



"Donna J
Shaver-Miller"

<donna_shaver@usgs.
gov>

To: ken_mcmullen@nps.gov

cc:

Subject: hatchling rut experiment

06/11/02 08:26 AM

MST

Ken:

I spoke to USFWS about the hatchling rut experiment. They said that such an activity would have to be in the permit and that they would not likely approve that in the permit due to lack of experimental design, likelihood of jeopardizing the well being of the individual hatchlings, and the fact that they like to have the Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Recovery Team evaluate what sorts of research are needed in the future. At this late time in the nesting season, there will not be time to get together a proposal, peer-reviewed experimental design, evaluation, and permit revision for this year. With so many nests this year, I cannot help but believe that we will have nests next year and if the paperwork were in order and the USFWS felt that the work should be done, next year would be a better time to do it.

In the meantime, I do not think that we are going out on a limb to say that there is a concern about this problem for sea turtles, since it is mentioned in the literature and recovery plans. You can get an idea of the impacts of ruts by watching the hatchlings at the releases. We attempt to smooth out ruts and plug ghost crab burrows prior to the releases, but there sometimes small ruts remain after our beach preparation or arise during the release. I have been releasing hatchlings here since 1980 and have observed that ruts (including footprints) can impact the progress of hatchlings down the beach and cause them to invert, but the degree of impact varies with the depth of the ruts and other factors.

If you wish, when things calm down we can discuss and try to pursue this further.

Donna

Donna J. Shaver, Ph.D.
Station Leader

U.S. Geological Survey
Biological Resources Discipline
Columbia Environmental Research Center
Padre Island Field Research Station
http://www.cerc.usgs.gov/frs_webs/padre/

Address for mail:
Padre Island National Seashore
P.O. Box 181300
Corpus Christi, TX 78480-1300

Address for express mail services:
Padre Island National Seashore
Ranger Station
20301 Park Road 22
Corpus Christi, TX 78418