



To pledge your support, **please complete a commitment card and mail it** to the FWC's Coastal Wildlife Conservation Initiative (CWC) Coordinator. Then use the magnet to show your fellow residents that you support growing a better beach by reducing beach raking.

### Basics of how to grow a better beach

- Vegetation helps stabilize the beach and provides habitat for some types of shorebirds.
- A balance between vegetation and bare sand is beneficial for humans and other animals.
- Raking specific corridors while leaving the rest of the beach unraked provides a good balance.
- You can help by bringing the benefits of limiting mechanical beach cleaning to the attention of decision-makers for your property.
- The FWC will send you a car magnet when you pledge to help reduce beach raking and grow a better beach. You can mail your commitment card to the following address:



Saltmeadow cordgrass

Dawn Whittington



USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

*This publication was funded in part through a grant agreement from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Coastal Management Program, by a grant provided by the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act.*



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
MyFWC.com



### To learn more about mechanical beach cleaning (or beach raking):

Go to [MyFWC.com](http://MyFWC.com) and search for "Mechanical Beach Cleaning Guidelines."

### To learn more about beach plants:

Go to [nrca.usda.gov](http://nrca.usda.gov) and search for "Coastal Dune Restoration."

Go to [dep.state.fl.us](http://dep.state.fl.us) and search for "Beach Plants."

### To learn more about shorebirds:

Go to [MyFWC.com](http://MyFWC.com) and search for "Shorebirds" or visit [flshorebirdalliance.org](http://flshorebirdalliance.org).

# Grow a Better Beach!



## What is a better beach?

A better beach is a healthier and more stable beach, which means that it has a balance of vegetation and open sand. Plants hold the sand in place and provide habitat for wildlife. They also form the basis of dune building, which protects against storm surge. Many are aware of the stabilizing properties of sea oats, but



Beach elder

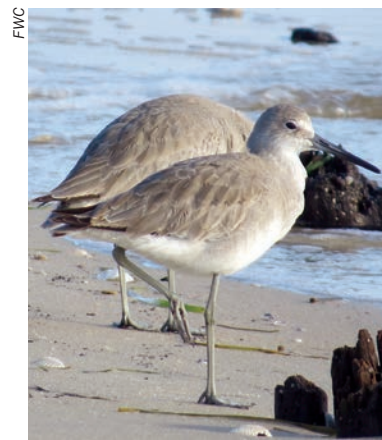


Bitter panicgrass

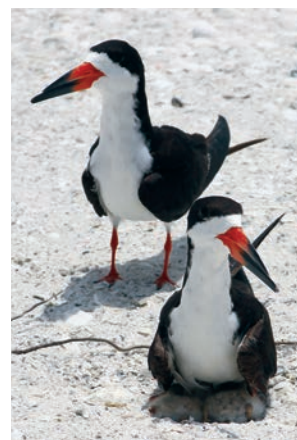
there are several other grasses and plants that may look like weeds which also stabilize the beach. Some of these are pictured here, such as bitter panicgrass and beach elder.

## What activities affect the beach?

Mechanical beach cleaning, or beach raking, is a practice that affects the stability of the beach. Even if operators are careful to avoid visible vegetation, raking prevents seedlings from taking root, which prevents plants from establishing, leaving the beach open to destabilization.



Pictured on left, willets; black skimmers on right



## How is wildlife affected?

Some birds, such as the willet and Wilson's plover, nest within dune vegetation. Others, such as the black skimmer and least tern, nest on open, sandy beach. Therefore, a balance between vegetation and bare sand is best for beach-nesting birds.

Mechanically cleaning the beach not only decreases habitat for birds who use vegetation, but it can also create problems for birds that use the open sand. During the breeding season, beach raking can disrupt courtship and nest-site selection, destroy nest scrapes, crush well-camouflaged eggs or flightless young, or cause adults to flush from the nest — leaving eggs and chicks vulnerable to heat stress and predation.



Wilson's plover

Mechanical beach cleaning could also impact sea turtle nests by compacting nests or raking over turtle crawls (making it difficult for monitors to locate and mark nests). Therefore, beach rakers who operate during turtle nesting season must follow strict conditions to ensure protection of turtles and their nests.

## How can you help grow a better beach?

You can grow a better beach by encouraging practices that allow vegetation to stabilize the beach. You don't need to plant anything — reducing the extent of mechanical beach cleaning is the best way to allow nature to do the work and preserve your beach. The best approach is to **limit mechanical beach cleaning to specific corridors where people access the beach.**

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) would like to partner with you to grow a better beach. We are asking you to pledge to promote the reduced beach raking approach by bringing up this issue at your next condominium association or civic organization meeting. To let everyone in your community know you support growing a better beach, the FWC will send you a magnet to put on your car.

Many in your community already show their support for protecting the beach by cleaning up trash they find when walking along the beach. Asking for less mechanical beach cleaning is another important step that you can take.



Least tern