

Guidelines for Sea Turtle Volunteers in North Carolina - Spring 2022

Relative to NC DHHS Recommendations January 13, 2022

To protect volunteers, the public, and NCWRC staff, the following guidelines must be followed by all volunteers engaging in activities related to sea turtle nest monitoring, nest protection, nest inventory, and stranding response. These guidelines remain in effect until rescinded.

1. All sea turtle work remains voluntary. No volunteer coordinator should demand or even encourage participation where it is not offered. Any individual who is uncomfortable, or who wishes not to participate, should not be persuaded.
2. The volunteer coordinator(s) for each beach project must contact local town staff before the start of the nesting season to ensure that local town staff and law enforcement are aware of the work being done. They may request that you follow additional guidelines, specific to your community.
3. COVID-19 vaccines and boosters are now widely available at no cost to all eligible North Carolinians who wish to receive one, and all eligible North Carolinians are encouraged to get vaccinated; therefore, each volunteer is encouraged to be fully vaccinated before initiating volunteer activity.
4. When travelling to and from the beach in a vehicle, if all occupants are fully vaccinated, face coverings are not required. Open windows are encouraged to maintain maximum ventilation.
5. The NC DHHS recommends that people who are not up-to-date with vaccination should “...wear a well-fitting mask, stay outside, and keep 6 feet of distance” from others who do not live with them. For those who are up-to-date with vaccination, they should consider “...wearing a mask or face covering in crowded outdoor settings where you cannot maintain 6 feet physical distancing.” Therefore,
 - a. For all activities undertaken while patrolling the beach, including eggshell collection and nest marking, it is strongly recommended that volunteers who have not been fully vaccinated maintain at least 6 feet of physical distancing from non-household members, and wear a face covering. Volunteers with up-to-date vaccinations should continue to maintain 6 feet physical distancing in crowded settings where the vaccination status of the public is unknown.
 - b. Avoid passing equipment between individuals. When it’s necessary to share equipment, you should wear disposable gloves. If using a vehicle (including UTVs) that will be used by others subsequently, you should use disinfectants to wipe-down the vehicle after use.
 - c. Any individual exhibiting symptoms or recently exposed to a person with COVID-19 (even if not showing symptoms) should follow current NC DHHS guidelines on quarantine and isolation (<https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance>) and is encouraged to get tested.

6. When responding to stranded turtles, follow the requirements for social distancing and health and safety described previously. If the turtle must be moved by more than one person, face masks must be used by all attending the turtle unless everyone is from the same household and/or all have up-to-date vaccinations. If you are responding to a call from the public, communicate to them over the phone that a no-contact transfer of the turtle is needed.

When you finish your volunteer field work, carefully wash your hands and sanitize your equipment, including phones and any other electronic equipment used.