

## **HARBOR ISLAND SEA TURTLE PROJECT FROM DUSK UNTIL DAWN: LIGHTING AND PHOTOGRAPHY ON THE BEACH**

Lurking about on a beach can disturb nesting turtles, lights or no lights. Some nesting sea turtles are more sensitive to this “human presence” than are others.

### **LIGHTING**

Regular white-light flashlights are prohibited on the beach from dusk until dawn during sea turtle nesting season which runs from May through October.

#### **PROHIBITED**

Flashlights that shine white

#### **ACCEPTABLE**

Flashlights that shine red

Flashlights with red nail polish on the lens

Flashlights with red plastic wrap on the lens

Flashlights with red glass paint on the lens

Red LED lights

Headlamps with red lights

Use light sources that are pure red and use them only briefly. Pure red light (light that is composed mostly of wavelengths in the red region of the visible spectrum) is preferred for two reasons. The first is that sea turtles apparently do not see red light as well as we do. The second reason is that red light does not bleach the photo pigment we depend upon for our night vision. Not all reds are the same. Some are more pink (whiter than red) to begin with and some start out red but fade to purple (blue and red) over time. One of the most pure and fade resistant red filters is the red plastic (Lexan) of automobile tail lights (the lens can be cut to flashlight-size with a coping saw). Most red films of acetate that one might use to cover a flashlight fade quickly and because of this are not very good choices. Red tape is fair in a pinch, but it diffuses the light too much to focus well.

### **PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY**

Flash photography and white-lighted videography is not permitted.

Photography or videography lighted by red lights is acceptable.

As a general rule, turtles should not be approached on a nesting beach until they have completed laying their eggs. At this time, the animal is less likely to be disturbed and if disturbed, the negative impact is lessened because the eggs

have already been laid. Photographs may be taken at this time.

Nesting female turtles should not be disturbed from their nesting routine, nor should they or their hatchlings be held back from returning to the sea to await suitable filming conditions (e.g. sunrise). Hatchlings need to enter the sea as quickly as possible so that they do not waste valuable yolk reserves.