Habitat Conservation Plan

II. Armoring: Permits and Regulations

What is an Armoring Structure?

Chapter 62B-33 of the Florida Administrative Code (FAC) defines armoring as any manmade structure designed to either prevent erosion of the upland property or protect eligible structures from the effects of coastal wave and current action. Armoring includes certain rigid coastal structures such as geotextile bags or tubes, seawalls, revetments, bulkheads, retaining walls, or similar structures."

How Does Armoring Cause Take?

Shoreline armoring often creates obstacles to sea turtles during their nesting forays onto County beaches and generally diminishes the quality of nesting habitat. Construction of these structures may also result in the fragmentation of dunes that are home to beach mice. Shorebirds including wintering piping plover are affected by the loss and physical change of habitat for feeding, nesting, and roosting. Additionally, armoring structures may alter physical coastal processes, destroy or diminish dune function, accelerate erosion of the beach seaward of the structure, redirect wave energy and increase erosion on adjacent properties, and inhibit natural shoreline recovery following a storm event. All of these consequences degrade the habitat of protected coastal species and constitute take under the ESA.

Who Has Responsibility for Permitting Permanent Armoring Structures in Florida?

Under State statute, the FDEP has exclusive jurisdiction to issue permits for the installation of permanent armoring structures sited at or seaward of Florida's Coastal Construction Control Line (CCCL). Permits for permanent structures are only issued if the affected property is both eligible and vulnerable, as defined under Chapter 62B-33 FAC. Permits that are issued for such structures have very specific conditions regarding their design, location within the beach/dune system relative to the habitable structures they are protecting, construction timing, and impacts to nesting sea turtles.

Why Did Walton County Issue Permits for Shoreline Armoring?

Under Florida statute (FS 161.085), the FDEP is authorized to delegate permitting responsibilities for shoreline protection measures, including the installation of ***temporary*** armoring structures, to local governments during emergency situations. Walton County exercised its local permitting authority following the passage of Hurricane Dennis in 2005. However, by law any structure installed under local emergency authorization can only remain on the beach for a period of 60 days. At that time, affected property owners must either have submitted a complete CCCL permit application to the FDEP to retain the structure or they must remove the structure from the beach. As for permanent armoring, State law prescribes specific conditions for the installation of temporary armoring structures. http://www.dep.state.fl.us/beaches/publications/gen-pub.htm#Rules