

PUBLIC BEACH HOURS CHANGE WITH AMENDED CITY CODE

Special Note about the Sarasota Powerboat Grand Prix, which is held during sea turtle nesting season: The Sarasota Powerboat Grand Prix is an annual off shore boat racing event off Lido Beach, Sarasota, Florida. While you're enjoying the race and other summer events, it is important to remember to be mindful of local marine life.

As the boat race takes place during sea turtle nesting season, the Sarasota Police Department, Mote and Sarasota Powerboat Grand Prix event partners would like to remind the public of the entire ***Sarasota County Sea Turtle Protection Ordinance***, Chapter 54, Article XXIII of the Sarasota County Code of Ordinances, which protects endangered sea turtles on all local beaches, including Lido Beach, throughout nesting season, May 1 – Oct. 31.

The ***Sarasota County Sea Turtle Protection Ordinance*** requires that any “temporary structures, including but not limited to beach chairs, umbrellas and cabanas which have the potential for entrapment of marine turtles and which may interfere with the use of the natural beach environment for nesting habitat, be removed from the beach nightly, from sunset to sunrise.” Beach furniture and other beach equipment, toys or trash left on the beach overnight during sea turtle nesting season can pose a serious entanglement hazard and obstacle for sea turtles and their hatchlings.

The City of Sarasota also recently amended ***Sarasota City Code Sec. 22-4*** regarding beach closure hours. Now, both the City and the County's ordinances require that public beaches be closed from 11 p.m. until sunrise, from June 30 until July 10. This means that Lido Key beach will be closed to all beachgoers and race spectators until sunrise during the 4th of July holiday events.

During this extended closure time, the Sarasota Police Department will be working with other law enforcement agencies, Mote and Sarasota Powerboat Grand Prix event partners to ensure a safe and fun holiday for all beachgoers, including the sea turtle kind!

To comply with the City and County ordinances, beachgoers should wait until at least sunrise (6:30 a.m. during the boat races) to set up furniture or equipment. This will allow any new turtle crawls and nests to be documented by Mote scientists. If you see turtle tracks not yet documented by Mote (documented tracks are crossed out with an 'X'), please avoid placing furniture on them if possible and call Mote's Turtle Patrol at 941-388-4331 to report their location.

In addition, please do not approach nesting turtles or hatchlings, do not make noise around turtles and their nests, and do not use fireworks, flashlights or fishing lamps on the beach. Artificial lights can disorient nesting turtles and their hatchlings, which emerge at night and use dim natural light to find the sea.

Beachgoers should stay away from sea turtle nests marked with yellow stakes and tape, and seabird nesting zones that are bounded by ropes.

Dogs are not allowed on Sarasota County beaches other than Brohard Paw Park in Venice, where they must be leashed or under voice control, according to county ordinances.

Suncoast Charities for Children, the local nonprofit organization that organizes the Sarasota Powerboat Grand Prix Festival, fully supports utilizing all available best practices to protect Florida's wonderful natural resources and diverse wildlife.

"Our Board of Directors and Powerboat P1 USA fully support any necessary changes implemented this year to ensure that we can all safely share our beaches," said Festival Director Lucy Nicandri. "Powerboat P1 USA has committed to implementing environmental protection measures in partnership with its event partners during all local racing events and has directed the P1 Marine Foundation to undertake a local environmental awareness and education program in support of the shared mission to safeguard and restore the marine and coastal environment."

Additionally, Lido Beach has a large nesting colony of Black Skimmers. Their nests often consist of simple scrapes in the sand. The birds and their nests are vulnerable to human disturbance and to predation by domestic dogs, raccoons and laughing gulls. Any harassment or taking of protected birds, their young, their nest or their eggs, is a violation of Florida law and may subject violators to criminal penalties.

For more information, please visit www.audubon.org/content/audubon-florida

Personal Property On The Beach

In addition to expanded marine, foot and vehicle patrols, the Sarasota Police Department will be protecting public safety during the Sarasota Grand Prix weekend by posting signs prohibiting beachgoers from storing and leaving unattended personal property on Lido Beach. This is for the protection of all beachgoers and their belongings, to help ensure a safe and orderly race and beach-going experience.

