This presentation will cover:

- Project Context
- The Definition of a Conservation Easement
- Project Benefits
- Phase I Accomplishments
- Phase II Goals
- Survey Findings
- Next Steps
Florida contains the majority of sea turtle nesting habitat in the country. The majority of coastal land in Florida is privately owned. Threats to sea turtle nesting habitat include: artificial lighting, beach erosion, coastal armoring, beach furniture, beach driving, predation, pollution.

This project seeks to mitigate these issues by using conservation easements to protect sea turtle nesting habitat.
Conservation Easements

“A voluntary agreement between a landowner and an easement holder that restricts certain uses of the property for the purpose of conservation.”

Variable Components:

• Method of transfer
  – Can be donated or sold
• Types of easement holders
  – Government or NGO
• Restricted rights
  – Limitless
• Duration
  – Set duration or perpetual*
Potential Benefits:

**HABITAT CONSERVATION**

Through restricted uses on properties like:
- Subdividing
- Chemical Pesticides
- Shoreline Armoring
- Lighting
- Driving on the beach
- Bonfires/ Fireworks
- Physical obstructions
- Etc.

**PROPERTY OWNER BENEFITS**

Benefits could include:
- Federal income tax deduction
- State property tax exemption

*Since a CE is specific to a property owner’s needs, each CE could look a little different.*
Project Goals Phase I

COMPLETED

✔ Analyze the **biophysical and socio-economic coastal property trends** through ArcGIS and a statewide survey

✔ Identification and creation of the suite of **less-than-fee property interests**

✔ **Draft Model** Coastal Conservation Easement

✔ Analyze surveys to **identify appropriate circumstances** for CEs (**more on survey later**)

✔ **Enter into a Coastal CE to protect sea turtle nesting habitat** (as seen on right)
Project Goals Phase II

**NEXT STEPS**

- Continue to negotiate **CEs that explicitly protect sea turtles** and their nesting beach habitat while increasing stewardship
- **Increase educational awareness** among coastal residents for CEs and sea turtle nesting habitat through workshops and outreach
- Utilize this pilot project to understand the potential for a more **comprehensive program**
- **Collaborate** with other land trusts and interested stakeholders
THE SURVEY SOUGHT TO UNDERSTAND:

- single-family coastal homeowners’ understanding of, attitude towards, motivations for, and interest in coastal conservation easements to protect sea turtle nesting habitat
- knowledge of and interaction with sea turtles, opinions and attitudes of coastal armoring,
- geographic and demographic differences
SURVEY POPULATION:

Parcels chosen if:

- Located on a sandy nesting beach
- Within a mile of a protected section of beach (state park, preserve, etc.)
- Classified as a single family home

Additional constraints:

- No duplexes
- Parcel split by road
- Beach owned by HOA
- If permanent address was out of country it was removed

- 4,588 Parcels met these requirements
- Proportional geographic sample of 1,274 homeowners
- 33% response rate
Key Findings

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS:
- Most respondents (57.1%) had yet to hear of a conservation easement.
- ~¼ said the CE definition matched their understanding extremely well.
- ~30% had interest to establish a CE on their property.
- Almost one-half wanted more information on the project.

However, confusion amongst property owners exist regarding:
1) the applicability of the project for small coastal properties; and
2) the voluntary nature of CEs.

Therefore, it is important moving forward to target our efforts to areas more likely to be engaged.
Respondent Property Facts

- Average property size of .705 acres
- Average parcel assessed property value ~$1.2 million
- Average length of ownership ~19.3 years
- 19% reported having coastal armoring
- 24.6% of people consider their property a rental

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MOVING FORWARD

Focus Geographic Areas for CEs
- Based on survey results we will focus on The Florida Keys and the Central East
  - With Central East focus in Brevard County

Programmatic Goals
- Utilize this pilot project to understand the potential for a more comprehensive program
- Conduct another coastal property stakeholder workshop
- Webinar session with possible CLE (Continuing Legal Education) Credit
- Publish survey findings in appropriate journal/s
- Complete two new CEs

Previous April 2017 workshop in Melbourne, FL. Photo by Cynthia Lagueux.
Potential Legal Obstacles

- Current CE legislation
- Valuation
- Mortgages
  - Subordination
THANK YOU

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