Sunshine Coast Turtle Evaluation

Funded by Sunshine Coast Council, Queensland

The Sunshine Coast Council conducted a comprehensive initiative focused on addressing light pollution impacting Loggerhead Turtle nesting beaches. With a population of 350,000 and a yearly growth of 8,000 to 10,000 residents, the council aimed to assess community response to motion-activated, turtle-sensitive lighting at two critical nesting sites.

Their strategy involved initiatives evaluating community support for light pollution reduction in ecologically sensitive areas to gain insights for behaviour change programs. Using QR coded public signage, online sponsorships, print and radio interviews, and in-person engagement, surveys were conducted across three periods: pre, during, and post turtle nesting season.

The results showed a significant increase in environmental consciousness across the three waves of surveys. Awareness regarding the initiative rose from 39.3% to 53.2%, and 90.5% of participants acknowledged that changing lights could aid turtle nesting. However, while the initiative positively impacted knowledge and awareness, it didn't significantly influence attitudes, social norms, or behavior.

To address this gap, the council aims to launch an extensive communication campaign educating the public about the crucial role of light reduction in turtle conservation. Additionally, interventions persuading the public to alter their behaviors around nesting beaches are planned in collaboration with other local governments.

Despite increased awareness and support for the initiative's purpose, influencing attitudes and behaviors toward light pollution necessitates more robust communication and targeted behavior change strategies. The council's next steps involve a concerted effort to engage and persuade the public to actively participate in reducing light pollution near critical turtle nesting sites.

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