Sea Turtle License Plate Grants Program

In 1995, a statewide effort was initiated by the non-profit Sea Turtle Conservancy (STC) to establish a Florida Sea Turtle Specialty License Plate to provide a permanent funding source for the state's Marine Turtle Protection Program. Thanks to the efforts of STC and other Florida sea turtle groups, in 1997, the Florida Legislature (Statute 320.08058 (19)) authorized the creation of a Sea Turtle Specialty License Plate to promote the conservation and protection of Florida's sea turtles. The Sea Turtle License Plate was first offered for sale in February 1998 and quickly became one of the most popular specialty plates in Florida, raising over $1 million annually. Approximately 70% of the funding generated by sales of the tag goes to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWCC) Marine Turtle Protection Program to support research and management activities related to sea turtles. Approximately 30% is distributed to the Sea Turtle Grants Program to support sea turtle research, conservation, and education projects that benefit Florida's sea turtles. The Sea Turtle Grants Program is administered by the non-profit Sea Turtle Conservancy.

Types of Funding

1. **Competitive Grant Funding** – A maximum of four Grant Applications for funding can be submitted by an eligible organization/institution/agency for consideration by the Sea Turtle Grants Committee. Funds can be requested for projects in one of three categories (conservation, education or research) that clearly add to the preservation of Florida's marine turtles; that accomplish tasks included in the current recovery plans for marine turtles; that address the goals of the FWCC's Marine Turtle Protection Program; and that are consistent with subsection 370.12 (1) (c), Florida Statutes. **Please note that grant funds may not be used for materials that contain fundraising or membership development language, or to support any type of litigation.** Activities that shall be considered eligible include, but are not limited to:

    A. **Conservation:** Protection of marine turtles, their nests and hatchlings from harmful activities on the nesting beach, including lights and predators, such as the replacement or modification of existing lights near marine turtle nesting beaches. This would include the purchase and installation of shields, light barriers, tinted glass or other structures that reduce or restrict the amount and direction of lights that directly or indirectly illuminate the beach or create a glow that is visible from the beach. This includes the care and rehabilitation of sick or injured sea turtles, such as the purchase of equipment and supplies related to treating, holding and maintaining turtles.

    B. **Education:** The development, production, and distribution of educational materials (including printed materials, interpretive displays, signs, etc... and programs that promote the understanding of the biology, health, life history and habitat needs of Florida's marine turtles and the protection and conservation of these species. This could also include equipment purchases related to educational presentations and displays. *Grant funds may not be used for developing or printing materials that contain fundraising or membership development language*.

C. **Research:** Research directly related to the conservation of marine turtles. Such research should provide information for the improvement of strategies to protect marine turtles and may include assessments of coastal lighting; beach nourishment; coastal armoring and other shoreline protection structures; in-water distributions; developmental habitats; migration patterns; rehabilitation of injured or diseased marine turtles; epidemic diseases, including Fibropapillomatosis; fishing gear; and general life history information.

2. **Funding for Ongoing Activities** (non-competitive mini-grant) – Each year the Sea Turtle Grants Committee will select up to ten (10) organizations or institutions conducting ongoing Marine Turtle Permit-related Nesting Beach Surveys, Stranding and Salvage, or Rehabilitation Activities to be awarded a non-competitive mini-grant of $1,000 in support of these activities. Funding in this category is intended to support established activities of Florida's Marine Turtle Permit Holders, *funds may not be used for developing or printing materials that contain fundraising or membership development language*. Recipients will be selected by the Committee and can not have received funding from the Sea Turtle Grants Program in the previous grant cycle or for any other purpose in the current cycle. **Permit Holders must submit a Registration Form by 5 PM, March 1, 2027**, if they would like to be considered. The Registration Form can be found on the Sea Turtle License Plate web site at https://helpingseaturtles.org/permit-holder-mini-grant-registration-form/. ***Note:*** You can both apply for Competitive Grant Funding AND register for Ongoing Activity Funding. Groups whose Competitive Grant Application is approved will automatically be withdrawn.

3. **Emergency Funding** – As the Sea Turtle Grants Program continues, a portion of the grant funding will be set aside each year for addressing sea turtle emergencies. These funds will be used to help Florida's Marine Turtle Permit Holders respond to unforeseen sea turtle issues, such as mass strandings, illnesses, or other threats. Requests for Emergency Funding should be directed to the Sea Turtle Grants Program at (352) 373-6441 or via e-mail at stgp@helpingseaturtles.org.

Who is Eligible to Receive Funding

Florida Coastal Local Governments, Florida-based Non-Profit Organizations, and Florida-based Education and Research Institutions that actively participate in marine turtle research, conservation, and educational activities within the state of Florida are eligible to apply for and receive grant funds. If you have any questions or concerns about your eligibility, please contact Dan Evans or David Godfrey at (352) 373-6441 or e-mail stgp@helpingseaturtles.org.

A maximum of four (4) Grant Applications for funding may be submitted during each funding cycle by an eligible organization/institution/agency.

Sea Turtle Grants Program Application Dates & Funding Cycle

Digital Submission of Sea Turtle Grant Applications due..... November 6, 2026
Completion of Research Application Reviews..... January 29, 2027
Applications provided to Sea Turtle Grant Committee..... February 6, 2027
Sea Turtle Grants Committee Meeting to Award Funds* (exact date TBD)..... March, 2027
Funded Projects should begin upon execution of contract, anticipated to be by..... May 1, 2027

* Projects that require any type of permit must have all permits approved prior to the Grant Committee meeting.

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE TO SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

Complete Digital Grant Applications must be submitted online by no later than 5:00 pm on Friday, November 6, 2026:

Sea Turtle Grants Program Digital Submission Form

One (1) original printed (hard copy) Grant Application with signed Cover Sheet must be mailed to the following address and postmarked by 5:00 pm on Friday, November 6, 2026:

Sea Turtle Grants Program
Sea Turtle Conservancy
4581 NW 6th St, Suite A
Gainesville, FL 32609

Funding Considerations

Since the Sea Turtle Grants Program depends on funds generated by the sale of the Sea Turtle License Plate, there is no certainty from year to year that funding will be available. Grant expenditures will be made based on funds collected.

Applications shall be selected for funding by the Sea Turtle Grant Committee (Committee). This Committee consists of seven members with technical knowledge and expertise in the research and management of marine turtles, their nests, hatchlings, or habitats.

When reviewing applications, Committee members shall consider the scope of the proposed activity (high priority for projects with the most benefit for the conservation of Florida's marine turtles); the qualifications and demonstrated ability of applicant to accomplish the proposed activity; demand and public support for the proposed activity; the estimated cost of the activity; the availability of more appropriate alternative funding; and any other considerations deemed appropriate by the Committee.

The Committee may choose to only recommend funding a portion of a project.

Final funding decisions are made by the Sea Turtle Grants Committee and provided to the Sea Turtle Conservancy for execution of grant contracts.

Application Review & Selection

Upon receipt of an application, a proposal number will be assigned and a receipt notification will be mailed to the project manager within five (5) business days after the application deadline. Later communications concerning the proposal should reference the proposal number. Applicants may contact STC at (352) 373-6441 or stgp@helpingseaturtles.org if receipt is not acknowledged within 14 business days following submittal. A maximum of four (4) Grant Applications for funding may be submitted during each funding cycle by an eligible organization/institution/agency.

STC staff will check each application for completeness and correct format before distributing it for review. **If an application is not complete, not in the correct format, or if an insufficient number of copies are submitted, the application may not be considered for funding**.

A Marine Turtle Permit (Florida Administrative Code 68E-1) is required for any research involving live turtles, eggs, or hatchlings or turtle parts, including blood, and for educational projects involving live turtles, eggs, hatchlings or turtle parts. An approved permit should be included with the grant application if one has already been issued. Grant applicants may simultaneously apply for the necessary marine turtle permit; the two processes will run separately but concurrently. Please contact FWCC for information regarding permits. *Please note that Projects that require a State and/or Federal Permit must have all Permits approved prior to the Grant Committee meeting.*

STC will send complete applications for research proposals to FWCC staff for review. The primary responsibility of reviewers is to evaluate a research proposal's technical merit, compliance with Marine Turtle Permit requirements, and the capabilities of the proposed project personnel and their institution to meet the project objectives. Reviewers will evaluate applications based on their content and format as submitted, not based on their potential for improvement. Reviewer comments, and any other pertinent information, will be provided to the Committee.

Once applications are selected for funding by the Committee, only those projects that can be executed as submitted will be funded. Major project modifications will not be allowed prior to execution of the contract. Subsequent to initiation of the contract, modifications will be considered at the discretion of the STC; however, such modifications should not change the overall project scope and deliverables unless significant justification is provided.

Applicants whose projects are selected for funding through the Sea Turtle Grants Program will be required to enter into a contract, or grant agreement, that specifies the exact amount of the award, deliverables required, and the specific disbursement schedule. Contracts must be signed by a legal representative of the recipient, returned to STC, and signed by STC's Executive Director before the funded activities can begin. **Award recipients must include acknowledgement of funding from the Sea Turtle Grants Program and, where possible, include a graphic of the Sea Turtle License Plate, supplied by STC, on any and all publications, signage, documents, videos, publicity and results related to their project.**

Payment Schedule for Grant Awards

Upon review of those applications recommended for funding by the Sea Turtle Grants Committee, the payment schedule will be determined. Projects will generally receive 50% of the awarded funds upon contract execution, 25% upon approval of 6-month reports, and the final 25% upon approval of final reports **OR** projects will receive 70% of the awarded funds upon contract execution, 15% upon approval of 6-month reports, and the final 15% upon approval of final reports. Payment schedule will depend upon the project.

Sea Turtle Grant Application Preparation

The Cover Sheet and Budget Form (MS Word format) can be downloaded from the web site at www.helpingseaturtles.org. Applications or Forms can also be requested via e-mail at stgp@helpingseaturtles.org or by calling Dan Evans at (352) 373-6441.

All applicants should review their proposal package carefully to ensure it is complete and all data essential for a critical evaluation are included or summarized. Any omissions are the responsibility of the applicant. Proposals are being scored for completeness and correct format.

Applicants must provide **one (1) original hard copy** (Cover Sheet with original signature) and **one (1) digital copy** (MS Word format only, *digital copy does not need to have signature on the cover page*) of each Sea Turtle Grant Application being submitted. You **do not** need to submit eight (8) copies that were required in previous years.

The Project Proposal hard copy should only be stapled in the upper left-hand corner with Supporting Materials paper clipped at the end of each individual copy. **Research Proposals should be stapled separately and then paper clipped to the Project Proposal**. All supporting materials must be able to fit into an 8 ½" x 11" sheet sleeve.

Digital copies should be submitted through an online submission form at Sea Turtle Grants Program Digital Submission Form. *All digital files must be named using the following format: Project Manager/PI's Name_Short Project Name_Document Name*.

Example: JohnSmith_LoggerheadSeaTurtlesSouthFlorida_CoverSheet.doc

Please do not attach a cover letter/page to your proposal, submit your proposal in a folder, or bind your proposal in any other way or order than described in these guidelines.

Digital Grant Applications must be submitted by 5:00 pm on the due date. While the **Original Printed Grant Applications must be postmarked by 5:00 pm of the due date.** *Applicants will be notified of application receipt and completeness via email, generally within five business days after the due date*. I**ncomplete applications may not be considered for funding**. Formal notification will be sent by written letter within 14 business days of the due date.

Directions for Sea Turtle Grant Applicants

The Sea Turtle Grant Application consists of several components:

- Cover Sheet (1 page, single sided)
- Project Proposal (limit to 8 single sided pages or 4 double sided pages)
- Budget Form (limit to 2 single sided pages or 1 double sided page)
- Copy of current MTP Permit (if applicable)
- *Digital only* copy NMFS Permit, please don't print out your NMFS Permit (if applicable)
- Additional required information based upon Project Category (see below)

Succinctness is strongly encouraged. Applicants are requested to use standard weight recycled paper, no smaller than 11 pt Times New Roman font, 1" margins (not including headers/footers), and headings to separate sections described below.

Cover Sheet: Please fill out the Cover Sheet completely making sure to keep it to one page, fill in the Total Amount Requested, and the Original Hard Copy must be **signed** (*Digital version of Cover Sheet does not have to be signed*). The Project Manager must have the authority to submit a proposal on behalf of the applicant's listed organization. If the Project Manager does not, a letter of endorsement signed by an Authorized Representative of the listed organization must be included after the Cover Sheet and the Cover Sheet must be included.

All Project Proposals should include the following Sections, in order, within the body of the proposal:

1. **Project description**. Provide a detailed explanation of the project, including general methods/activities to complete your project. For Research requests, do not include detailed methodology in this section, just refer to your separate Research Proposal.

2. **Conservation Benefits to Florida Marine Turtles?** Describe the benefits of your project to Florida's marine turtles and how your project. Include how your project relates to FWCC's Marine Turtle Protection Program Goals (Attachment A) and the federal recovery plans for marine turtles as appropriate (available on the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service website). **In addition, if appropriate to your request, please provide information about the number of turtles that are treated by your rehabilitation facility or the number of turtle nests per mile (or km) in your survey area.**

3. **Has a similar project previously been funded by the sea turtle grants program?** If yes, how is the proposed project different and how will you incorporate existing materials or results? *If you are requesting an additional year of funding for a project, please include a summary to date of the previous project's results with your application*. Review past funded projects at http://www.helpingseaturtles.org/search.php

4. **What are the tasks and expected accomplishments of the proposed project?** Please identify the tasks to be completed by the 6-month and final reporting dates that can be used to monitor the progress of your project and what you expect to be the final accomplishments when the project is complete. *If your proposed project includes*

cooperation with, or involvement of, another entity, please provide a letter of support from that entity.

5. **What are the proposed project's 6-month and Final Deliverables in addition to the required reports?** Please list items that you will be providing with your reports to show the progress of the project. These can include draft samples of educational materials, photos of field research, quotes/receipts, a draft or final copy of a research presentation/manuscript, etc… *Please note that a copy of some type of grant award announcement will be required as a 6-month deliverable for all projects*.

6. **What is the background and relevant experience of the people working on the project?** Please only provide a 1-2 paragraph biographical summary per person that summarizes education or experiences relevant to the proposed project.

7. **Budget Narrative.** Please provide a **detailed description or justification for each item listed on the separate Budget Form**. Do not just list the more general line-item name used on the Budget Form, *provide specific details for each item.* If showing Match, you may include staff time or other non-monetary resources as being provided in support of the project. Indirect Costs must be no more than 5% of the funds being requested. Neither Indirect Costs nor Match are required, though showing some level of Match is desirable.

8. **How will you publicize or distribute the results of your project?** Please make sure to include how the Sea Turtle Grants Program, as the funding source, will be announced or publicized to fulfill the 6-month deliverable grant award announcement requirement.

9. **How will the success of this project be evaluated and what is the project's life span?** Describe how you will determine the success of your proposed project and the project's life span. How sustainable is the project beyond a single funding cycle? Would additional funding be required to continue the project or use of equipment beyond the grant award? If applicable, what will be done to continue the project or use of equipment?

Budget Form: Please fill out the separate Budget Form and include all requested funds with the brief item title used in your Budget Narrative. Remember that your proposal may by partially funded, so **it is in your best interest to separate out items**. **If you must lump items together on the Budge Form, please break out the various items within your Budget Narrative**. Indirect Costs can not be more than 5% of Requested Funds Sub-Total, and are not required.

Additional information requirements based on category:

Conservation Grant Applications that involve the purchase of surgical or rehabilitation equipment and/or supplies should include a separate page that provides a justification and addresses the beneficial uses any potential negative impacts resulting from the usage of the proposed equipment or supplies. **Please provide a quote for all equipment requests**.

Education Grant Applications that involve the production of educational materials should include a separate page with a title and brief description of the item, the number to be produced,

description of how the materials are to be distributed, and the target audience for each educational item being proposed. **Please provide a mock-up, draft design or draft text of any proposed materials or displays**. If you are requesting a reprint of educational materials, please include a sample of the existing item(s). When getting a quote for printing, please keep in mind that it is *strongly encouraged that educational materials be printed on recycled paper.*

Research Grant Applications should include a separate research proposal with introduction, objectives, detailed methods (including data analysis), and a C.V. or resume (2 pages or less) for each person involved in the proposed project. **Research Proposals should be stapled in the upper left-hand corner and paper clipped to your Project Proposal**. Research Proposals are reviewed by FWCC staff. If you have already been issued a permit for the proposed research, please include it as part of your Research Proposal.

Completed applications should be submitted in the following order:

Project Proposal, stapled together:
- Cover Sheet
- Letter of Authorization (if applicable)
- Project Proposal
- Budget Form
- Copy of FWCC Marine Turtle Permit (if applicable)
- If you also require a NMFS Permit, *please only submit a digital version of your NMFS Permit, do not print it out*

Supporting Documents, paper clipped to the end of the Project Proposal:
- Education & Conservation description page for each item requested, mock-up, draft design or draft text of any proposed materials or displays (if applicable)
- Research Proposal (if applicable)
- Other Supporting Materials (if applicable)

Attachment A:
Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission's Marine Turtle Protection Program Goals

- Maintain the quantity and quality of nesting habitat for marine turtles in Florida.

  - ❖ Ensure that beach restoration projects consider and minimize impacts to marine turtles
  - ❖ Reduce the impact of beach-front lights on nesting beaches
  - ❖ Reduce storm water drainage onto nesting beaches
  - ❖ Manage beach-cleaning activities to minimize effects on sea turtles

- Promote the protection of marine habitats that are used by Florida's marine turtles.

  - ❖ Minimize loss of important nearshore foraging habitats during beach restoration activities
  - ❖ Identify and eliminate point sources of pollutants into coastal systems used by marine turtles

- Reduce human-related mortality of all life history stages of Florida's marine turtles.

- Minimize human manipulation of sea turtles, their eggs, and their nests.

- Collect information on the biology, ecology and migrations of sea turtles.

- Collect information on the effects of human activity on sea turtles.

- Continuously monitor populations of sea turtles that nest on Florida beaches or that have genetic links to sea turtles found in Florida waters.

- Identify and maintain the genetic diversity of marine turtle populations that occur in Florida.

- Provide scientific data that will guide land acquisition efforts to benefit sea turtles.

- Identify and eliminate factors that reduce the natural productivity of marine turtle nesting beaches.

- Promote the health of Florida's marine turtle populations.

- Promote international cooperation in sea turtle recovery efforts.

- Educate the public about Florida's sea turtles and the ways they can promote the recovery of sea turtle populations.

- Address the tasks assigned to FWC in the federal Recovery Plans for marine turtles

Florida Sea Turtle Grants Program
Proposal Cover Sheet

Project Title:
Project Category (mark one)**: ___ Education ___ Research ___ Conservation**
Organization: _____ FEID#_____
Project Manager: _____ **Title: _____** **Mailing Address: _____** **_____** **City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____** **Phone: ( ) _____ Fax: ( ) _____ Email:_____** **Authorized Signature: _____ Date: _____**
If your proposal requires a Marine Turtle Permit, please provide the MTP that covers the activities you are proposing: MTP# _____ (include copy of permit) **___** Proposal does not require a MTP
Eligibility:
Project Summary:
Total Amount Requested: $
STC Use Only Proposal Number: Date Received:

Florida Sea Turtle Grants Program
Budget Form

Project Title:	
Budget Item	**Funds Requested**
Labor (Please include Salaries, Wages & Fringe benefits for each position)	
Requested Funds Sub-Total	
Indirect Costs (Not more than 5% of Requested Funds Sub-Total, not required)	
Matching Funding (Not required)	
Total Project Costs *(Requested Sub-Total + Indirect + Matching)*	
TOTAL REQUESTED	