CNMI DLNR Green Sea Turtle Program
Nest in Situ Relocation Protocol: (REVISED 10-7-14)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Permit TE-017352-15

I. ACTIVITY PURPOSE:

Nests that are in danger of being inundated by high tide cycles may be translocated to locations above of the high tide zone. Nests laid in areas with significant obstacles (i.e. rocks, non-native vegetation) are not typically translocated, instead personnel monitor and assist the hatchlings. Nest relocation is considered a last resort management technique. All nest translocations should be performed as soon as possible and no more than 12 hours following deposition

II. TOOLS AND MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Clean 5 gallon bucket
- Latex gloves
- Tape measure
- Field notebook

III. NEST RELOCATION PROCEDURES:

Step 1:

The decision to translocate nests will be made on a case by case basis by the project supervisor. An experienced technician will assist with nest translocations if possible. Nest translocations must occur within 12 hours of egg deposition to prevent damaging the developing embryo. Eggs must be shaded using a towel or umbrella if relocated in the daylight. After 12 hours of egg deposition, eggs should only be moved in an emergency situation when found washing out to sea.

Step 2:

After the adult female has completed egg deposition, the clutch can be excavated and the eggs carefully placed one by one into the 5 gallon bucket. The depth should be recorded from the beach surface to the top of the egg chamber. Care must be taken to maintain the orientation of the egg; do make any abrupt movements, take your time and be patient. The person(s) handling the eggs should wear latex gloves to prevent contaminating the eggs.

Step 3:

Count and record the number of eggs in the clutch as they are placed in container.

Step 4:

Care should be taken to measure the nest depth and width so the original dimensions can be replicated. Suspend a tape measure in the hole until it reaches the bottom and read the depth at the sand surface. Eggs should be carefully transported immediately to the relocation site.

Step 5:

A new egg chamber with proper nest depth and width should be dug in a location where the clutch will be safe from tidal inundation and where the hatchlings can make it to the ocean on their own well above the high tide line. Care should be taken to avoid putting the nest to near (<1m) existing nests.

Step 6:
The eggs should be placed carefully, not dropped, one by one into the new nest chamber and counted. Label temperature dataloggers with nest information following normal procedures. Before covering the nest, attach string with plastic bottle containing metal ID tag to one temperature datalogger; place the temperature datalogger on top of the egg chamber and bury the plastic ID bottle above and to the side so that the ID bottle will be found before the eggs during nest excavation.

Step 7:
Cover the nest by replacing the damp subsurface sand removed from the egg chamber (do not place hot surface sand on the eggs), gently tamping it in place in layers of 8-12 cm. Care should be taken so that the string with plastic bottle containing the metal ID tag is cryptically buried just under the surface and to the side to prevent poachers from locating the egg chamber.

Step 8:
Once the hole is completely filled, disguise the nest by smoothing over the disturbed sand surface, sweeping dry surface evenly all about. Flag nest site at two measured distances from the nest using standard triangulating procedures (include: date, nest #, turtle tag #'s) and take multiple photos from varying directions of distinguishing landmarks (vegetation, cliffsides, etc) and record GPS point of the egg chamber location. Record that the nest was translocated on the data sheet.

Protocols adopted from the following:

Eckert, K.L, K.A. Bjorndal, F.A. Abreu-Grobois and M. Donnelly (Editors). 1999 *Research and Management Techniques for the Conservation of Sea Turtles*. IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group Publication No. 4

Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission; Marine Turtle Conservation Guidelines, Nov. 2007

“Our Shared Documents>>>>>Translocations>>>>>translocationprotocols-A.doc.”