

# **Frequently Asked Questions**

## Review of the Padre Island National Seashore Sea Turtle Science and Recovery Program

### *Are you cutting the program's budget?*

- No cuts to the sea turtle program's base budget are planned or have been enacted. The National Park Service review underscores the importance of the sea turtle program at Padre Island and outlines goals to strengthen its mission and expand opportunities for shared stewardship. We want to broaden the success of the sea turtle program to the park's other resources for their protection and for the enjoyment of our visitors.

### *Has the program already lost funding?*

- No base funding has been lost. At present, the sea turtle program constitutes nearly one quarter of the park's entire base budget (23.8 percent, \$1,374,902 annually) -- that is nearly double the average for resource management programs (12.5 percent) across the National Park Service. The program also secures about \$500,000 - \$800,000 in project funds each year to support turtle work. These project funds routinely fluctuate based on the success of project submissions

### *Is the National Park Service curtailing its employees' speech regarding this review?*

- The National Park Service relies heavily on the expertise, dedication, and passion of its employees. To ensure we are responsive to the public and to members of the press, parks have standard operating procedures for coordinating, vetting, and confirming those responses through public information officers at parks or the park superintendent.

### *Which of the review's recommendations is the park currently pursuing?*

- Some recommendations will require careful study and public feedback before deciding when, or if, they should be implemented; however, several others are opportunities to implement agency best practices. We believe that by scaling back overtime, strategically hiring seasonal employees, and focusing our future research we have updated the program to better align with National Park Service practices and conservation principles.

### *How can you proceed with any of these recommendations without violating the Endangered Species Act?*

- No changes to the park's nest management program have been implemented. Any changes to the program with the potential to impact ESA-listed species must be reviewed by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and would require FWS to issue a biological opinion and any necessary permits.