

For Immediate Release:

New Lighting Guidelines for Jekyll Island Beaches to Protect Endangered Sea Turtles

Jekyll Island Authority Publishes Updated Lighting Ordinance; Sets New Standard for Beach Protection from Artificial Light

JEKYLL ISLAND, GA. – June 14, 2008 – The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) today announced its intentions to set greater restrictions on lights near its natural beaches in order to protect sea turtles from the adverse effects of artificial light. The move, once approved as a new ordinance for the state-owned island, will likely be the model for beach lighting ordinances for all of Georgia's coast communities.

Artificial lighting is the light that emanates from any man-made device, such as street-lights, tree lights, beach-walk lanterns, and neon signs. This new ordinance, which strictly defines what will and will not be allowed on and near the beach, will be regulated and enforced by the JIA.

“Jekyll Island is well-known for its conservation efforts, especially through the work of the Georgia Sea Turtle Center,” said Ben Porter, chairman of the Jekyll Island State Park Authority. “This is another big step towards making Jekyll Island one of the most environmentally-friendly communities on the East Coast.”

The new ordinance was developed in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources with vital input from the experts at the Georgia Sea Turtle Center. Once approved, illumination of certain beaches will be prohibited at nighttime during the sea turtle nesting season for the protection of the nesting females and hatchling sea turtles making their way into the sea. Oftentimes hatchlings will confuse artificial lighting with the reflection of the moon, which they use as a marker to get to the ocean once they hatch.

“We were pleased to see the Jekyll Island Authority take the lead in placing these restrictions into an enforceable ordinance,” said Noel Holcomb, Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources. “As Chairman of the Shore Protection Committee, I will promote the standards within this ordinance to the Shore Protection Committee as we consider beachfront projects for permitting under the Shore Protection Act.”

Lighting may still be operated during the nesting season if the light, or reflection, is not directly visible from the beach. But the majority of the lights will be low-intensity lighting, such as amber or red LEDs, red neon lights and “Turtle Safe Lighting,” which are coated and compact florescent lamps under 13 watts. Additionally, the ordinance states that tinting will be installed on all windows and glass doors within line-of-sight of the beach.

The new ordinance was announced by the Jekyll Island Authority at its regular meeting on Monday. The “first reading” of any new ordinance must be posted for public review, anyone interested in reading the proposed ordinance language can view it on the Authority's Web site at http://www.jekyllislandauthority.org/Ordinances/proposed_beach_lighting_ordinance_2008.pdf.

The Jekyll Island Authority is expected to adopt the new ordinance at its regular meeting in August.

The Jekyll Island Authority would like to give a special thank you to island resident, Dr. Steve Newell for his instrumental part in the creation of the new draft ordinance.

About Jekyll Island

Jekyll Island is a barrier island on Georgia's coast – midway between Jacksonville, Fla. and Savannah, Ga. Accessible by car just minutes from I-95, Jekyll Island offers a variety of amenities, including 10 miles of beach, four golf courses, a 250-acre Historic Landmark District, water park, tennis center, an array of lodging options including hotels, cottages and campgrounds. Owned by the State of Georgia, and managed by the Jekyll Island State Park Authority, Jekyll Island has had development limited to just 35 percent of its available land area. This unique aspect of Jekyll Island serves to preserve the critical barrier island ecosystem, and provide guests with a unique escape from the crowds and complications of other beach resort destinations. The Jekyll Island Foundation is a public 501 (c) 3 organization which operates exclusively for charitable and educational purposes to support the work of the Jekyll Island Authority by assisting in the preservation, conservation and appreciation of Jekyll Island. Please visit www.jekyllisland.com for more information or call 1-877-4JEKYLL.

About the Jekyll Island Foundation

The Jekyll Island Foundation is a tax exempt, public, non-profit that offers participatory opportunities in planned giving, private donation, legislative education, corporate support, and philanthropic foundation support. The Foundation serves to raise, receive, manage and disburse funds for the stewardship of the historic and natural resources of Jekyll Island. This stewardship includes preservation and improvement of historic sites, conservation of the undeveloped portion of the island and development and improvement of amenities for visitors to the island. For additional information on the Jekyll Island Foundation please visit www.JekyllIslandFoundation.org or call (912) 635-4402. The Foundation office is located in Villa Ospo at 381 Riverview Drive, Jekyll Island, Ga., 31527.

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