

For Immediate Release

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Turtle Trackers of Hilton Head Island Establishes Sea Turtle Preservation Endowment Fund at Community Foundation of the Lowcountry

May 17, 2023 - Turtle Trackers of Hilton Head Island, a 501 (C)3 non-profit organization, was established in 2016 to assist with the preservation efforts for endangered sea turtles nesting on Hilton Head Island and to educate the public for the protection of the sea turtle hatchlings headed to the ocean.

Turtle Trackers relies on the generosity of donors and grants to fund its operation. In an effort to make certain that funding exists for years to come, Turtle Trackers recently established the Sea Turtle Preservation Endowment Fund with Community Foundation of the Lowcountry.

“The purpose of the Turtle Trackers Sea Turtle Preservation Endowment Fund is to ensure that resources for sea turtle preservation efforts and programs will continue to be available to fulfill the mission of Turtle Trackers,” said Turtle Trackers President Beverly Crylen. “Turtle Trackers started with our Sea Pines Chapter and has expanded to six chapters island-wide with over 550 members. This reflects the growth of the island’s visitor and residential populations, along with increased education and sea turtle protection programs that Turtle Trackers fund and operate.”

These programs include on-beach activities to ensure the beach is clean, flat, and dark for nesting sea turtles who come ashore beginning in May to lay their eggs, as well as for the hatchlings who make their way from their nests to the sea. Officially, the sea turtle nesting and hatching season on Hilton Head Island runs May through October. As of May 17, there are 15 confirmed sea turtle nests on Hilton Head Island.

Additionally, Turtle Trackers utilizes informed volunteers for Sea Turtle Patrol educational presentations, in-school education for local elementary school students, operates Sea Turtle Learning Stations at various locations throughout the island during sea turtle season, and provides materials and educational programs for tourists vacationing on island resorts. Turtle Trackers members provide sea turtle protection and education along the Hilton Head Island’s 14 miles of beach.

“It literally takes a village to provide the education and protections necessary for successful sea turtle preservation,” said Crylen. “We expect our needs to expand in the years to come as Hilton

Head continues to flourish as a desirable eco-tourism and vacation destination, as well as a second- and permanent-home location.”

The partnership between Community Foundation of the Lowcountry and Turtle Trackers goes back to 2016 when the original Sea Turtle Preservation Fund was created. The Community Foundation staff plays an important administrative role in managing the Turtle Trackers funds and providing guidance and recommendations for Turtle Trackers leadership.

“The Community Foundation is honored to partner with Turtle Trackers of Hilton Head Island through this important endowment fund,” said Emmy Rooney, Community Foundation VP of Development and Donor Services. “The endowment provides a direct way for everyone, Lowcountry residents and visitors alike, to support the efforts of the dedicated volunteers working tirelessly to protect sea turtles now and well into the future.”

To donate to the Turtle Trackers Sea Turtle Preservation Endowment Fund, click on https://lowcountry.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/create/fund?funit_id=2188 or visit turtletrackershhi.org.

To learn more about Turtle Trackers, please visit turtletrackershhi.org, and for more information about Community Foundation of the Lowcountry, please visit cf-lowcountry.org.

Photo caption: Turtle Trackers, representing a team of over 550 volunteers, celebrates the start of the 2023 sea turtle season on Hilton Head Island.

Photo credit: Bill Pender