

Engaging Boaters: Reframing Sea Turtle Protection in Florida

April 2020

Theresa L. Miller, PhD, Senior Researcher
Mackenzie Price, PhD, Principal Strategist
Jenn Nichols, PhD, Director of Research
Interpretation and Application
Emilie L'Hôte, PhD, Director of Research

**FRAME
WORKS**

**A Strategic Brief in partnership with Loggerhead Marinelife
Center and the Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research
at the University of Florida**

**This report was funded in part by a grant awarded from the Sea Turtle Grants Program.
The Sea Turtle Grants Program is funded from proceeds from the sale of the Florida Sea
Turtle License Plate. Learn more at www.helpingseaturtles.org.**

Contents

Introduction	3
Recommendations	4
Appendix: Research Methods	19
Endnote	26
About FrameWorks	27

Introduction

How conservation advocates talk about sea turtles being hit by unintended boat strikes matters.

Effective communication about the risk of unintended boat strikes, what causes them, and how boaters can help prevent them needs a communication strategy that members of the conservation community can share. The communications recommendations in this report were prepared for Loggerhead Marinelife Center (LMC) and the Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research (ACCSTR) at the University of Florida by the FrameWorks Institute as a guide for how to bring boaters' thinking about unintended boat strikes away from individual freedoms and toward coexistence with marine life to support the local environment.

Exploratory interviews conducted by FrameWorks researchers revealed that boaters in Palm Beach County, Florida believe that going fast on their boats is desirable and essential to boating, and that unintended boat strikes affecting sea turtles are uncommon. These beliefs lead boaters to conclude that slowing down for sea turtles is unnecessary and that any unintended boat strikes that do occur are “freak accidents” and, therefore, unpreventable.

Simply blaming boaters for their bad behavior on the water is not enough to correct these misperceptions. In fact, they can have the opposite effect: Stories that blame boaters leave them feeling alienated from the problem of unintended boat strikes and the solutions available to protect sea turtles.

Instead, building support among boaters and the general public for effective solutions requires telling a new story about unintended boat strikes affecting sea turtles. In short, we need to reframe the conversation in ways that normalize a reduced speed zone to protect sea turtles and invite boaters to participate in the solution.

Strategic framing means making intentional choices about what to say—and what to avoid saying. A reframing strategy can help communicators and experts communicate more effectively with public audiences. Using the reframing strategy described in this strategic brief will foster better public understanding of what is at stake when sea turtles are hit by unintended boat strikes and build support for a reduced speed zone to protect sea turtles.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Do more than identify the zone. Choose a name that explains what the zone *achieves*.

What to do

When choosing a name for the zone, keep it simple by focusing on what you want the zone to achieve, that is, protecting sea turtles that are currently endangered or threatened. Importantly, stick to one name and use it consistently across all messaging and communications about the zone.

How to do it

- Always include “sea turtles” in the name of the zone, to make the purpose of the zone clear.
- Use words such as “protection” and/or “endangered” in the name of the zone to identify the threat that sea turtles face *and* what can be done about it.
- Suggested names that tested well in our research include:
 - **Sea Turtle Protection Zone**
 - **Endangered Sea Turtle Zone**
 - **Endangered Sea Turtle Protection Zone**

Why it works

When communicating with the public about making voluntary behavior changes, it's important to focus on the relationship between the problem you are pointing out to the public and the end result of the change you want people to make. This can mean explaining, step-by-step, how changing a given behavior will help solve the problem under discussion. Linking underlying causes to visible problems and to behavior change solutions can increase an audience's sense of individual and collective efficacy, or the belief that individuals and groups are able to achieve the goal you have in mind.

In this case, this means choosing a name that clearly identifies the goal of protecting endangered or threatened sea turtles from unintended boat strikes that injure or kill them. By including "sea turtles" in the name of the zone, we help people immediately understand what its main purpose is. We found that boaters were more willing to slow down in the zone when it was clearly linked to sea turtle protection, rather than presented as a "reduced speed" or "go slow" zone without additional context. Additionally, we found that including words such as "protection" and "endangered" in the name of the zone increased boaters' willingness to slow down and their belief that others would also be willing to slow down. There are two main reasons for this:

- Words such as "endangered" clearly identify the current status of the sea turtle population and link it to unintended boat strikes, which increases boaters' understanding of this problem.
- By mentioning "protection," we identify a clear, simple, and achievable step that boaters can take to protect sea turtles from harm.

Strategy for naming a speed reduction zone

Use the name to focus on the sea turtles themselves and the goal of protecting them. Names that focus on boaters' behavior lose sight of what the zone is designed to accomplish.

Names that work

- ✓ Turtle Protection Zone
- ✓ Endangered Sea Turtle Zone
- ✓ Endangered Sea Turtle Protection Zone

Names to avoid

- ✗ Voluntary Speed Reduction Zone
- ✗ Go-Slow Zone
- ✗ Suggested Slow Speed Zone

Why the “VSRZ” doesn’t work

We found that the term “Voluntary Speed Reduction Zone” fell short for boaters in two main ways:

- **It focuses on boaters’ behavior, rather than on an achievable goal.** The emphasis on “speed reduction” results in boaters defending their “need for speed” on the ocean rather than on how sea turtles are being harmed and what can be done about it.
- **The focus on “voluntary” decreases a sense of collective efficacy.** When “voluntary” is included in the name of the zone, boaters disbelieve that most people will voluntarily slow their speeds for any reason, let alone to avoid unintended boat strikes that they are typically unaware of. This taps into a widespread belief that most people will disobey voluntary regulations and that enforcement through fines is the only way to change behavior on the water.

Recommendation #2: Define what you're asking boaters to do and explain why they should participate.

What to do

When communicating about the zone, provide specifics so that boaters understand what is being asked of them and the reasons behind these requests. This includes:

- Defining the speed of the zone
- Defining the geographical area and seasonality of the zone
- Explaining why slowing down helps protect sea turtles from harm
- Explaining why the zone is needed one mile offshore.

How to do it

1. **Give a speed limit range that is identifiable to boaters as “slow speed.”** An example of “slow speed” (as a nautical term and as opposed to a “no wake” zone) is 15–20 mph, but any speed range that is deemed appropriate will be useful to include in communications about the zone.
2. **Create maps and other information about the exact geographical area and seasonality of the zone.** Detailed maps of the area one mile offshore between Jupiter Inlet and Lake Worth Inlet will clearly show boaters the location of the zone and its limits, thereby providing them with information about where to slow down. Maps should also include information about the seasonality of the zone, from March to October, so boaters know when they need to comply with the zone.
3. **Provide information about how slowing down can prevent unintended boat strikes.** Boaters are unaware of the extent of the problem of unintended boat strikes affecting sea turtles. They need more information on how driving boats fast can make it difficult to see sea turtles, and how sea turtles move slowly in the water and often cannot avoid a boat’s propeller when it’s moving fast. Boaters need information on how slowing down their boat can directly protect sea turtles because it is easier to see them in the water and redirect the boat away from the sea turtle’s path. It is necessary to give boaters information that demonstrates how slower speeds can protect sea turtles.
4. **Explain why the zone needs to extend one mile offshore.** Information on sea turtles’ movements during the nesting season and their tendency to stay in waters up to one mile offshore during that time period will help boaters understand why they need to slow down this far offshore in the ocean, where boaters often go faster than in other areas of the ocean or Intracoastal Waterway.

Why it works

Boaters are typically experienced on the water and aware of other areas that are restricted use or reduced speed for various reasons (for example, Manatee Protection Zones in the Intracoastal Waterway and no fishing zones in the ocean). We found that boaters are willing to comply with restrictions that seem reasonable to them, and the more information they have about unintended boat strikes affecting sea turtles, the more reasonable the request to slow down in the zone becomes. In particular, this information should include *why* unintended boat strikes harm sea turtles and *how* and *where* this typically happens. Information on what speeds are slow enough to avoid harming sea turtles will also be helpful, as will information on where sea turtles are typically located in the ocean during the turtle nesting season.

Here's an example of what this detailed explanation might look like in practice:

One way you can share the water with marine life in Florida's waterways is to watch your speed. Between March and October, the area one mile offshore from turtle nesting beaches becomes busier as sea turtles travel back and forth to nest. At this time of year, sea turtles are often swimming close to the water's surface. The increase in turtle traffic close to the surface means that boaters are more likely to strike turtles unintentionally. Slowing down in these areas during the nesting season makes sea turtles' journey safer, and ultimately helps these vulnerable species.

When boats strike turtles, their shells can be damaged, and they often die. Even when a strike isn't immediately fatal, injuries from the crash can change a turtle's buoyancy and make it difficult for them to swim and ultimately survive. But when vessels slow down under 15–20 mph in high-traffic sea turtle areas—including the offshore area one mile out between Jupiter Inlet and Lake Worth Inlet—they reduce the risk of unintended strikes and make the ocean a more supportive habitat for marine life.

A Note on Explaining the Zone as a “Pilot Project”

When boaters were given information that the zone could be thought of as a “pilot project” that would extend beyond the parameters of Jupiter Inlet and Lake Worth Inlet over time, there was some indication that boaters would support a more extensive zone as time goes on. Boaters were able to connect the idea of a pilot project with the Manatee Protection Zones that have become more extensive over time. Giving boaters a clear explanation of the zone now—including *where* it is and *why* slowing down is needed—will help increase support of a larger zone in the future, because the idea of a zone to protect sea turtles will be normalized for boaters.

Recommendation #3: Tell a three-part “coexistence story” about the zone.

What to do

Just giving information about the zone is not sufficient to build support among boaters and increase their willingness to slow down. You also need to tell people a story about the zone—a set of ideas about the zone that has a beginning, middle, and end. Telling stories about important community issues gives audiences a familiar way to process new information. Moreover, telling stories that are values-based makes it clear why people should care about the issue. The story about the zone should include these three main parts:

- Part 1: Lead with the value of *Coexistence* between sea turtles and boaters.
- Part 2: Identify the threat that sea turtles face.
- Part 3: Balance urgency and efficacy in a call to action.

How to do it

Part 1: Lead with *Coexistence*.

Telling a story about the zone should start with emphasizing the importance of coexistence between people and the marine environment in Florida. The key message about the zone should be centered on finding a balance between boaters, who are respected and valued community members, and sea turtles, who are also respected and valued as marine life.

Why it works

The Florida boaters represented in our sample are knowledgeable about the marine environment, and there is widespread support for taking care of the oceans and marine life. There is also a sense of community among boaters that centers on general respect for one another and for the oceans and marine life. Yet boaters are wary of being told what to do on their boats in the ocean, especially by non-boaters.

By leading with the value of *Coexistence* and balance between people and the marine environment, we build support for the zone by showing why it matters. We cue helpful ways of thinking about marine life and community while avoiding any sort of scolding or finger-wagging about what boaters should do on the ocean. Messages that emphasize coexistence invite boaters to participate in the zone as a way to share the ocean with sea turtles. They activate boaters’ productive knowledge about the ocean and marine life. Moreover, the value

of *Coexistence* emphasizes the positive roles that boaters can play to find a balance between people and the environment. It is an empowering message that helps boaters to think about efficacious solutions to help protect sea turtles.

Why a *Responsibility* story backfires

Messages that focus on boater responsibility cue unproductive beliefs and backfire, leading to pushback against the zone. This is because boaters hold fundamental beliefs about the ocean and themselves that conflict with ideas of “boater responsibility,” including:

- The belief that the ocean is a place of freedom and relaxation, where rigid rules do not apply
- The belief that boaters are already well versed in what is appropriate behavior on the ocean
- The belief that the boating community knows more about what is happening in the ocean than others do.

Focusing on coexistence instead downplays these beliefs and encourages thinking about the positive roles that boaters and the boating community can, and already do, play in taking care of sea turtles and marine life in general.

The “before-and-after” example below illustrates how slight changes in word choice and emphasis can shift away from an unproductive appeal to boaters’ responsibility and towards a more productive appeal to coexisting harmoniously with marine life.

Before:

We believe that a voluntary speed reduction zone will significantly decrease the number of unintentional boat strike cases. This initiative cannot be effective without your help. We need the Florida boating community to volunteer to help us make a difference.

After:

Florida boaters enjoy local waters peacefully alongside local marine life. Driving boats at slower speeds (under 15–20 mph) through areas that sea turtles swim in helps maintain the balance between wildlife and humans enjoying the environment.

Part 2: Identify the threat that sea turtles face.

After leading with an appeal to *Coexistence*, communications should then focus on what is disrupting the balance between boaters and sea turtles, namely, unintended boat strikes that injure or kill sea turtles. There is currently widespread disbelief among boaters that

unintended boat strikes threaten sea turtles, so it's important to identify *why* and *how* this is a threat. The strategic use of images and data are key ways to explain and demonstrate the threat of unintended boat strikes affecting sea turtles.

Here's an example of what it looks like to identify the threat that turtles face:

Before:

Sea turtles in the waters off of our region are particularly vulnerable to unintended boat strikes. It's up to boaters to protect them.

After:

Between March and October, boaters have a higher chance of unintentionally striking sea turtles traveling to nesting beaches between Jupiter Inlet and Lake Worth Inlet. This is because not only are sea turtles heading to the beaches to nest, but they are more likely to be swimming closer to the surface. When they swim this way, they come closer to boats that can hit them, seriously injuring or even killing them.

Images that work



Image of an injured sea turtle, from the LMC website (© Loggerhead Marinelifelife Center)

We found that the most effective image to accompany messages on a website, in pamphlets, or other written communications materials (rather than on signage) is of a sea turtle injured by an unintended boat strike. This is because the image clearly displays the impact of what happens to sea turtles that are unintentionally struck by boats. It also evokes sympathy for injured or killed sea turtles and leads to a sense of urgency about preventing harm to them.

In contrast, we found that an image of an uninjured sea turtle swimming in the ocean was ineffective at increasing boaters' willingness to slow down, because it did not demonstrate the negative effects of boat strikes affecting sea turtles. Similarly, an image of a sea turtle swimming next to people was ineffective because it did not display the *consequences* of unintended boat strikes.

We recommend primarily using an image of an injured sea turtle to illustrate written communications such as a website or pamphlet (rather than signage). People are likely to spend more time reading messages on a website or in a pamphlet, which allows them to process what is going on in an image like this one. For the best approach to communications on signage, which needs to be almost instantly understood, see Recommendation #5.

Use unintended boat-strike data strategically

Using data strategically can also help to build people’s understanding of the threat of unintended boat strikes affecting sea turtles and create a sense of urgency about the problem.

Useful:

“More than 90 percent of unintended boat strikes are fatal to sea turtles.”

Why it works

- Gives the problem weight and significance
- Demonstrates the dire consequences for sea turtles
- Creates a sense that reducing unintended boat strikes should be a top priority for sea turtle protection.

Not useful:

“Twenty-eight sea turtles were identified as victims of unintended boat strikes in 2018 (12 injured, 16 dead).”

Why it doesn’t work

- Doesn’t show the whole picture, since many sea turtles that are victims of unintended boat strikes are never found and therefore unidentified
- Underrepresents the threat that sea turtles face from unintended boat strikes, and without a point of comparison, is likely to be interpreted as a low if not insignificant threat level
- Fails to create a sense of urgency around the threat and what should be done about it.

Part 3: Use well-known examples to balance urgency and efficacy in a call to action.

Once you’ve created a sense of urgency about unintended boat strikes threatening sea turtles, it is necessary to balance this sense of urgency with an equal or greater emphasis on solutions. This is because when people focus solely on threats or problems, they often feel powerless to do something to improve the situation. They need to know that feasible, effective solutions exist to address the problem at hand. The best way to balance urgency and efficacy is through well-known examples of solutions that are already in effect and working to protect marine life in Florida. In Florida, two key examples can be used to help boaters think about effectively protecting marine life:

1. Plastic straw regulations in Palm Beach County
2. Manatee Protection Zones

Why it works

Boaters are supportive of the newly implemented regulations to ban plastic straws in some municipalities in Palm Beach County (effective from December 2019). Although new, the plastic straw ban is widely seen as an effective step towards protecting sea turtles from ingesting harmful plastic. This example offers boaters a reminder that their local community is already committed to protecting sea turtles. Presenting the zone as another concrete step that needs to be taken in the community to protect sea turtles will increase the sense of *collective efficacy* about the zone, as an effective solution that everyone can take part in, just like the plastic straw ban.

Boaters in Florida are also highly supportive of the Manatee Protection Zones in the Intracoastal Waterway and overwhelmingly express willingness to slow down to protect manatees. We found that boaters made productive comparisons between the Manatee Protection Zones and a zone to protect sea turtles, and that thinking about the manatee zones made boaters more willing to slow down in a sea turtle zone. To see how the boaters we sampled talked about the Manatee Protection Zones, see the box below.

The before-and-after messaging examples shown here illustrate how to incorporate comparative examples into messages about sea turtle protection from boat strikes.

Before:

It's difficult to quantify damage caused by boat strikes, but what *is* clear is that unintended boat strikes endanger sea turtles off the coast. We need you to volunteer to make a difference in safeguarding the environment and protecting the local marine life.

After:

Florida has a history of making changes to coexist with local marine life. Municipalities in Palm Beach County recently took the step to eliminate plastic straws in order to protect sea turtles. And on the Intracoastal Waterway, we established Manatee Protection Zones to deter unintended boat strikes on manatees. We can take this same approach to prevent unintended boat strikes on sea turtles in the ocean.

Why talking about Manatee Protection Zones works

Hear directly from Florida boaters:

Boater 1: *It reminds me of the manatee zone. Everybody's used to the manatee zones, at least in the intracoastal. And people are pretty good about it.*

Boater 2: *I mean, you're hearing more and more about sea turtles all the time. So, let's just continue to raise the awareness and go, oh, okay, this makes sense. Like the manatees, we can do it for manatees, we love manatees, right? We do it for the manatees, we can do it for the turtles. That's what I think.*

Boater 3: *Well they do have a slow [lane] for the manatees, so I think the turtles deserve their lane as well.*

Boater 4: *To save 'em [the turtles]. The same with the manatees. You gotta watch for them too. And the boaters I know, they respect them and do that.*

Talking about the Manatee Protection Zones works for two main reasons:

- **The manatee zones normalize areas in Florida's waterways that are established to protect marine life.** We found that boaters are able to see the sea turtle protection zone as an extension of existing manatee zones that they support and follow.
- **Boaters can see the positive impact of slowing down for manatees in the zones.** There is widespread awareness that the manatee zones have had demonstrable impact on protecting manatees in Florida, and they are seen as a successful example of taking care of marine life. Connecting the manatee zones to a turtle protection zone therefore gives boaters reason to believe that they can and will be successful at protecting sea turtles.

Recommendation #4: Use a range of peers as messengers.

What to do

Communication materials about the zone should include messages from across the local community. This includes recreational and commercial boaters, divers, and fishermen, as well as scientists from Loggerhead Marinelife Center (LMC) and the Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research (ACCSTR), talking about and supporting the zone.

How to do it

Messaging in various formats (website, pamphlets, social media, TV/news media) should include the expertise and scientific knowledge base of LMC and ACCSTR and their affiliates, as well as the experiences and knowledge of the community of boaters, divers, and fishermen that live and work in the area. Messengers can include boaters that sponsor rehabilitating sea turtles at LMC, for example, and/or LMC staff who are also divers or fishermen. These crossover messengers in particular will be effective in demonstrating widespread collective support for the zone and fostering a sense of collective efficacy to protect sea turtles.

Why it works

Choosing messengers from a variety of backgrounds leverages the respect that boaters have for the boating community, while avoiding potential pitfalls (namely, a tendency to think about local boaters in opposition to non-boaters or tourists). Additionally, including LMC staff will build on the general goodwill that people have for the facility. Importantly, incorporating both the local community and LMC and ACCSTR experts into messaging efforts will demonstrate the importance of utilizing both local and scientific knowledge and expertise to protect sea turtles.

Recommendation #5: Saturate the landscape—find as many ways as possible to communicate about the zone.

What to do

Harness the power of repetition to create a sense that the zone is a normal and necessary part of the environment in Florida. Give boaters constant reminders of what the zone is, what it's for, where it's located, and when it's in effect, throughout the local environment.

This means that the zone should be clearly explained and identified across a variety of media and formats: online (on LMC's and ACCSTR's websites and that of partner/affiliated organizations), in pamphlets and other written materials, on GPS devices that boaters use, and on signage. Communication about the zone should be visible in as many locations as possible, such as docks, piers, shops around town, on buoys, and so on.

How to do it

Certain types of messages are better suited to certain locations and media than others. Short, straightforward signs work best in and around the location of the zone. This includes areas such as docks and piers, and on buoys in the water. Longer messages—including messaging about coexistence, explanations of the threat facing sea turtles, and examples to balance urgency with efficacy—are best used online and in pamphlets, coupled with images (such as images of injured turtles). In GPS devices, the best option is a shape file of the delineated map of the zone that clearly identifies its coordinates and parameters (and that indicates its seasonality from March to October).

It's also important to remember that different modes of communication are better suited to certain media than others. If you're going to use signs, large-font text is best, and images are best saved for websites and pamphlets, not signs. On GPS devices, the best way to go is a clear, well-delineated map. Importantly, the name of the zone (whichever one is chosen) should be included in all communications materials, across media and locations.

Why it works

Saturating the landscape with multiple messages is effective because it normalizes the zone and its purpose to protect sea turtles. Including messaging in multiple formats and various locations further reinforces the zone's existence as a part of life in Florida (just as the manatee zones are now thought of as part of boating in the Intracoastal Waterway). A landscape that is saturated with consistent, coherent messages will build support for the zone as a necessary step towards finding a balance between people and sea turtles, one that can effectively protect sea turtles from harm.

What an effective sign looks like



To increase boaters' willingness to slow down, focus on the following elements for sign design:

- **Color of border:** Use red, yellow, or another color that is highly visible on the water and attention-grabbing.
- **Name of the zone:** Display the exact name of the zone on every sign (whichever name is chosen from the [list provided above](#).)
- **Large, simple text:** Use as few words as possible. Don't say anything too complicated. It should not take more than a few seconds for boaters to read and understand the full content of a sign.
- **Language about speed and speed limits:** Clearly identify what "slow" means, whatever speed range is chosen.
- **Language about location:** Make it clear the zone is located "1 mile offshore" to avoid confusion about where reduced speed is necessary.
- **Seasonality:** Name the dates the zone will be in effect to avoid confusion.

Appendix:

Research Methods

To arrive at all recommendations for this Strategic Brief, we applied Strategic Frame Analysis®—an approach to communications research and practice that yields strategies for shifting the discourse around social issues. This approach has been shown to increase understanding of, and engagement in, conversations about scientific and social issues.

This work builds on earlier research involving exploratory interviews with members of the public. This earlier research explored and compared how experts and boaters in Florida understand marine life conservation and unintended boat strikes on sea turtles.

Below, we describe the research conducted that involved the design and testing of frames to address the gaps identified between the expert and public view on the issue of unintended boat strikes. These frames were tested in 2019 and refined using two methods: on-the-street interviews and peer discourse sessions. In total, 73 people, mostly boaters, in Palm Beach County, Florida were included in this research.

Frame Design

To identify effective ways of talking about unintended boat strikes on sea turtles and a zone to reduce boat speeds to prevent these strikes, FrameWorks researchers specified a set of tasks the frames needed to perform and then brainstormed potential reframing strategies¹ that we thought might accomplish one or more of these tasks (for example, different values, or ways of conveying why an issue matters and what is at stake). After generating a list of candidate framing ideas to test, researchers solicited feedback on these ideas from project partners to ensure that the frames were both apt and potentially usable for those working in the field. Based on this feedback, researchers refined a set of frames and brought them into empirical testing.

On-the-Street Interviews

Frame design was followed by a set of on-the-street interviews to explore potential framing tools with members of the public. From 9–12 September 2019, we conducted 50 brief, face-to-face on-the-street interviews in Jupiter, Florida with boaters and “boater-adjacent” people (i.e., people who live, work, and/or do recreational activities on the water and on boats). We first asked participants to respond to open-ended questions about sea turtles. Participants were then presented with different candidate frames (e.g., names of the zone, values and norms, and images) and asked questions to explore the frames’ abilities to restructure understanding, open up new ways of thinking and give people productive language to use in discussing the issue.

A list of the names of the zone, values and norms frames, and images we tested are below.

Names of the Zone That Were Tested

- Turtle Protection Zone
- Voluntary Speed Reduction Zone
- Reduced Speed Zone
- Go-Slow Zone
- Endangered Turtle Corridor
- Turtle Crossing Zone
- “Slow For Turtles” Zone

Values and Norms Frames That Were Tested

Interconnectedness

Human wellbeing and the wellbeing of our coasts and oceans are interconnected. We depend on the oceans and they depend on us. In Florida, boaters are connected with marine life, including sea turtles, who come here every year to lay their eggs on the beaches. Yet the balance between humans and marine life is currently being threatened by boat strikes on sea turtles, which critically injure or kill turtles. This is why we need the *[name of zone]*: by slowing down for sea turtles coming to Florida’s beaches to nest, boaters can help restore and strengthen our connection with sea turtles and with the marine life we all depend on.

Natural Reverence

The oceans and marine life are beautiful and amazing. As humans, we need to respect our oceans, coasts, and marine life. In Florida, boaters know and respect marine life, including sea turtles, who come here every year to lay their eggs on the beaches. Yet right now, sea turtles are not being respected—instead, they are currently being threatened by boat strikes that critically injure or kill them. This is why we need the *[name of zone]*: by slowing down for sea turtles coming to Florida's beaches to nest, boaters can respect and appreciate sea turtles and all marine life in our oceans.

Responsible Management

As humans, we are responsible for managing our oceans and coasts. It's important that we think carefully and develop long-term plans to do this right. In Florida, boaters have an important role to play in managing marine life, including sea turtles, who come here every year to lay their eggs on the beaches. And there are practical steps that need to be taken, as sea turtles are currently being threatened by boat strikes, which critically injure or kill them. This is why we need the *[name of zone]*: by slowing down for sea turtles coming to Florida's beaches to nest, boaters can help responsibly manage sea turtles and marine life for ourselves and future generations.

Economic Prosperity

Tourism is central to Florida's economy. Many tourists visit Florida to see our marine life, especially sea turtles, who come here every year to lay their eggs on the beaches. Yet sea turtles are currently being threatened by boat strikes, which critically injure or kill them. This harms Florida's economy and the economic prosperity that Floridians gain from tourism. This is why we need the *[name of zone]*: by slowing down for sea turtles coming to Florida's beaches to nest, boaters can ensure Florida's tourism economy continues to prosper now and in the future.

Normalization

On the road and on the water, everyone is used to slowing down to avoid hitting animals. People slow down on the highways to avoid hitting deer, and in Florida, boaters slow down in waterways where manatees live to avoid hitting them with their boats. The same can and should apply for sea turtles, who come to Florida every year to lay their eggs on the beaches. Yet just as manatees once were, sea turtles are currently being threatened by boat strikes, which critically injure or kill them. This is why we need the *[name of zone]*: it would help boaters know when to slow down for sea turtles coming to Florida's beaches to nest, just like everyone already does for other animals.

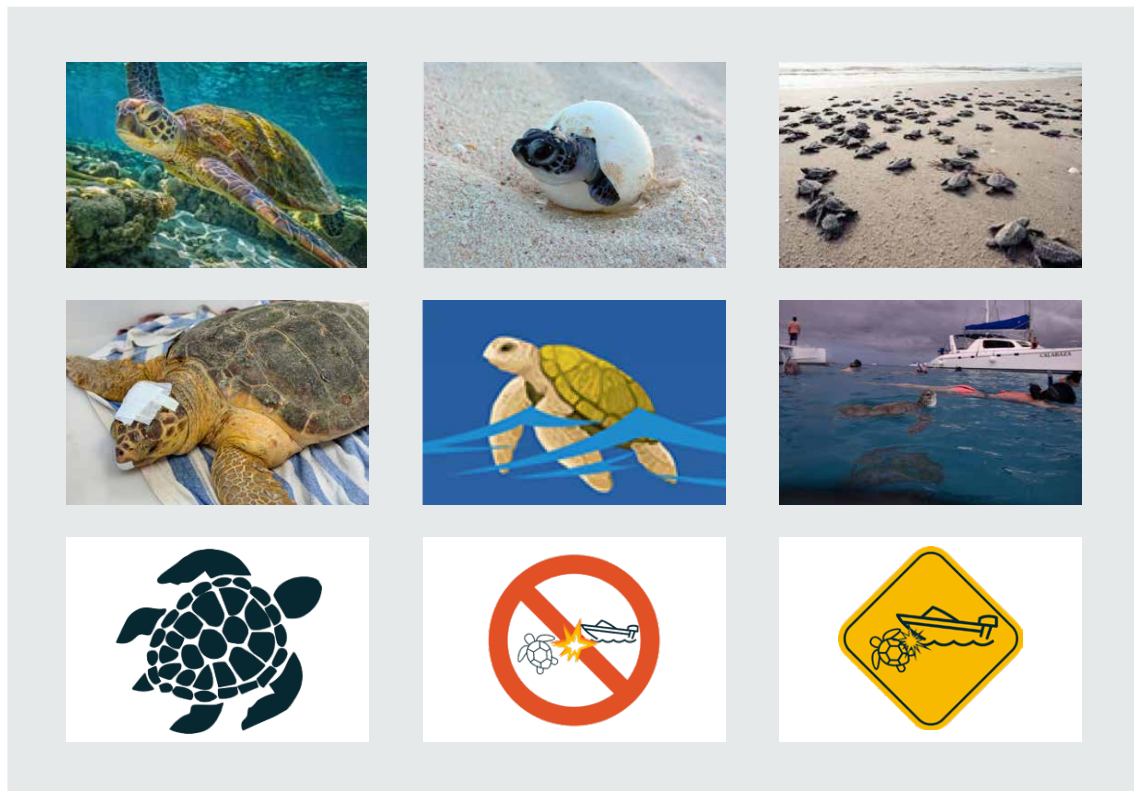
Perception of Acceptance

Sea turtles are an important part of Florida’s marine life, and most boaters in Florida agree that they can play a role in protecting them every year during nesting season, when they come to lay their eggs on the beaches. A new survey finds that a majority of boaters would be willing to slow down in designated areas to prevent boat strikes on sea turtles, which critically injure or kill them. This indicates shared concern over the wellbeing of sea turtles in the area: support for the [name of zone] is already very strong and implementing it would be an effective solution to better protect endangered marine life in Florida. Boaters already think it is necessary to protect sea turtles coming to Florida’s beaches to nest, and the [name of zone] would help them act on this concern.

Efficacy

Sea turtles are an important part of Florida’s marine life, and they are currently endangered. Many things threaten sea turtles who come to Florida every year to lay their eggs on the beaches, including plastics and boat strikes that critically injure or kill them. And just like there are new regulations on plastic straws to prevent them from harming sea turtles, we can address the issue of boat strikes with the [name of zone]: by slowing down for sea turtles coming to Florida’s beaches to nest, boaters can take a concrete step to prevent harm and have a positive impact on turtles.

Images That Were Tested



Peer Discourse Sessions

On 3–4 December 2019, four peer discourse sessions (a form of focus group) were conducted in Jupiter, Florida with a total of 23 participants. Each of these sessions lasted approximately one hour. Participants were recruited based on their identification as boaters (recreational and commercial) living in and around Palm Beach County.

We used peer discourse sessions to refine findings from the on-the-street interviews to explore the effectiveness of refined names of the zone, values and norms frames, and images for signage about the zone. Sessions included a variety of discussion prompts and activities designed to evaluate which frames are most easily understood by the public, allow them to most productively use new information, and were most easily used during conversations with peers.

The lists of names of the zone, values and norms, and images for signage tested are included below:

Names of the Zone

- Sea Turtle Protection Zone
- Voluntary Speed Reduction Zone
- Endangered Sea Turtle Zone
- Suggested Slow Speed Zone
- Sea Turtle Crossing Zone
- Go Slow for Sea Turtles Zone

Values and Norms Frames

Natural Reverence

The oceans and marine life are worthy of our protection and respect. In Florida, the boating community respects and appreciates marine life, including sea turtles. And boaters can further respect and protect sea turtles by slowing down in the zone to avoid hitting turtles with their boats.

Responsible Management

As humans, we are responsible for managing our oceans and coasts for ourselves and future generations. In Florida, boaters already help manage marine life, including sea turtles. And they can take one more important step to care for sea turtles by slowing down in the zone to avoid hitting turtles with their boats.

Coexistence

Humans and the oceans thrive when they can coexist. In Florida, there is a balance between boaters, who enjoy the ocean on their boats, and marine life who live in the ocean, including sea turtles. And boaters can help maintain this healthy balance by slowing down in the zone to avoid hitting turtles with their boats.

Normalization

Everyone is already used to slowing down their vehicles to avoid hitting animals, on land and on the water. In Florida, for instance, boaters already slow down in waterways where manatees live to avoid hitting them with their boats. Boaters can do the same for sea turtles, by slowing down in the zone to avoid hitting them with their boats.

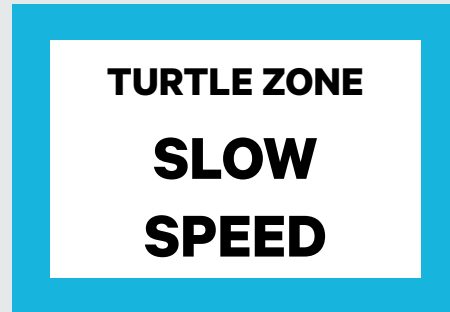
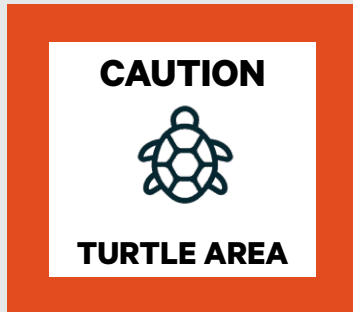
Efficacy

Boaters can take action to protect sea turtles in Florida. Turtles are currently endangered by many things, including boat strikes that critically injure or kill them, and plastics. And just like there are new regulations on plastic straws to prevent them from harming sea turtles, slowing down in the zone is a concrete step that boaters can take to protect sea turtles and address the issue of boat strikes.

Boater Pride

The Florida boating community is proud of its deep knowledge and connection with the ocean and marine life. Boaters take pride in this tradition by taking care of their boats, the water, and marine life, including sea turtles. And boaters can continue to honor the boating community's traditions by slowing down in the zone to avoid hitting sea turtles with their boats.

Images for Signage



Endnote

1. Framing refers to the subtle selection of certain aspects of an issue to cue a specific response. FrameWorks tests a set of frame elements that convey meaning and affect the way that people respond to an issue. These include values, metaphors, narratives, messengers, and more.

About FrameWorks

The FrameWorks Institute is a nonprofit think tank that advances the mission-driven sector's capacity to frame the public discourse about social and scientific issues. The organization's signature approach, Strategic Frame Analysis®, offers empirical guidance on what to say, how to say it, and what to leave unsaid. FrameWorks designs, conducts, and publishes multi-method, multi-disciplinary framing research to prepare experts and advocates to expand their constituencies, to build public will, and to further public understanding. To make sure this research drives social change, FrameWorks supports partners in reframing, through strategic consultation, campaign design, FrameChecks®, toolkits, online courses, and in-depth learning engagements known as FrameLabs. In 2015, FrameWorks was named one of nine organizations worldwide to receive the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

Learn more at www.frameworksinstitute.org

Engaging Boaters: Reframing Sea Turtle Protection in Florida

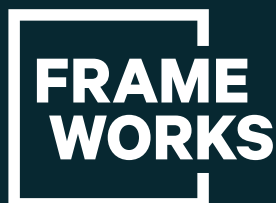
April 2020

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the FrameWorks Institute.

Please follow standard APA rules for citation, with the FrameWorks Institute as publisher.

Miller, T.L., Price, M., Nichols, J., & L'Hôte, E. (2020). *Engaging boaters: Reframing sea turtle protection in Florida (a FrameWorks Strategic Brief)*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

© FrameWorks Institute 2020



Designed by Soapbox
www.designbysoapbox.com