

Coastal Construction Conservation Measures to Protect Beach Mice and their Habitat

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Conservation measures can be implemented that would protect beach mice and their dune habitats. Beach mice are nocturnal and forage for food throughout the dune system. They feed primarily on seeds and fruits of bluestem, sea oats, evening primrose, and other dune plants. However, insects are also an important component of their diet. Optimal beach mouse habitats comprise a mix of interconnected habitats including primary, secondary, scrub dunes, and interdunal areas. Beach mice dig burrows mainly in the primary dunes and in other secondary and interior scrub dunes where the vegetation provides cover.

Conservation Measures for Multi-family or Commercial Developments

Project Planning and Design

1. Minimize development footprints (building, parking, ancillary structures, other amenities) to reduce overall impacts to dune habitats.
2. Site the development to maximize the size and continuity of beach mouse habitat and preserve travel corridors.
3. Maintain all non-developed areas within the development in their natural condition and connect the habitats with landscaped areas by using native dune plants.
4. Protect remaining natural habitat using elevated pedestrian walkways that allow the natural dunes system to form and grow. Conserve natural habitats by installing the minimal number and size walkways over the area. Assure that pedestrians use the walkways and do not walk in or impact the dune habitats.
5. Designate the remaining dune habitat as a conservation area and limit activities within the area to maintenance and restoration of the habitat. Use appropriate signs to designate and indicate the purpose of the conservation area.
6. Post or fence property boundaries that allow movement of beach mice to and from adjacent habitats and control access by people and pets.
7. Landscape using only native dune plants and soils characteristic of local dune habitats.
8. Install "sea turtle" lighting that reduces the direct and ambient lighting of the dune habitats within and adjacent to the project site. The lighting plan is to be reviewed and approved by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Project Construction

1. Limit impacts to onsite dune habitats by designating areas of construction disturbance using construction or silt fencing material.
2. Store construction materials and equipment outside or adjacent to dune habitats. Use staging sites outside of the habitat.
3. Keep the construction site clean and free of debris in dune habitats.

4. Restore all habitats to their natural configuration and vegetation that are impacted by construction.
5. Use top down construction for pedestrian walkways over the dune habitats.

Post Construction and Maintenance of the Development

1. Prohibit free movement of pets in the outside portions of the development. Prohibit pets in the dune habitats. Do not encourage or support feral cats in the development (i.e., feeding).
2. Install and maintain sturdy animal-proof garbage containers to prevent the invasion of house mice and predators of beach mice (cats, racoons, fox, coyotes).
3. Prohibit the use of pesticides or pest control in outside areas of the development that could kill or harm a beach mouse (i.e., traps or poison). Prohibit the use of herbicides that could affect dune plants that provide cover or food for beach mice. (If an outside rodent problem occurs, the Service will work closely with the development or their exterminator to resolve the problem).
4. Restore dune habitats using native dune vegetation following storm or other significant weather events.
5. Conduct or fund biannual beach mouse trapping surveys of the dune habitats for three years following project completion. The person conducting the trapping surveys must have appropriate State of Florida and Fish and Wildlife Service permits to conduct the work.
6. Allow the Fish and Wildlife Service to have access to the property to conduct periodic inspections (with notification). Allow the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, or the Florida Park Service to conduct periodic beach mouse surveys if deemed appropriate (tracking or trapping).
7. Incorporate these above Conservation Measures as Covenants and Restrictions for the development.

Potential Offsite Project Enhancements

1. Assist in local projects to provide beach access and protect dune habitats.
2. Assist in local projects to restore and maintain dune habitats.
3. Assist in local projects that increase the survivability of beach mice (i.e., predator and animal control).
4. Assist in education and outreach efforts to inform others on the significance of beach mice and the importance of protecting the species and their habitats.



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