

Dear Sea Turtle Patrol Volunteers,

Let us provide you with an update regarding our upcoming Sea Turtle Patrol and the COVID-19 (Corona virus) situation. As a community, we're going to face some challenging days ahead. Joanie and I want to communicate our thoughts regarding Sea Turtle Patrol for the next 6-8 weeks or so. First, nothing is more important than our personal health and protecting those around us that may be more vulnerable. Second, the sea turtle nest monitoring work does need to continue as much as volunteers feel comfortable with conducting the patrols. So our intention is to continue the patrols.

Our perspective is that Sea Turtle Patrols are very self-isolating activities and with some extra precautions they can be conducted safely. Patrols are usually done alone or with a partner. When people pair up they are typically pairing up with people that they know. Volunteers need to make the decision to pair up depending if they feel if their partner is healthy or not. Volunteers asking for partners that they do not know may want to reconsider this request. Please let Joanie and Theresa know your preference.

When on patrol we ask volunteers to practice self-distancing. That may sound odd on the beach but it's still important to maintain a 6 foot distance from others. For walking patrols with a partner we recommend this as well. We also recommend that you go to the start of your route and conduct your patrol with minimal interaction with the public. This is typically not how we would want to conduct our business but considering our situation we need to be able to conduct the patrols as safe as possible. We feel that walking the beach is a safe activity as long as you maintain the 6 foot distance from others.

Regarding the use of our UTVs, keep in mind that the potential to catch anything from a UTV is incredibly low. The UTVs are kept outside and the UV (ultra-violet) radiation from the sun is the best sanitizer possible. This is a known and well-established fact. Also, the humid, breezy climate of the coast and the material of the UTVs all work in our favor. However, as an extra precaution, we will endeavor to have either hand sanitizer or a soap and water solution to wipe down the steering wheel and anything else you may be touching. Feel free to bring your own personal sanitizers and use them as you see fit. Again, we recommend that you enter the UTV with minimal interaction with others, conduct your patrol carefully and not interact with the public, or at least keep your distance (6-feet) and keep conversations to a minimum.

For your safety, the safety of those more vulnerable near to us, and to fellow Sea Turtle Patrollers, we ask that you take precautions to keep yourself healthy in your daily lives. In lieu of testing for the virus, everyone should monitor themselves for the following symptoms: a dry cough, fever, difficulty breathing /shortness of breath and/or aching joints. For reference, if you experience any of those symptoms, Texas A&M University (both College Station and Galveston) is telling faculty and staff not come into work and to self-isolate for 14 days. Joanie and I strongly recommend that you do the same and cancel your patrol, giving us as much notice as possible.

Take some time to follow the links down below, education yourself and stay up to date – we've been following the news closely and have still found the links below useful.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

<https://www.tamu.edu/coronavirus/index.html>

<https://www.tamug.edu/newsroom/2020articles/Coronavirus-Update.html>

One of the advantages of being associated with Texas A&M University is the vast resources and guidance it provides, especially in times of crisis like we are facing. Feel free to look at the corona virus updates from the university as a guide for your own personal health and to find additional resources.

There will likely be updates regarding our protocols as we get closer to our April 1st start of Sea Turtle Patrol. Joanie and I will be providing weekly updates so please monitor your emails for additional information.

Stay Healthy,
Dr. Christopher Marshall
Joanie Steinhaus