.5 Water consumption must be measured, the sources of water must be noted, and measures must be adopted to minimize overall consumption.^{GSTC}

8.3 Sunscreen

- 8.3.1 **C** Certified enterprises must not sell or distribute any sunscreens containing oxybenzone, octinoxate, 4-methylbenzylidene camphor, or butylparaben which are detrimental to the health of corals.

- 8.3.2 Guests must be advised to only use sunscreens with a base of non-nanotized zinc oxide or non-nanotized titanium oxide.

Note: Sunscreens with a high concentration of nanoparticles of titanium dioxide can also be harmful to corals.

- 8.3.3 If sunscreen is sold or provided by the certified enterprises or directly associated businesses, the only sunscreens that can be offered are those with non-nanotized zinc oxide or non-nanotized titanium oxide.

8.4 Wastewater

8.4.1 **Recommended**

Wastewater, including gray water should be effectively treated so it can be recycled and reused where possible. ^{GSTC}

8.4.2 **C** Sewage must be properly treated before it is discharged to the sea.

Note: See https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/sanitation-waste/wastewater/en/ for resources on wastewater and sewage.

8.5 Energy

8.5.1 *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must encourage their guests to reduce energy and water usage – for example turning off lights when not in use and not having sheets/towels changed daily.

8.5.2 *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must encourage their guests, staff and suppliers to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions, and must provide information on how guests can reduce their carbon footprint during their stay. ^{GSTC}

Note: Options to achieve this standard could include encouragement of cycling, offering bike rental, running beach shuttles to reduce individual car journeys and so on.

8.5.3 **Recommended**

The certified enterprise is encouraged to source renewable energy for its operations.

8.5.4 **Recommended**

Certified enterprises should offset their emissions through a reputable carbon offset reduction program, such as Certified Wildlife Friendly™ carbon credits see <https://www.wildlifeworks.com>.

8.6 Waste

8.6.1 **Recommended**

Waste should be minimized and measured. ^{GSTC}

8.6.2 **Recommended**

Waste should be re-used or recycled wherever possible. ^{GSTC}

8.6.3 Waste must be properly disposed of in order to minimize adverse effects on local communities, turtles and the environment. ^{GSTC}

8.7 Harmful Substances and Chemicals

- 8.7.1 The use of harmful substances, including pesticides, paints, swimming pool disinfectants, and cleaning materials, must be minimized. ^{GSTC}
- 8.7.2 Harmful substances must be substituted when available, by innocuous products or processes. ^{GSTC}
- 8.7.3 All storage, use, handling, and disposal of chemicals must be properly managed. ^{GSTC}

9 Buildings and Other Infrastructure on/near the Nesting Beach

9.0 Coastal Setbacks

A coastal setback is a buffer zone defined by a specific distance from the shoreline's highest water mark to a coastal feature – such as the line of permanent vegetation - within which all permanent construction is prohibited. Setbacks provide a buffer zone between the ocean and infrastructure and will help to protect both turtle nesting sites and development along the beachfront.

- 9.0.1 An appropriate setback must be defined, taking into account local laws and ordinances on setbacks and easements, as well as the beach and coastal environment and the expected reach of major storms.

Note: Coastal development setback guidelines differ depending on shoreline characteristics and typically range from 10 m to 100 m from the line of permanent vegetation. The shortest setback distances are typically associated with cliffed coasts or low rocky shores, while longer distances are typically associated with less predictable sandy shores.

- 9.0.2 Hard engineering options for beach protection, including impermeable breakwaters, jetties, groynes and seawalls positioned on the beach or in the nearshore zone, must only be considered as a last resort.

Note: If adequate setbacks are defined, expensive and sometimes environmentally damaging engineering options such as those above should be unnecessary.

9.1 New Development – Pre-Construction

Existing Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ enterprises that are carrying out new development, whether construction or new expansion, on their certified sites must follow the standards in this section.

New enterprises that hope to become Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ in the future are recommended to follow the standards in this section when engaged in new development on sites they intend to Certify.

The pre-construction phase is the most important phase for environmental planning and for

establishing a clear commitment to best practices. This is the phase where the placement of roads and buildings and patterns of access are established by design. In addition, it is in the pre-construction phase that workers typically bulldoze access roads, cut bush, fell native trees, dig trenches, burn debris and may in general be subject to less supervision than the more skilled workers that follow them.

9.1.1 **C** Developers must establish whether and when sea turtles nest on beaches near the proposed development before planning starts.

9.1.2 **Recommended**

Developers should identify and approach local sea turtle experts for advice before construction designs are finalized.

Note: From a beach protection standpoint, adequate setbacks are the most important aspect of any development, followed by proper attention to access roads and drainage, minimizing vegetation losses, and emphasizing the importance of keeping sandy beaches and associated dunes unlit and in their natural state.

9.1.3 An independent environmental impact assessment (EIA) must be conducted and stipulations in the Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) must be followed, to evaluate the effect of development and minimize or mitigate negative environmental impacts^{GSTC}. The EIA must include possible impacts of the following and the steps taken to reduce them:

9.1.3.1 Access roads

9.1.3.2 Vegetation removal and/or burning

9.1.3.3 Excavation

9.1.3.4 Erosion

9.1.3.5 Lights and work activity.

9.1.4 **C** Development work must be scheduled to avoid sea turtle nesting and hatching seasons.

9.1.5 **C** Development activity must minimize land clearance and use the least invasive techniques.

Note: For example, where hand clearing is possible, it must always be chosen over bulldozing.

9.1.6 Workers – including contractors – must receive training so that they are aware of, and can mitigate, the potential impact of their work on the environment and wildlife including turtles. Workers must be able to identify nesting turtles, eggs, hatchlings and their tracks and have the appropriate number to call to report such activities.

Note: This could include briefing workers on seasonal nesting times for all wildlife, risks to turtle nests from driving on beaches etc.

9.1.7 Security personnel working on and around the development site must be trained to view the destruction of sea turtles and their habitats as unacceptable.

9.1.8 Developers must adopt a Sea Turtle Policy Statement (see Appendix 1).

- 9.1.9 **Recommended**
Developers should form partnerships with experts and advocates to develop local Advisory Boards to provide oversight for the project.
- 9.1.10 Land and water rights, and property acquisition must be legal and comply with local communal and indigenous rights, including their free, prior and informed consent, and must not require involuntary resettlement. ^{GSTC}
- 9.1.11 Construction and renovation of tourist infrastructure must use appropriate sustainable practices and materials. ^{GSTC}
- 9.1.12 Properties must ensure that neither they nor their contractors use beach sand in construction projects.
- 9.1.13 *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* enterprises must incorporate elements of local art, architecture, or cultural heritage in their management, design, decoration, food, or shops, while respecting the intellectual property rights of local communities. ^{GSTC}
- 9.1.14 **Recommended**
Construction and renovation of tourist infrastructure should allow access for persons with special needs where appropriate. ^{GSTC}
- 9.1.15 **C** Tourism infrastructure must not introduce additional risks to sea turtle survival. Careful attention and monitoring must be paid to appropriate sanitation, hygiene and waste disposal.

Note: See also section 8.4: Waste Water.

- 9.1.16 If a turtle nest or hatchlings is inadvertently disturbed during construction activities, work should cease immediately and the appropriate personnel contacted. Work should not be resumed in that area until the all clear is given by the appropriate personnel.
- 9.1.17 **Recommended**
If new development is planned for the area neighboring or nearby the certified enterprise, the enterprise should speak with the developers about their involvement in the Sea Turtle Friendly™ program and should encourage them to pursue responsible practices, particularly the items included in Section 9.1 as well as the items in lighting included in Section 2. The enterprise should connect the developers with appropriate sea turtle experts.

9.2 Beach Restoration

Beach restoration involves the placement of sand on an eroded beach for the purposes of restoring it as a recreational beach and providing storm protection for upland properties. Restoration is generally accomplished by bringing sand to the beach from inland sites or adjoining beach segments, or by hydraulically pumping sand onshore from an offshore site.

Restoring or re-nourishing a beach is exorbitantly expensive and causes sand to become compacted, reducing the quality of the nesting habitat. Compaction alters sand temperature

and moisture levels, preventing adult females from successfully constructing their nests and/or affecting the development process of the incubating eggs.

- 9.2.1 Beach restoration must only take place with approval from the appropriate agencies.

Note: Adequate setbacks – see Section 2.0 – will help protect existing beach area and prevent the need for restoration.

- 9.2.2 If beach restoration is unavoidable, replacement sand must be similar (grain size, organic content) to that which was eroded, thereby maintaining the suitability of the beach for the incubation of sea turtle eggs.

- 9.2.3 Beach restoration must ensure that the beach profile (prior to the hurricane or extreme sea event) must be maintained as far as possible.

- 9.2.4 Sand used for restoration must be mined legally and sustainably.

- 9.2.5 Crushed limestone “sand” or any other cementitious medium subject to compaction must not be used as it can be detrimental to sea turtles and the beach habitat as a whole.

- 9.2.6 Restoration must not take place during nesting and hatching seasons when heavy equipment and activity can deter nesting, crush eggs, and/or prevent hatchlings from successfully digging out of the nest.

- 9.2.7 **Recommended**

The re-nourished beach should be restored using native, appropriately placed vegetation.

Appendix 1 – Sea Turtle Friendly Policy Statements

Sea Turtle Friendly Policy Statement for Resorts



Sea Turtle Friendly™ Policy Statement

_____:

Resort Name

- Is aware that sea turtles contribute in significant ways to ecology, culture, and economy;
- Is concerned that sea turtles are severely depleted from their historical abundance and face a number of contemporary threats; and
- Acknowledges that while there may be formal policies in place to protect sea turtles, population recovery will not be possible without greater attention to the conservation of essential nesting and feeding habitats.

We Pledge To:

- Encourage a commitment to environmental responsibility among employees and guests;
- View sea turtle protection as an opportunity for corporate responsibility and civic engagement in biodiversity issues;
- Assess environmental impacts of all activities, planned and ongoing, as they relate to the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats;
- Provide employees and contractors with information and instruction to enhance their awareness of relevant environmental issues, and to ensure effective management of environmental impacts, including impacts on sea turtles and their habitats;

- Identify and collaborate with local experts in designing, implementing and evaluating our sea turtle program to ensure that it fits within national sea turtle conservation priorities, policies, and ongoing initiatives;
- Make continual improvements in operations and management oversight to increase the effectiveness and reliability of our sea turtle conservation program;
- Implement measures to minimize waste, including applying monitoring procedures to ensure that the nesting beach and nearshore waters remain free of debris and pollution;
- Conduct regular (at least annual) lighting assessments to identify sources of light pollution, and strive to eliminate artificial light visible from the beach during nesting season;
- Implement a system that removes potential obstacles to sea turtle nesting, including sun beds and recreational equipment, from the beach each night during nesting season;
- Ensure that any turtle-watching activities that may occur on our property will be done in accordance with the Sea Turtle Friendly™ standards;
- Discourage vehicles on the nesting beach, require hand-raking of debris and seaweed;
- Support local sea turtle conservation and research, including offering financial or in-kind support, as practicable; and
- Report all incidents of sea turtle harassment or harm to the proper authorities.

I, _____, the undersigned, do hereby pledge that my business, _____, and anyone employed by me are aware of and agree to follow the guidelines in this policy statement.

Signature: _____

Date: _____



Sea Turtle Friendly™ Policy Statement

_____:

Business Name

- Is aware that sea turtles contribute in significant ways to ecology, culture, and economy;
- Is concerned that sea turtles are severely depleted from their historical abundance and face a number of threats; and
- Acknowledges that while there are policies and initiatives in place to protect sea turtles, population recovery will not be possible without greater attention to the conservation of essential nesting and feeding habitats.

We Pledge To:

- Encourage a commitment to environmental responsibility among employees and guests;
- View sea turtle protection as an opportunity for civic engagement in biodiversity issues;
- Assess environmental impacts of all activities, planned and ongoing, as they relate to the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats;
- Provide employees and contractors with information and instruction to enhance their awareness of relevant environmental issues, and to ensure effective management of environmental impacts, including impacts on sea turtles and their habitats;

- Identify and collaborate with local experts in designing, implementing and evaluating our sea turtle program to ensure that it fits within national sea turtle conservation priorities, policies, and ongoing initiatives;
- Make continual improvements in operations and management oversight to increase the effectiveness and reliability of our sea turtle conservation program;
- Implement measures to minimize waste, including applying monitoring procedures to ensure that the nesting beach and nearshore waters remain free of debris and pollution;
- Conduct regular (at least annual) lighting assessments to identify sources of light pollution, and strive to eliminate artificial light visible from the beach during nesting season;
- Implement a system that removes potential obstacles to sea turtle nesting, including sun beds and recreational equipment, from the beach each night during nesting season;
- Discourage vehicles on the nesting beach, require hand-raking of debris and seaweed;
- Support local sea turtle conservation and research, including offering financial or in-kind support, as practicable; and
- Report all incidents of sea turtle harassment or harm to the proper authorities.

I, _____, the undersigned, do hereby pledge that my business, _____, and anyone employed by me are aware of and agree to follow the guidelines in this policy statement.

Signature: _____

Date: _____



Sea Turtle Friendly™ Policy Statement

Contractor / Developer Name

- Is aware that sea turtles contribute in significant ways to ecology, culture, and the economy;
- Is concerned that sea turtles are severely depleted from their historical abundance and face a number of threats; and
- Acknowledges that while there are policies and initiatives in place to protect sea turtles, population recovery will not be possible without greater attention to the conservation of essential nesting and feeding habitats.

We Pledge To:

- Encourage a commitment to environmental responsibility amongst our employees;
- View sea turtle protection as an opportunity for civic engagement in biodiversity issues;
- Assess environmental impacts of all activities, planned and ongoing, as they relate to the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats;
- Provide employees and contractors with information and instruction to enhance their awareness of relevant environmental issues, and to ensure effective management of environmental impacts, including impacts on sea turtles and their habitats;

- Be vigilant and aware of any risks to the environment which may occur within or outside our development area as a result of our activities;
- Comply with environmental legislation and local best practice policies related to turtles and their habitats (sandy beaches, seagrass, coral reefs) and encourage others to do so;
- Promote setbacks, and maintain vegetated buffer zones between sandy beaches and all buildings, patios, and other built structures;
- Implement measures to minimize waste, including applying monitoring procedures to ensure that the nesting beach and nearshore waters remain free of debris and pollution;
- Plan construction and design to ensure that obstacles to sea turtle nesting, including sun beds and recreational equipment, can be removed from the beach each night during nesting season;
- Discourage vehicles on the nesting beach, require hand-raking of debris and seaweed;
- Support local sea turtle conservation and research, including offering financial or in-kind support, as practicable; and
- Report all incidents of sea turtle harassment or harm to the proper authorities.

I, _____, the undersigned, do hereby pledge that my business, _____, and anyone employed by me are aware of and agree to follow the guidelines in this policy statement.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2 – Conservation Plan Template

Section 1.1 requires a conservation plan to be completed. Below is an example template for this.

Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™

A project of the Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network



Conservation Plan Template for Certified Sea Turtle Friendly Hotels and Resorts

- It is not compulsory to use this template to produce a conservation plan. However, the *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* standards require a conservation plan is completed.
- If you do not wish to use this template it should provide the basic structure for any other conservation plan submitted.
- This document should be reviewed and updated whenever changes are made or at least annually.
- We strongly recommend that this form is completed and reviewed in collaboration with the appropriate WFEN-approved local sea turtle conservation organization.

Section 1 – Contact details

Name and position of person completing form	
Business name:	
Address:	
City:	
State/Province:	
Zip/Postal Code:	
Country:	
Phone number:	
Mobile number:	
Website:	

Email:	
Preferred contact method:	

Section 2 – Overview of the Hotel or Resort

Number of properties and locations	
Average number of guests per year	

Section 3 – Direct and indirect effects on sea turtles and their environment

Please list the potential direct and indirect effects the operation of the hotel or resort could have on sea turtles and their habitat.

For example; direct effects could include siting of guest facilities and equipment including beach furniture or hotel/beach lighting as well as direct habitat management on the beach – for example vegetation management. Indirect effects could include ensuring guests have reasonable expectations of their visit, providing guests with information on sea turtles, employee training and so on

3 a. Direct effects

--

3 b. Indirect effects

--

Section 4 – Potential disturbance of the natural ecosystem

Please note any potential disturbance of the natural ecosystem that could arise from operation of the hotel or resort.

For example, this could include good planning for siting of infrastructure, waste management to avoid pollution and so on.

Section 5 – Sustainability management system Recommended

A sustainability management system is a written plan that should guide business decisions by the hotel or resort to ensure that it is operating in a sustainable way.

5 a. Environmental issues

Please note the hotel or resort's policies and aims for water and energy use and waste management.

i. Water

For example is water use measured and if so, how much does the hotel or resort use per year? How is wastewater handled to avoid pollution?

ii. Energy use

For example is wood and charcoal use measured? Are electricity and diesel/petrol fuel use measured? Are there targets for reduction in use? Are energy saving techniques and technology used? Is renewable energy (solar/wind) used?

iii. Waste management

For example is waste measured? Are waste paper, plastic, metals and other wastes recycled? If so what is the actual and target volume of recycled waste.

5 b. Social and Cultural issues

Please provide information on employment policies, employee training and links with the local community and local businesses.

i. Employment

How many full time employees are there?	
How many part time employees are there?	
How many seasonal employees are there?	
How many employees come from local communities? (number or percentage)	

ii. Employee training

Please detail training topics for new employees.

Please detail training topics for existing employees and how often this is carried out.

iii. Working with the local community

Please detail any outreach programs or other communication with the local community – for example outreach for staff vacancies, liaison regarding guest visits, links with local guides for fishing etc.

5 c. Economic issues

Does the hotel or resort have community ownership? yes/no
[Delete as applicable]

Does the hotel or resort buy local products? yes/no
[Delete as applicable]

If yes, please note the local businesses and the products they supply

5 d. Quality issues

How is guest satisfaction measured? For example, in-house feedback forms, encouragement for guests to use rating sites such as Trip Advisor or other.

How does the hotel or resort ensure it is a good representative of the *Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™* program? For example, regular staff assessments, review of and action from guest feedback etc.

5 e. Health and safety issues

Does the enterprise have a health and safety policy yes/no
[Delete as applicable]

How does the hotel or resort protect both employees and guests from health and safety risks? Please detail below or attach health and safety policy where this exists

Section 6 –Map of the area around the Hotel or Resort

Please attach a map of the area around the hotel or resort that shows the following:

- The main site and its buildings
- Location of exterior lights
- Any associated areas and buildings
- Grounds surrounding each site
- Beaches associated with the hotel or resort
- Buildings on the beach
- Location of any marine, forests or wetland reserves in proximity to the resort
- Location of nesting or foraging sites of any endangered species or vulnerable wildlife near the resort
- General position of beach furniture
- Designated picnic areas
- Water Management - run off drains, grey water or sewage outlets

- Designated swim areas
- Recreational areas such as beach volleyball courts

Section 7 – Sea turtle habitat

7 a. Assessment of habitat

Please provide details of the assessment of sea turtle habitat around the hotel or resort including both the quantity (area) and quality of the habitat. This can include nesting areas, feeding areas, areas of sea grass and coral etc. Please include a list of the current activities which take place in these areas both those coordinated by the hotel or resort and external to it.

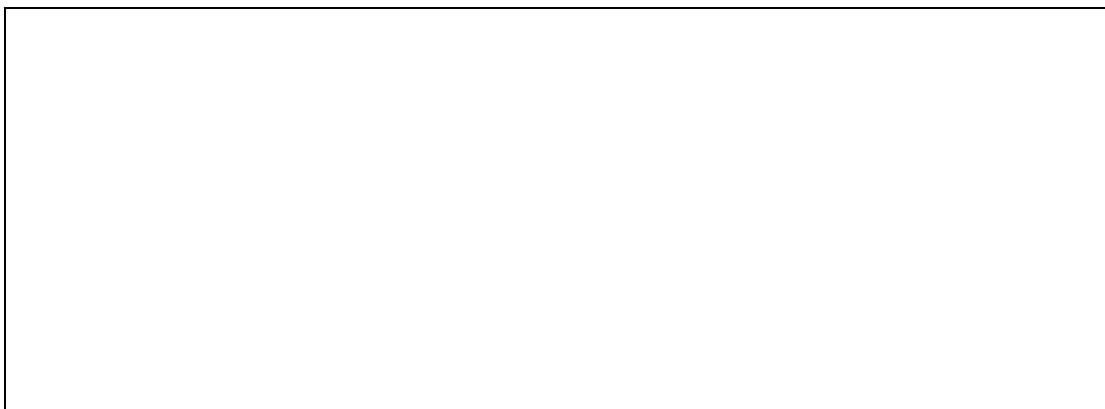
This information can be listed below or marked on the map in Section 6



7 b. Management of habitat

Please note current and planned actions (with timescale) to restore, create, maintain and improve sea turtle habitat.

For example seagrass meadows and coral reefs can be mapped and work carried out in conjunction with local authorities regarding guarding, putting up buoys to mark the area etc.



Date of completion of plan:

Date plan due for review:

Appendix 3 - Example Guest Survey

Standard 6.0.5 requires that visitor surveys are carried out at the end of the visit. See below for an example survey form.

Sea Turtle Friendly™ Resort Survey



Thank you for staying in a Sea Turtle Friendly™ resort! We would be most grateful if you could complete the following confidential survey. The information you provide will help the survival of the world's Sea Turtles. Please return this survey to the Front Desk upon checkout. Thank you in advance for your input!

Please circle the response(s) that you feel are most accurate.

- Sea Turtles are threatened by:
 - Poaching of eggs
 - Harmful fishing practices
 - Climate change
 - Coastal development
 - Hunting for their shells and meat
 - Pollution
 - All of the above
 - None of the above
 - Not sure
- My resort is helping Sea Turtles by:
 - Monitoring them
 - Protecting eggs and hatchlings
 - Following responsible lighting practices
 - Educating guests
 - Providing economic opportunity for local communities
 - Protecting Sea Turtle habitat
 - All of the above
 - Not sure
- The Sea Turtles species at my resort are:
 - Hawksbill
 - Green
 - Olive Ridley
 - Leatherback
 - Loggerhead
 - Critically Endangered
 - Endangered
 - Vulnerable
 - Not Threatened
 - Not sure
- Sea Turtles come to this resort property to:
 - Feed
 - Rest
 - Lay eggs
 - Play with visitors
 - Not sure
- How many species of Sea Turtles are there on earth?:
 - Three
 - Five
 - Seven
 - Nine
 - Not sure

Please indicate how closely you feel each statement corresponds to your own personal opinion.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Staying at my resort taught me new things about Sea Turtles and their threats					
My resort informed me about what I can do to help protect Sea Turtles on my vacation (i.e. while snorkeling, while shopping in town)					
I would change my behavior if I knew that certain actions were harmful to wildlife					
It is important to me that the resorts I choose contribute to wildlife conservation in a meaningful way					
In general, I would be willing to pay more to stay at a resort whose practices protect Sea Turtles & other wildlife					

Please answer the following questions truthfully!

	True	False		True	False
I dispose of litter and plastic in proper receptacles			I took the opportunity to learn about Sea Turtles on my trip		
I use buoyancy equipment when I snorkel/dive & am careful not to disturb habitat			It was easy to learn about Sea Turtles during my stay		
I close the curtains or keep lights low at night			I will follow updates about the Sea Turtles at the resort once I return home		
It is not okay to feed Sea Turtles in the wild			I will talk to family and friends about Sea Turtles & the threats they face		
I maintain a certain distance from Sea Turtles during encounters			I will look for other ways to contribute to Sea Turtle conservation once I return home		
I don't touch Sea Turtles because it can cause stress or behavior change			I will select resorts that I know are Sea Turtle Friendly™ or Wildlife Friendly™		

Please include any additional comments here or email to Julie@wildlifefriendly.org

<http://www.wildlifefriendly.org>



Appendix 4 - Bibliography

Reports

Barshel, N., Bruce, R., Grimm, C., Haggitt, D., Lichter, B. and McCray, J. 2014. Sea Turtle Friendly Lighting: A Model Ordinance for Local Governments & Model Guidelines for Incorporation into Governing Documents of Planned Communities: Condominiums, Cooperatives and Homeowners Associations.

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Landry, Melissa S. and Taggart, Christopher T 2010. "Turtle watching" conservation guidelines: green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) tourism in nearshore coastal environments. *Biodiversity and Conservation* 19:305-312

Meletis, Zoe A. and Harrison, Emma C. 2010. Tourists and Turtles: Searching for a Balance in Tortuguero, Costa Rica. *Conservation and Society* 8(1): 26-43.

Mycoo, Michelle A. and Gobin, Judith F. 2013. Coastal management, climate change adaptation and sustainability in small coastal communities: leatherback turtles and beach loss. *Sustainability Science* 8:441–453

Zeppel, Heather. 2008. Education and Conservation Benefits of Marine Wildlife Tours: Developing Free-Choice Learning Experiences. *The Journal of Environmental Education* 39(3):3-18

Other resources

<http://www.seaturtleguardian.org>

The Philippine Aquatic Rescue and Response Manual for Marine Turtles is a useful guide on the appropriate response procedures when turtles are found. It can be accessed here:

<http://www.mwwphilippines.org/downloads/rm-marineturtles.pdf>

Additional information can be found here:

http://www.widecast.org/Resources/Docs/Phelan_and_Eckert_2006_Sea_Turtle_Trauma_Response_Field_Guide.pdf