SEA TURTLE REPORT

Sea Oats Important to Loggerhead Nesting

By Maria Lamb

Sea Oats (Uniola paniculate) are native perennial grasses found in all Florida coastal counties, according to the Florida Wildlife Federation. Typically, they grow from the high tide mark inland and are very important in building up the dunes.



Keep Off the Dunes. Sea Oats are protected by Florida Statute 370.041, and it is illegal to remove them. Use designated dune walkovers or pathways.

This time of the year, as you walk towards Sand Dollar Island on the Gulf side of South Seas Towers, you will notice a very picturesque field of sea oat grass looking golden yellow rising just above the dunes. They look so delicate yet, hard at work to provide stability to the sand. Their narrow leaves blow in the wind and spread their seed heads. According to UF/IFAS, "sea oats have root systems up to 40 feet deep and help anchor the dunes and help stabilize beaches. The plant is extremely drought and salt tolerant and is a protected plant in Florida."

According to FWC, removing them is illegal and they recommend that you stay off the dunes, instead using designated dune walkovers or pathways.

Sea Turtles dig the dunes! On Marco we have quite a few sea turtle nests nestled among the tall sea oats. According to sea turtle experts, sea turtles seem to seek out the safety of the dunes while looking for nesting areas on the beach. And there is another healthy relationship between sea turtles and dunes. While the dunes provide cover for the sea turtle nests, not all those eggs will hatch and not all the hatchlings will make it out of the nest. The unhatched materials left behind provide excellent nutrients for the dune plants to use to grow bigger with deeper roots.



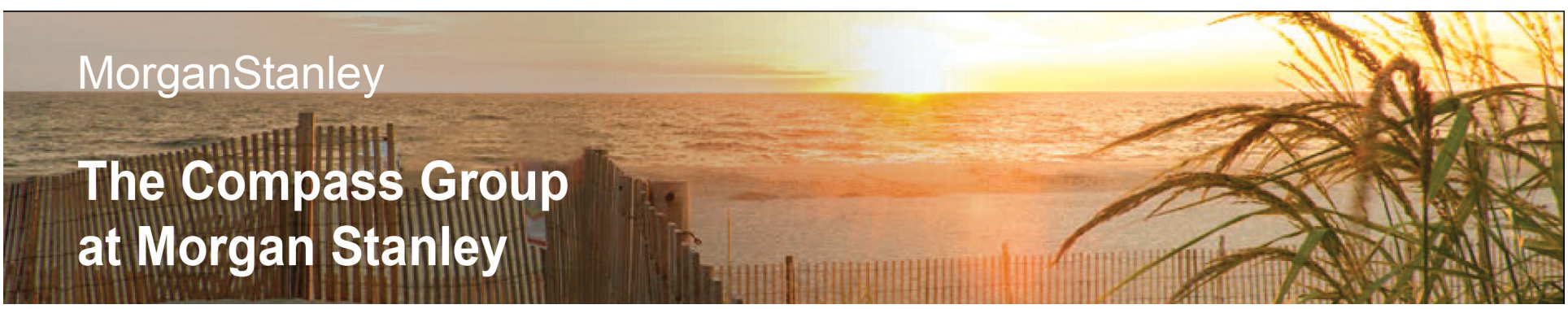
Photos by Maria Lamb

A field of tall sea oat grasses above the dune line. Sea Oats are a native perennial grass found in all coastal Florida and a favorite nesting site for loggerhead sea turtles.

Sea Turtle Activity Update September 5 - 11, 2024

Beach	Nests		False Crawls		Hatched Nests		
	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	Disoriented
Barefoot	222	225	187	199	104	181	17
Delnor Wiggins	55	49	75	51	21	46	0
Vanderbilt	221	245	199	171	118	195	15
Parkshore	213	160	188	108	75	136	12
City of Naples	244	304	277	199	71	240	9
Keewaydin Is.	420	626	658	682	172	502	0
Sea Oat Island	10	13	17	6	0	8	0
Marco Island	97	102	231	205	36	68	10
Kice and Cape Romano	135	108	190	173	34	78	3
10,000 Islands	129	158	134	186	56	98	0
Collier County Totals	1746	1990	2156	1980	687	1552	66

To report dead, injured or disoriented sea turtles on Marco call 239-289-9736 or 239-289-9687



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