

Proposed Outreach Strategy for Human/Sea Turtle Interactions in Hawaii

written 9/05

Where else besides Lanaikea? Highway proximity

Interactions in Hawaii

DRAFT (Internal Use Only)

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Received 2005 from K. Foote

FWS HANDWRITTEN NOTES by GHB

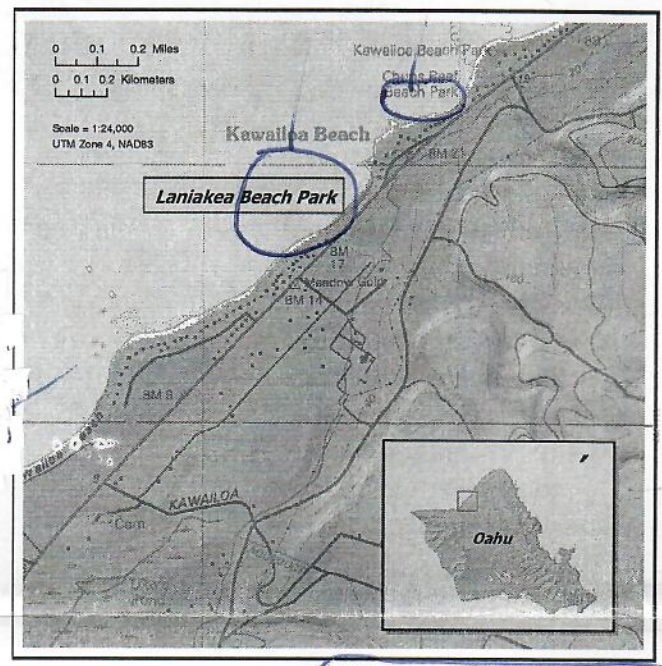
INTRODUCTION

Hawaiian green sea turtle populations have increased in numbers in recent decades and with increased numbers come more sightings and human/sea turtle interactions. The species' successful stride towards recovery has resulted in a "double-edged sword". Population numbers are up, public awareness has increased, and so has the potential for negative impacts to the species via a multitude of human interactions. This has created a conflict of opinion between staunch supporters of minimal human/sea turtle interactions and those who believe any kind of interaction puts the species at risk.

Laniakea Beach, located on the north shore of Oahu is a prime example of the issues involved with human/sea turtle interactions. Over the past five years, local residents and tourists alike have visited the beach to view and interact with green sea turtles. Interactions, public opinion, and media coverage has become more prevalent in the past year and a half. Public use of the area is high, ranging from 500 to 1,500 people a day (Note: This rough estimate is based on short-term monitoring conducted in June 2005). A large number of tourists visiting the small beach are part of organized tour groups, ranging in size from 10-80 individuals, who spend a relatively short time at the site. Based on short-term monitoring of the site conducted in June 2005, 10 to 15% of all visitors to the site lightly touch the turtles and/or feed the turtles algae. An estimated 90% of the touching that occurs is limited to the carapace and flippers, and an estimated 40% of the visitors come within 20 feet of the turtles for observation and photo opportunities. The number of turtles in the area ranged from 4-28 individuals with at least 4-7 of these individuals actively seeking human interaction.

BUS 255

likely feeding on drift



Map produced by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, June 29, 2005

Blatant negative interactions seem to be rare, but Map of Laniakea Beach located on Oahu's north shore with increased interactions the probability of more serious negative interactions is likely to increase. Reports and observations have been made of people grabbing and lifting turtles, pursuing animals, teasing animals with the offer of food, feeding turtles non-native food items, accidental collisions, and turtles biting humans. Most of this behavior can be attributed to the desire to "get up close and personal" to the animals with no obvious intentional malice. If anything, people may be guilty of "loving the animals to death"? This continual interaction has resulted in a number of turtles becoming habituated to human contact though no turtles have been physically harmed to date. Those turtles that have become habituated openly beg for food, initiate contact, and occasionally bite or nip people. Additional activities that may negatively affect the turtles are dogs on the beach and in the water (both leashed and unleashed), spear fishing in the area, potential collisions with watercraft, and fishing (entanglement).

Distance

200 lbs?

?



Visitors crowd around a green sea turtle at Laniakea Beach



Many visitors, like this woman lying next to a green sea turtle, want to get as close as possible to the animal for a photo opportunity.

Representatives from NOAA, National Marine Fisheries, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources all concur that action needs to be taken to ensure: the turtle's welfare; the continued recovery of the species; the proper application of the Endangered Species Act; and the implementation of an effective and positive outreach campaign. In order to promote responsible wildlife viewing at Laniakea Beach other factors must also be considered such as pedestrian safety, traffic stoppage and safety, parking enforcement and safety, negative human/human interactions, litter, lack of bathroom facilities and sanitation etc.



View of several individuals "spear fishing" in the areas here green sea turtles naturally forage.

Transit?



A young visitor to Laniakea Beach feeds algae (part of their natural diet) to a green sea turtle.



The most common interactions between humans and green sea turtles at Laniakea Beach are light touching of the flippers and/or carapace.

A designated representative from NOAA Fisheries Service (Hawaii) will take the lead in properly dealing with the issue of turtle/human interactions in Hawaii. This person will ensure that all interested parties are included in the planning and implementation processes.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience will consist of all visitors to turtle beaches throughout Hawaii. This includes residents and tourists that conduct public use activities associated with the beach and water where turtles are found. The target audience can be subdivided into two distinct categories (1) organized tour groups and (2) non tour groups. A specific outreach strategy will need to be developed for each category. English and Japanese speakers appear to comprise the majority of visitors; therefore, all outreach materials should be in these languages.

To ensure an effective outreach campaign "in depth" work is required by those tasked with the job to further identify and define specific target audiences in accordance with each product and/or activity.

EVALUATION

In the planning of any educational model or project, evaluation plays an essential role. All stages of evaluation should be considered in the development of an effective outreach campaign (i.e., primary, formative, remedial, and summative). Considerable time should be spent in the primary evaluation phase identifying target audiences, their behaviors and attitudes. The importance of evaluation cannot be overemphasized. Effective evaluation allows the educator the opportunity to effectively monitor both success and failure associated with any product, activity, or program. The information gathered will allow the educator the opportunity to alter or adapt that product, activity, or program to be successful.

OBJECTIVES (DESIRED OUTCOMES)

To be identified by those tasked with developing the outreach campaign. The following are a few examples/suggestions:

1. The establishment of a positive environmental ethic among visitors to Hawaii's turtle beaches, in as much, that they all conform to set guidelines that ensure a positive wildlife viewing experience and the turtle's continued well being.
2. The active participation of organized tour groups to promote the conservation of sea turtles in Hawaii.
3. Establishment of a volunteer patrol at Hawaii's most popular turtle beaches that ensure proper behavior among visitors and provides additional quality outreach.
4. The design, production, and distribution of a variety of outreach products that ensures that a unified message is effectively communicated.

THEME (PRINCIPAL MESSAGE)

To be developed by the working group.

"SHOW TURTLES ALOHA"

Example: Residents and visitors can experience the beauty and grace of Hawaii's green sea turtles if they follow and respect the established guidelines.

PROPOSED STRATEGY

web site *

not to Highway Attract

To properly address the concerns involved with turtle/human interactions in Hawaii a multi-level outreach strategy is needed. An effective outreach campaign should include the following: (1) proper signage with a uniform message presented in a positive fashion, (2) training and outreach materials for tour operators; (3) educational materials and (4) a positive human presence on the beach to inform and educate visitors and to document possible Endangered Species Act violations.

none as yet

not to Attract more people

SIGNS

Signs can inform, educate and warn your audience all at the same time, but can also prove detrimental to the desired outcome if not properly designed, constructed and placed.

Text

Once your audience(s) has been properly identified and the appropriate levels of evaluation completed, you may begin the design of your sign(s). It is very important to have a strong central message accompanied by 5 or less points or ideas that you want to emphasize. It is very important not to overload your sign with text. This will deter the majority of the audience from reading the sign. Given the multinational composition of your target audience(s), it would prove beneficial to produce the text in more than one language. Whenever possible try to express your message and ideas graphically. The audience will respond more positively to a colorful graphic than letters on a sign.

please

Another very important aspect in the development of the text and graphics is to maintain a positive point of view. Some may say this is difficult or impossible especially when you want to prohibit an activity or behavior, but this is not the case it simply takes a little more creative thinking.

Examples:

NOT TRUE

Do not touch the turtles!	Help Hawaii's turtle's <u>live happy lives</u> -do not touch them.
Observe turtles from a distance!	Everyone needs their space ...Respect Ours! Maintain a minimum of
Do not feed the turtles!	We are wild animals. Help us stay that way. Please do not feed us!

Construction and Placement of Signs

Sign construction and composition is critical to ensure an effective, long-lasting product. Two scenarios should be considered in the construction: (1) the possibility of vandalism or other forms of destruction to the signs (i.e., wave surge, vehicle collisions etc.), and (2) little to no possibility of future vandalism or other forms of damage.

The first scenario can be adequately addressed through proper evaluation. Should the evaluation process determine that there is a high probability of vandalism or destruction to the signs, then a less complicated sign with cheaper materials should be constructed. This will reduce costs in the long-run, enable easy replacement of signs when damaged, and provide a supply of duplicate signs.

First History

The second scenario could include a more complicated, permanent sign with high quality materials. When choosing sign materials, climatic elements play a key role. Will the sign be exposed to direct sunlight, salt spray, termites etc.? Most turtle beaches in Hawaii will be exposed to these very elements. High quality "scratch resistant", UV resistant, anti-corrosive materials are recommended. This type of sign has a longer life span, but is considerably more expensive.

Placement of the signs is also a critical element to an effective, long-lasting sign. When choosing a location for a sign, consideration must be given to the following: visibility (Can your audience easily see and read the sign?); access to and from the site (Is your sign located along an identified access route?); consideration towards the elements (Is the sign likely to be destroyed in large surf?); and the natural aspect (Will the location damage or threaten any native flora and fauna?). Given the fact that turtle beaches throughout Hawaii vary greatly, exceptions may have to be made for the long-term benefit of the habitat and species.

TRAINING AND OUTREACH MATERIALS FOR TOUR OPERATORS

A large portion of the people visiting Laniakea Beach come to the site via organized tour groups, many of which are foreign tourists. A separate outreach strategy needs to be developed for this group. To adequately address this subsection of the target audience the following is recommended: specific training provided to all tour guides; development and distribution of outreach materials to all tour participants; and some kind of monetary or in-kind contribution by the tour companies towards "on-the-ground" sea turtle conservation efforts.

Tour Guide Training

Training should be provided to all tour guides involved in visiting beaches or other coastal areas where sea turtles are present. One of the best ways to conduct this training would be in the form of a 4 hour workshop with subsequent smaller scale refresher courses required in subsequent years. This should become a requirement for any company conducting organized, paid tours to turtle beaches in Hawaii.

will attract none

enforce?

Outreach Materials

Fact Sheet

A basic full-color fact sheet should be designed to distribute among tourists in organized tour groups. The fact sheet may include species photo with identifying characteristics, species description, distribution, cultural significance, threats, and population numbers.

→ The most important part to include is the appropriate and legal behavior allowed when visiting a turtle beach.



? root of whole issue

Action Card

Since the focus is to encourage proper human behavior and instill a positive environmental ethic, a separate product should be produced. I recommend the development of a wallet-sized, laminated card that includes a checklist of the proper human behavior required to ensure the species continued conservation and recovery. One side of the card may include an attractive graphic with a catchy slogan such as "Honu Bodyguard – No Compromise in the Protection of Hawaii's Sea Turtles" and may even include a written oath to protect not only sea turtles but all of Hawaii's native wildlife. The other side of the card would include the checklist of proper behavior/actions allowable on sea turtle beaches.

This product will not only inform and educate, but also inspire tourists to become actively involved making them an official protector of sea turtles, while also providing them with a colorful souvenir of their visit which will hopefully continue to educate after they have left the islands. The laminated card will allow users to bring the card to the beach and even in the water to remind them of proper etiquette.

Monetary or In-kind Contributions

Tour guide companies in Hawaii are making money from Hawaii's precious natural resources, and the time as come for the tour companies to put some of those profits back into the habitat and wildlife they are so eager to exploit. Tour companies should contribute both money and in-kind contributions towards the conservation of and recovery of Hawaii's green sea turtles. Tour companies should contribute between \$1-3 for every tourist they bring to one of Hawaii's turtle beaches. This money can go directly towards on the ground conservation efforts, and perhaps even help with the maintenance of any related infrastructure. In addition, the tour guide companies will collectively cover all costs related to the production and distribution of outreach materials they provide to their customers.

TAXES
Enforce collect?

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

The same informational fact sheet on Hawaii's green sea turtles can be distributed at the beach. An additional informational handout will include the checklist of the proper human behavior required to ensure the species continued conservation and recovery, basic information on endangered and threatened species in Hawaii, a short summary of the laws and penalties for violations, a list of additional actions to help protect Hawaii's native wildlife and habitats, and who to contact for additional information and volunteer opportunities.

To assist with volunteer recruitment and expanding outreach efforts throughout the islands special "Honu bodyguard" t-shirts can be designed and distributed to those individuals participating in more in-depth, specialized outreach activities. To reach all interested parties throughout the state, a sea turtle bumper sticker with a catchy slogan can be developed and distributed. The bumper sticker may also be sold for a minimal profit, via the volunteer program and tour operators, to help supplement the volunteer programs' operation costs.

The abovementioned materials can be distributed via the volunteer program. A brochure/fact sheet dispenser should be installed and properly identified to encourage visitors to use the educational materials. The dispenser itself should be made of an anti-corrosive, waterproof material to ensure that the materials are protected from wind and rain.

HUMAN PRESENCE (VOLUNTEER PROGRAM)

One of the most critical aspects of this outreach strategy is to have a constant human presence at Laniakea Beach and other turtle beaches with high public use. No matter who the audience is you will always have a percentage of visitors who don't read the signs or the handout material, but will respond to human contact and a positive dialogue.

NOT SELLING

The development of a "turtle patrol" consisting of highly motivated volunteers and perhaps a paid coordinator will ensure compliance to set wildlife viewing regulations. The purpose of this group will be to educate and inform while monitoring the beach and documenting any ESA violations. Members can educate and inform on a one-to one basis or to a group of individuals. Volunteers can ensure that visitors are properly informed of the appropriate behaviors expected of visitors and educate them about the turtles and their plight.

?
what plight?

Volunteers can also conduct outreach sessions with school groups and any other interested parties. They can implement a program where the participants are trained to become "Honu bodyguards", thus increasing awareness and active participation throughout other areas of the island. Once the training is complete, participants can be awarded with a "Honu bodyguard" t-shirt, the laminated action card and a bumper sticker. An effective training program will assist in volunteer recruitment and eventually establish an island-wide network of "Honu bodyguards" or earth stewards.

All volunteers must be easily recognizable by their clothing and their program well supported by all those agencies, NGO's and private entities involved. The following attributes are desired in the potential volunteers: a basic knowledge of sea turtles, the ESA and other environmental issues in Hawaii; a willingness to contribute a minimum of 4-8 hours a week; good people skills, positive attitude and highly motivated.

Volunteers could also be equipped with a cell phone or radio with direct contact to HPD and other pertinent agencies (i.e., DOCARE, FWS/LE, and NOAA/LE etc.) should the need arise. The volunteer(s) could also be provided with a camera to document any human-turtle interactions that cross the line which may prove to be a deterrent in itself to any questionable behavior.

It is recommended that NOAA oversees the volunteer program and that it be comprised of interested local residents to ensure a stakeholder interest. NOAA will have to provide the initial start up monies needed for such a program with the desire of the program becoming self-sufficient in the near future. It would prove beneficial if the volunteer group could be directly linked to a non profit group which would enable it to more easily raise funds towards sea turtle conservation. Monies raised by the group and collected from tour group operators should eventually allow the group to be self sufficient.

BUDGET

Signs

Without knowing the specific details for the signs (i.e., size, color, amount, composition, location, type etc.) it is difficult to estimate the amount needed. The following cost estimate includes design, production and placement

\$8-12,000.00

#160 - #250
BANNERS

Tour Guide Training

Conduct a 4-hour training workshop to tour guide operators three times a year
Estimated cost

\$3,000.00

Attract more

Outreach Materials

Fact Sheet (full-color, double-sided)

Estimated cost

\$1.00/printing

Action card (full-color, laminated, wallet-size)

Estimated cost

\$1.00/printing

"Honu bodyguard" t-shirt (color, 100% cotton)

Estimated cost

\$5-6.00/shirt

Sea turtle bumper sticker (color)

Estimated cost

\$0.25/sticker

Xerox
10¢ each

Volunteer program (dependent upon program size)

Estimated cost

\$10,000/1st year

FOR?

FOR?

The total cost for the proposed outreach campaign (1st year) cannot be calculated at this time due to the absence of many critical variables such as quantity (i.e., printing amount, number of volunteers), quality (i.e., type of materials used, number of colors used in printing) etc. However, it is recommended that a minimum of \$50,000 (start up cost) will be needed to launch a successful outreach campaign and any deficits that may arise can be supplemented via monetary donations and in-kind contributions.

