

Public Comments – Coyote Predation Discussion

Collected between January 30, 2026 and 5:45 pm, February 2, 2026

In Favor – 5

Against – 11

Total of all comments collected:

In Favor – 9

Against – 20

General Comments - 4



Coyote targeted removal

From Karen Weber <mullenweber@gmail.com>

Date Mon 2/2/2026 5:46 PM

To Scotty L. Kelly <Scotty.Kelly@mysanibel.com>

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Dear City Council Members,

As a home owner on Sanibel I strongly support the targeted lethal removal of coyote proposal put forth by CWG.

It is my understanding that the only coyotes targeted would be those that are coming on to the stretch of beach where most nest predations have occurred. Thus the term "targeted."

From what I've read, CWG has exhausted all other plans to significantly decrease the number of nest predations. This is the only other option. The sea turtles are a federally protected species. The coyotes are not. It seems clear to me that the targeted removal of the offending coyotes is the only way to protect the sea turtle nests.

Sincerely,
Karen Weber



Coyotes

From Michael Flynn <mflynn880@gmail.com>
Date Mon 2/2/2026 2:55 PM
To Scotty L. Kelly <Scotty.Kelly@mysanibel.com>

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Scott,

I am writing to share comments regarding the potential lethal culling of coyotes on the island due to their impact on nesting sea turtles.

I closely follow news related to nesting sea turtles and have been aware of coyote predation on turtle nests for many years. If I am reading the city's recent email correctly, there has been a significant increase in turtle nest predation since Hurricane Ian. I believe it is important for the city to recognize that Ian substantially altered coyote habitat, particularly near the beaches.

We live on East Gulf Drive across from three large properties that were destroyed by Hurricane Ian. To date, little—if anything—has been done to maintain the landscaping on these properties. These overgrown areas have become ideal habitat for coyotes and provide easy access to the beach, which may be contributing to the increased predation.

Nature requires balance, and at times human intervention may be necessary. Thinning the coyote population could be warranted to protect turtle nests. However, it is equally important to address the underlying habitat issues. Property owners should be required to clean up and maintain vacant and damaged properties that have effectively become breeding grounds for coyotes. Without addressing these conditions, coyotes will likely continue to breed, return to these areas, and pose an ongoing threat to turtle nests.

Our neighborhood is currently home to at least one large coyote. While it took some adjustment, the situation now feels relatively balanced, as we do not have an overabundance of rabbits or iguanas. I suspect this coyote is living on the vacant beachfront properties, as one has been frequently observed in that area.

If lethal culling is pursued, I strongly encourage the city to address habitat management at the same time to ensure a more effective and lasting solution.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Flynn

561 Kinzie Island Ct

Sanibel FL



Coyote Depredation of Turtle Nests

From Robin Miller <snowrobin@live.com>

Date Mon 2/2/2026 1:41 PM

To Scotty L. Kelly <Scotty.Kelly@mysanibel.com>

Cc Holly Smith <Holly.Smith@mysanibel.com>

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To the Sanibel City Council and the Sanibel Coyote Working Group,

The recent increase in coyote depredation of sea turtle nests is deeply concerning, but it is also understandable given the ecological upheaval Sanibel has experienced since Hurricane Ian. The island's interior habitat is still recovering from massive wind damage, storm surge, and saltwater intrusion. Fallen trees and dense vine growth continue to block sunlight, suppress groundcover, and alter plant communities. Flooding and habitat loss reduced populations of small mammals and other prey species, and the current tangle of debris makes it difficult for coyotes to move, hunt, and forage as they normally would.

Every species — humans included — seeks the greatest calories for the least effort. Coyotes are no different. When interior habitat is nearly impassable, when prey populations have not yet rebounded, and when human sanitation systems prevent access to trash or food waste, the only remaining reliable food source is the beach. Sea turtle nests become the path of least resistance for survival. This is not malice; it is ecology.

Protecting sea turtle nests is essential. But killing coyotes for trying to survive is not the answer, nor have all non-lethal options been exhausted. Removing the coyotes currently accessing nests will simply open that territory to other hungry coyotes, potentially creating a cycle of continual killing as new individuals move in to fill the void.

Coyotes are intelligent, adaptable, and capable of behavioral modification. Instead of lethal removal, Sanibel could implement targeted feeding stations designed to draw coyotes away from nesting areas. Hunters have long used feeding stations to reliably alter wildlife movement patterns; the same principle can be applied here in a controlled, scientific, and humane way. A monitored feeding-and-conditioning program would reduce pressure on turtle nests while giving the island's ecosystems time to recover, prey populations time to rebound, and natural predator-prey dynamics time to stabilize.

Sanibel has always been a leader in conservation innovation. This is an opportunity to continue that legacy — to protect sea turtles and respect the ecological role of coyotes during a period of unprecedented environmental disruption. I urge you to pursue non-lethal, science-based solutions that reflect the values of this community and the complexity of the island's recovering ecosystem.

Please choose the path of innovation rather than elimination.

Warm Regards,
Robin Miller



Re: Coyotes#2

From MM Merryfield <merrymerryfield@gmail.com>

Date Mon 2/2/2026 12:23 PM

To Scotty L. Kelly <Scotty.Kelly@mysanibel.com>

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Scotty,

I have learned a great deal since my first message last week by listening to Jack and to Robin. Please pass on these comments to the Council.

I appreciate the time and effort the Coyote Working Committee has put into their proposal. My understanding now is that 3-5 coyotes will be shot on Bowman's Beach probably in March or early April. I still don't understand why they are being shot before there are turtle nests since I assume you want to target those that attack the nests.

I think it is essential that each kill be documented so that we understand what the coyote actually did to warrant its death. This information should be shared with the public, at least upon request.

If lactating females are shot, efforts should be made to find the pups. If they are shot in their dens, that information should be made public. Transparency is critical if the Council is to deal with rumors and concerns.

I assume someone from the City will supervise or at least witness the shootings. We need to trust that the City is in control.

This is a huge step for Sanibel contrary to what most of us think of a sanctuary island and Sanibel's mandate to live with wildlife. I think you are underestimating the intelligence and fortitude of our coyotes. After all they are hungry and need to feed their families. What stronger motive is there for any animal? Plus they mate for life so the chaos the killings will cause will take time to understand.

Will this killing lead to others next year? Will shooting coyotes become an annual event?

Please think about the long term effects of shooting animals on our beaches.

Merry Merryfield
4210 Old Banyan Way

On Thu, Jan 29, 2026 at 8:30 PM Scotty L. Kelly <Scotty.Kelly@mysanibel.com> wrote:
Thank you. Your comments will be added to the record.

Scotty Lynn Kelly, FCPC, MMC, CGSP
City Clerk
City of Sanibel
239-472-3700 Ext. 354
239-744-3488 (Fax)
Scotty.Kelly@MySanibel.com
www.mysanibel.com

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From: MM Merryfield <merrymerryfield@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 6:40 PM
To: Scotty L. Kelly <Scotty.Kelly@mysanibel.com>
Subject: Coyotes

How you been in touch with Project Coyote? They are a national organization that works with communities to find ways not to kill coyotes if they are threatening other species.

I live in Gulf Pines and really do not want to see any coyotes killed near us. We love the coyotes and if they had other food sources they would not be going after turtle eggs.

I can't believe Sanibel will sanction killing wild animals who are just trying to survive. We moved here because it protects wildlife and is a sanctuary island.

Merry Merryfield

Please share with Holly and Rachel

From: Taylor Heilpern-Baxter <jthbax@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 2, 2026 11:44:09 AM
To: Holly Smith <Holly.Smith@mysanibel.com>; Laura J. DeBruce <laura.debruce@mysanibel.com>; Mike Miller <Mike.Miller@mysanibel.com>
Subject: Coyote/Sea Turtle Meeting

Vice Mayor Smith, Council-member DeBruce and Mayor Miller,
I don't know if this will help at all, but I have included studies below and a breakdown of why the proposal to cull coyotes for the protection of sea turtle eggs is archaic and has yet to show long term success anywhere, despite what FWC suggests. There are no studies to date backing their proposal's long term effectiveness. It's important to understand coyote behavior. They are unique in their ability to rebound when their population or family units are reduced. Their elimination, even a small amount, would open the door to a vicious cycle of elimination each year and would be costly and cause a drastic increase in human/wildlife interactions. My hope is that by taking a minute to allow our island to bounce back from the series of storms we have experienced since 2022, our smaller wildlife will flourish again and nature will re-balance the eco system, leading to less turtle egg loss. I believe in the federal protection of endangered species, but I believe that we are walking a fine line by tampering with nature to this degree. Protecting a species from human harm is one thing. Protecting them from another wild animal by way of killing is not what the federal protection act is about and it's certainly not what this island stands for. It would be amazing to see Sanibel lead the way in doing things the Sanibel way rather than the way that has failed over and over again for others around the world. Thank you again for taking the time to read this and I hope it lends a new perspective to the issue at hand.

Respectfully,
Taylor Heilpern
615-480-3494

Studies and conservation groups indicate that indiscriminate killing or reducing coyote populations is an ineffective, short-term solution for protecting sea turtle nests, often suggesting that non-lethal, proactive management (like protective screens) is a better approach

. While coyotes are significant predators of sea turtle eggs, removing them can cause populations to rebound quickly, sometimes leading to larger litters and higher, more persistent predation rates in the long run.

Here is a breakdown of the evidence showing why reducing coyote populations to save sea turtles is considered a poor, or at least inefficient, idea:

- Ineffectiveness of Killing Programs: Research shows that killing coyotes often fails to reduce their populations. Because coyotes have complex social structures, removing them can cause remaining coyotes to breed at a younger age and produce*

larger litters, allowing the population to quickly recover and, in some cases, increase.

- *"Vacuums" Created by Removal: Indiscriminate killing creates a, empty niche that other coyotes will quickly fill.*
- *Ecological Role and Biodiversity: As top carnivores, coyotes help maintain ecological balance by regulating smaller predators like foxes, raccoons, and skunks, which are also notorious for destroying sea turtle nests.*
- *Alternative Solutions are More Effective: Studies Show*
- *Resilience of the Species: Even in areas with high coyote activity (like Sanibel Island), loggerhead sea turtles have shown the ability to continue nesting in high numbers, suggesting that while predation is a concern, it may not be the primary driver of long-term population decline if managed correctly.*
- *Other Factors are More Significant: While coyote predation can be severe (sometimes 30-40% of nests), studies also point to environmental factors like **tidal flooding** as primary threats to nest survival, which reduction of coyotes cannot solve. ****Important** to note that we have had a rough year of surges and it was documented by SCCF that significant turtle egg loss was observed in all events.*

Key Takeaway: The consensus in wildlife management is that removing predators like coyotes is rarely a lasting solution. Instead, focusing on a combination of non-lethal, proactive methods (caging, patrolling, and habitat management) is viewed as a more responsible and effective strategy to protect sea turtles. In addition, once culling begins, it must continue, as coyotes rebound quickly and become a larger population than before. Therefore, it's a vicious cycle that only gets worse with time.

** To elaborate on Patrolling- An alternate option for sea turtle egg protection that has been showing success is the implementation of night watchers who take shifts at the most historically harmed nest locations. Coyotes adapt more quickly than any other species and they learn of areas to avoid quickly. Having human presence more regularly around problem nests has been shown to train predators away from them.*

***Fun fact: ghost crabs pose more of a risk to eggs as coyotes.*



Curbing coyote populations could be lost cause, UGA study finds
wspa.com

[https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://www.wspa.com/news/state-news/curbing-coyote-populations-could-be-lost-cause-uga-study-finds/?utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook_WSPA_7News_";!!PrEGzL_9Z0O58w!G8jVwWdf5QVgfr8Ckx9ugkTbOqWeQYvLeMd4MEzHk3jvm7PlutfmBgHld03eOo2LRwMd-jrSi1w1WlebNA\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://www.wspa.com/news/state-news/curbing-coyote-populations-could-be-lost-cause-uga-study-finds/?utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook_WSPA_7News_)

<https://curesblog.lmu.edu/coyotes-we-cant-kill-our-way-to-conservation/#:~:text=The%20killing%20rarely%20solves%20a%20wildlife%20problem.,predator%20control%20operations%20run%20by%20private%20contractors.>

project coyote

Research Shows Coyote Populations Bounce Back Quickly After Killing Campaigns



Coyotes are known for their adaptability - Project Coyote
facebook.com

[https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://www.facebook.com/share/189HJEkke5/?mibextid=w_wXlfr_ ;!!PrEGzL_9Z0O58w!G8jVwWdf5QVgfr8Ckx9ugkTbOqWeQYvLeMd4MEzHk3jvm7PlutfmBgHld03eOo2LRwMd-jrSi1xJQk13gQ\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://www.facebook.com/share/189HJEkke5/?mibextid=w_wXlfr_ ;!!PrEGzL_9Z0O58w!G8jVwWdf5QVgfr8Ckx9ugkTbOqWeQYvLeMd4MEzHk3jvm7PlutfmBgHld03eOo2LRwMd-jrSi1xJQk13gQ$)



**Ontario MNR biologist reiterates:
coyote culls don't work**
thefurbearers.com

[https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://thefurbearers.com/blog/ontario-mnr-biologist-reiterates-coyote-culls-don-t-work/ ;!!PrEGzL_9Z0O58w!G8jVwWdf5QVgfr8Ckx9ugkTbOqWeQYvLeMd4MEzHk3jvm7PlutfmBgHld03eOo2LRwMd-jrSi1xuToJTsg\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://thefurbearers.com/blog/ontario-mnr-biologist-reiterates-coyote-culls-don-t-work/ ;!!PrEGzL_9Z0O58w!G8jVwWdf5QVgfr8Ckx9ugkTbOqWeQYvLeMd4MEzHk3jvm7PlutfmBgHld03eOo2LRwMd-jrSi1xuToJTsg$)



**Science: Culls aren't effective long-term
solutions**
thefurbearers.com

[https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://thefurbearers.com/blog/science-culls-arent-effective-long-term-solutions/ ;!!PrEGzL_9Z0O58w!G8jVwWdf5QVgfr8Ckx9ugkTbOqWeQYvLeMd4MEzHk3jvm7PlutfmBgHld03eOo2LRwMd-jrSi1y-wQCddw\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://thefurbearers.com/blog/science-culls-arent-effective-long-term-solutions/ ;!!PrEGzL_9Z0O58w!G8jVwWdf5QVgfr8Ckx9ugkTbOqWeQYvLeMd4MEzHk3jvm7PlutfmBgHld03eOo2LRwMd-jrSi1y-wQCddw$)



Concerned about Killing Coyotes, Diversionary Feeding, questions for meeting tomorrow

From Kirsten Murphy <kirstenmurphy@gmail.com>

Date Mon 2/2/2026 10:49 AM

To Scotty L. Kelly <Scotty.Kelly@mysanibel.com>; info@sccf.org <info@sccf.org>

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Hello Sanibel and SCCF, I received the notification about potentially killing coyotes on the island, and I have some questions and concerns.

Firstly, how would the coyotes be killed? Would poison be laid out, in which case how do we know other animals (and potentially pets) won't also eat the poison? I feel like there'd be similar problems with lethal traps. Or will people just be patrolling the beach at night with loaded guns, which also seems unsafe for everyone?

On your list of previously tried protection methods, it doesn't look like you've attempted using wolf urine to scare away the coyotes (a technique they apparently tried in the Carolinas when they had a similar coyote problem). It'd be worth trying at least before resorting to killing.

Also I urge the SCCF to look into Diversionary Feeding, a technique that has seen some success in protecting endangered species from predators:

<https://www.anthropocenemagazine.org/2025/07/instead-of-killing-predators-that-eat-endangered-species-researchers-feed-them/>

Basically you provide alternate food sources for the predators, and I believe using that in addition to the other protective methods (cages, habanero...) would be effective in deterring the coyotes from going after turtle nests. With an easier way of getting food that's essential to their survival, the coyotes will be significantly less motivated to push past the obstacles to the turtle eggs.

I realize you don't want coyotes associating humans with food, so I suppose the food would have to be left out or thrown from a truck somewhere less populated. And you'd be concerned about causing the coyote population to increase even more, so probably only provide food during the height of turtle nesting season, not year-round. Alternatively, maybe look into chemically mimicking the smell of prey/carrion to lure the coyotes away from turtle nests, without actually feeding them?

I understand the need to protect sea turtles, but killing off another animal to do so just doesn't seem right, the coyotes are only trying to survive too.

Thank you for taking the time to read all this,

Kirsten

From: Annie Layman <annielayman5@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 2, 2026 9:43 AM
To: sancouncil <sancouncil@mysanibel.com>
Subject: Sea Turtle protection

Dear City Council members:

First I would like to say that I am a lover of all living creatures. My family has had a home on Sanibel since the early 1970s and the main reason for that is that since Sanibel began as a city, careful thought has gone into working to preserve the natural environment for the enjoyment of all who visit and reside here.

I am familiar with the proposal to lethally remove a select group of coyotes in order to protect sea turtle nests. My understanding is that extensive research has been done over several years to try to protect the turtle eggs from the coyotes and that even the most sophisticated cages that have been assembled over the nests by caring volunteers are ineffective in keeping out the coyotes. Teams of the animals have been videoed working together to break into whatever structures are assembled and eat the eggs.

Sanibel has a responsibility to protect the nests of the many turtles who come here to lay their eggs each year. We are known throughout the world not only for our shells but as a place where turtles come to safely provide for the ongoing generations of their young each summer. This proposal would permanently remove those coyotes who have been constantly observed as the bad actors in relation to the turtle eggs, not all of the coyotes. The work would be done by professionals who know how to do it correctly and I am definitely in favor of it. The little turtles have a hard enough time and we need to give them all the support they deserve and to which countless volunteers give many hours of nest protection each turtle season.

Sincerely,

Annie Layman

From: Annette Gregory <agregory373@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 2, 2026 9:30 AM
To: email-list <email-list@mysanibel.com>
Subject: Re: Sanibel Coyote Working Group to Share Proposal for Sea Turtle Protection at City Council Meeting on Feb. 3

As my parents built and lived on Sanibel for almost 30 years (The Dunes), I am very disappointed in the suggestion that killing a beach coyote would even be suggested as a remedy for turtle egg predation. Annihilation of a species to save another doesn't make sense and cannot be white washed in tentative statements made by the council. Please come up with a more humane solution, alarms, perimeter guards - which I'm confident and convinced the residents and tourists would finance. Shooting and killing coyotes is a cheap non- solution.

Sincerely,

Annette Gregory
Daughter of Herb and Joan Becke
(The Dunes)
Sent from my iPhone



Coyotes

From Natalie King <nking1225@gmail.com>
Date Mon 2/2/2026 8:13 AM
To Scotty L. Kelly <Scotty.Kelly@mysanibel.com>

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Please don't shoot coyotes living on Sanibel to save sea turtles. They are beautiful animals! If they can't be relocated they should be allowed to live.

Natalie King
4415 Gulf Pines Drive
Sanibel full time resident.



Please Save Our Sea Turtles

From Kate Sergeant <kate@onislandsanibel.com>

Date Mon 2/2/2026 7:42 AM

To Laura J. DeBruce <laura.debruce@mysanibel.com>; Holly Smith <Holly.Smith@mysanibel.com>; Mike Miller <Mike.Miller@mysanibel.com>; John Henshaw <John.Henshaw@mysanibel.com>; Richard Johnson <richard.johnson@mysanibel.com>

Cc Scotty L. Kelly <Scotty.Kelly@mysanibel.com>; Dana A. Souza <Dana.Souza@mysanibel.com>

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Hi All,

I am writing in support of SCCF's efforts to protect our sea turtle nests from coyote depredation since I am unable to attend the City Council meeting in person.

I am honored to serve as the Coastal Wildlife Liaison on SCCF's Board of Trustees and have a long history working with Kelly Sloan and supporting our sea turtle program.

SCCF's sea turtle scientists and turtle conservation program are renowned worldwide. Kelly and her staff often travel to national and international conferences to share the work done and discoveries made on our beaches. They have dedicated their professional lives to conservation science. They are the foremost experts in their field so you can rely on their data, their analysis and their recommendations – including this one.

The proposed plan was not contemplated lightly but it is presented as a last resort at a critical juncture. It will have little impact on the coyote population but if we do not take action now, the sea turtle population will be decimated.

The increasing number of turtle nests over the years is heartening and are the direct result of conservation efforts but loggerhead turtles are endangered worldwide and have a threatened status in the US. Florida's turtle population is barely stable even with all the people protecting them and their nests. Without this proposed intervention, the conservation efforts these past decades won't matter or help.

So, I ask you to believe our experts when they tell you that without this lethal solution, our sea turtle population will be devastated. You can rely on their assurances that this will be done with as little impact on the coyotes as possible. Please trust these experts and rely on their analysis to make an informed decision.

No one likes to think of some coyotes dying but slowly losing all our sea turtles is heartbreaking.

Please save our sea turtles.

Kate McDonald Sergeant

Opposition to Lethal Coyote Removal & Firearms Code Exception

From Angi Semler Welch <angisemler14@gmail.com>

Date Mon 2/2/2026 7:07 AM

To Scotty L. Kelly <Scotty.Kelly@mysanibel.com>; citycouncil@mysanibel.com <citycouncil@mysanibel.com>

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Dear Mayor and City Council Members,

I am writing to strongly oppose the proposed targeted lethal removal of coyotes. As a full-time Sanibel resident, I fully support sea turtle conservation and recognize the seriousness of nest depredation. At the same time, **I adamantly reject the use of firearms on our public beaches** and the notion of **killing animals for simply following their natural survival instincts in response to environmental shifts**.

The proposal to deploy high-powered firearms poses an unacceptable risk. Sanibel's beaches are the heart of our community—public spaces where residents and visitors walk at all hours. Introducing lethal weapons into this environment is a serious public safety hazard. Moreover, this approach contradicts Sanibel's identity and mission as a sanctuary island, where we strive to live in harmony with wildlife.

I urge the City Council to reject this program.

Instead, I encourage the City to continue pursuing adaptive, non-lethal strategies that address root causes and reflect the values of our community.

Below are the primary reasons for my opposition:

1. Public Safety and Violation of the Sanibel Code

The request to bypass Sec. 74-182 (17) is an acknowledgment that this program is incompatible with our safety standards. "Suppressed" firearms do not eliminate the inherent danger of discharging weapons in a public corridor. Our laws were written to protect residents and visitors and should not be set aside for a short-sighted, lethal "solution."

2. Sanibel's Identity as a Sanctuary Island

Targeting coyotes with lethal force contradicts Sanibel's long-standing commitment to peacefully coexisting with wildlife. Our vision and mission as a "Sanctuary Island" should be used to guide decisions such as this, and choosing lethal removal directly violates that mission. It also sets a dangerous precedent that our sanctuary status is conditional, eroding the principles that make Sanibel a model for conservation. "Eradication of any problem species is clearly in conflict with efforts to promote coexistence of people and wildlife." ([Treves and Naughton-Treves, 2005](#))

3. Short-Term Solution

Decades of wildlife research demonstrate that lethal removal is not a long-term solution. While depredation may decrease briefly, vacated territories are quickly filled by new, often more opportunistic coyotes. Remaining or newly arriving coyotes may reproduce at higher rates or more aggressively seek easy food sources, creating a cycle of perpetual killing rather than a lasting reduction in nest loss. This pattern, known as the vacuum effect, has been documented in long-term coyote management programs ([Treves & Naughton-Treves, 2005](#); [Berger, 2006](#); [Knowlton et al., 1999](#)).

4. Survival Instinct Is Not Malicious

Coyotes are not “problem” animals—they are survivors responding to environmental pressures. Targeting them for following their natural drive to find food is a betrayal of the sanctuary ethics Sanibel residents hold dear.

5. Recent Data Reflects Outlier Conditions

The depredation trends cited for this program occurred following ***unprecedented hurricanes*** that decimated food sources and disrupted human activity. Basing a permanent lethal policy on short-term survival behavior caused by extraordinary environmental conditions lacks long-term ecological validity.

6. Supporting Sea Turtles Does Not Require Killing Coyotes

Opposition to lethal removal does not mean ignoring the seriousness of sea turtle conservation. Adaptive, non-lethal strategies can protect nests while respecting Sanibel’s values, avoiding unnecessary killing, and fostering coexistence. For example, gating the footbridge access to Bowman’s Beach during turtle nesting season. **See detailed suggestions below.**

For all these reasons, I respectfully urge the City Council to reject this proposal, uphold the prohibition on firearms on public beaches, and pursue non-lethal, science-based solutions that protect sea turtles without compromising public safety or our island’s sanctuary principles.

Please see below for alternate options for addressing the depredation problem.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for maintaining the values that make Sanibel a unique model of coexistence and conservation.

Sincerely,
Angi Semler Welch

Proposed Non-Lethal Alternatives

1. Leverage Natural Water Barriers at Bowman’s Beach to Impede Coyote Access

- Bowman’s Beach is primarily accessible via two footbridges that cross over a long channel of water. Temporarily closing these bridges at night (or fitting with pedestrian-friendly gates) could minimize or impede predator access during critical hours.
- On the West End near Blind Pass consider installing fencing segments perpendicular to the shoreline, extending from the roadway toward the water, to create a directional deterrent and potentially redirect coyote movement away from nesting areas without enclosing the beach. These fences would allow continued access for people and sea turtles and would need to

account for changing tides at the waterline. Such a barrier could be combined with strategic night patrols (see below) to more easily "guard" the beach.

- Explore whether a similar roadway-to-shoreline fencing approach near Blind Pass Condos on the east end of Bowman's could also reduce coyote access to nesting areas.
- These strategies combined would severely limit coyote access on three to four sides of this critical stretch of beach.

2. Strategic Patrols and Monitoring

- Nighttime monitoring by trained volunteers during peak nesting periods can deter coyotes from beaches without using lights.
- Supports adaptive management by identifying areas of high activity for targeted non-lethal interventions.
- In 2010, scheduled night patrol surveys were conducted, which ultimately reduced the amount of nest depredation from a staggering 52% in 2009, to 15%. [Eskew 2012, Best Management Practices for Reducing Coyote Depredation on Loggerhead Sea Turtles](#)

3. Layered, Adaptive Management (Combined Measures First)

- Use a layered, adaptive non-lethal strategy that combines patrols and monitoring, deterrents, physical barriers, attractant reduction, and flexible nest-protection methods, recognizing that multiple tactics used together are more effective than any single measure in reducing coyote depredation.
- Rotate nest protection methods (screens, cages, chemical deterrents) and each season to prevent coyotes from learning and overcoming protections.
- [Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative \(2020\)](#) and [SEAFWA \(2020\)](#)

4. Additional Chemical or Scent-Based Deterrents

- Predator scents such as wolf urine have been shown to **reduce coyote nest depredation** without harming wildlife. [\(ScienceDirect, 2021\)](#)
- Capsaicin-based repellents applied **around**, not directly on, nests can supplement nest protection and encourage avoidance behavior. [\(International Ocean Turtle Newsletter\)](#)

Coyotes

From Pam Stoike <pamstoike@gmail.com>
Date Sun 2/1/2026 10:23 PM
To Scotty L. Kelly <Scotty.Kelly@mysanibel.com>

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Hello,

I am not able to attend the meeting on Tuesday. I wanted to thank you for all that you do to protect our sea turtles and wildlife on Sanibel. That being said I don't want to see any animal harmed. I realize that you have tried a lot of options for deterring coyotes.

Many people I have spoken with feel that this meeting may be a formality as the decision to use lethal actions is probably made. But, I have some other questions/ideas:

- 1) Without an accurate number of coyotes, is it appropriate to take lethal measures?
- 2) The first day you see a coyote approaching a nest or digging into a nest, will that coyote be killed? How do you know that particular coyote is a repeat offender? Have you tagged any of the coyotes to know what coyote is the one going after the turtle eggs? What is the procedure from day one?
- 3) Coyotes do not have an alternative prey source. Since marsh rabbits have not returned to pre-ian population numbers, why not introduce additional rabbits?
- 4) Sterilization may not be an immediate solution, but something to consider for a longer term approach.
- 5) How about using other deterrents? Water cannons - Obviously, this would be a more costly endeavor as your beach vehicles would need to be outfitted with this equipment. Electrified fencing or even shock collars as another alternative.
- 6) Finally, how about using non lethal measures such as shooting rubber bean bags/bullets to the rump of a coyote. Perhaps this may be enough of a deterrent. Has this been tried?

Thank you again for your time. I appreciate all that you and SCCF does to protect our islands and beyond.

Pam Stoike



Re: Proposal for Sea Turtle Protection

From David Finkelstein <David@bdex.com>

Date Sun 2/1/2026 12:11 PM

To Scotty L. Kelly <Scotty.Kelly@mysanibel.com>; sancouncil <sancouncil@mysanibel.com>

1 attachment (78 KB)

Coyotes.pdf;

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Dear Sanibel City Council Members,

Please find the attached comments regarding the proposal from the Coyote Working Group.



David Finkelstein
CEO
www.bdex.com
954-341-7988

- *3X Inc 5000 Fastest Growing Company*
- *Find more people like your best customers with Machine Learning.*
- *Read our white paper on how data quality effects ROAS*

To: Sanibel City Council

Re: Opposition to Targeted Lethal Removal of Coyotes for Sea Turtle Nest Protection

Dear Council Members,

As a concerned Sanibel resident, I felt I must share my thoughts on this proposal.

As you all know, The Sanibel Plan explicitly states: "Sanibel is and shall remain a barrier island sanctuary, one in which a diverse population **lives in harmony with the Island's wildlife** and natural habitats. The Sanibel community must be vigilant in the protection and enhancement of its sanctuary characteristics."

Lethally removing coyotes contradicts this foundational principle. True sanctuary management requires accepting natural predator-prey dynamics, not selectively eliminating species we find inconvenient.

Critical Data Gaps in the Proposal

1. No Evidence of Adult Sea Turtle Population Decline

The presentation provides extensive data on nest depredation rates but completely omits the most critical metric: adult sea turtle population trends. If coyote predation genuinely threatened sea turtle recovery, we would see declining adult populations. The proposal provides zero evidence this is occurring and the evidence of a significant increase in nests suggests the opposite, a likely significant increase in adult sea turtles over the past 15 years.

2. Sea Turtle Nests Continue to Increase

According to the presentation's own data, Sanibel experienced 902 nests in 2023—the highest count in the dataset spanning back to 2007. Despite fluctuating depredation rates, nest counts have generally trended upward over two decades, demonstrating that sea turtle populations are resilient to natural predation pressures.

Recent data supports continued recovery:

Florida's sea turtle nesting has shown significant increases over the past 15 years, with loggerhead nests—the primary species on Sanibel—more than doubling since the early 2000s

The 2023 season saw strong nesting numbers across Southwest Florida despite elevated coyote activity

Green sea turtles, also nesting on Sanibel, have shown particularly robust recovery, with nesting increasing exponentially over the past two decades

3. Predation is Natural and Expected

Sea turtle hatchlings are prey species. In natural ecosystems, they face predation from:

- Ghost crabs (major nest predators)
- Birds (herons, gulls, frigatebirds)
- Raccoons and other mammals
- Marine predators (sharks, large fish, dolphins)

Sea turtles have evolved a reproductive strategy that accounts for high juvenile mortality—producing large clutches precisely because most hatchlings will not survive. A 1/1,000 survival rate to adulthood, cited in the presentation, is normal for sea turtles, not evidence of crisis.

Will we next propose killing dolphins and birds because they also consume hatchlings?

Philosophical Concerns

Selective Species Management Violates Sanctuary Principles

The proposal treats coyotes as invasive pests rather than established island residents that have **come here to seek sanctuary from the overdevelopment** in Lee County. Selectively eliminating them because they compete with arbitrarily set goals is the opposite of sanctuary philosophy.

The Federal 10% Threshold is Arbitrary

The presentation repeatedly cites the federal recovery plan's 10% depredation threshold as justification. However:

- This is a management trigger, not proof of population-level harm.
- The threshold does not account for overall population health or compensatory mechanisms.

Unintended Consequences

The presentation acknowledges that broad-based removal causes ecosystem disruption—yet targeted removal still:

- Creates territorial vacuums that attract transient coyotes
- May increase depredation if less experienced animals move in
- Disrupts social structures, potentially making remaining coyotes bolder

As noted on slide 22, this can lead to "unpredictable predator movements and inconsistent hunting/foraging behavior"—potentially worsening the problem.

Recommendations

Rather than lethal removal, the city should:

- Continue non-lethal deterrents while accepting that some natural predation will occur
- Demand evidence of adult sea turtle population decline before considering lethal methods
- Commission comprehensive research on Sanibel's coyote population (the proposal admits current "information gaps")
- Re-examine whether the 10% threshold is appropriate for barrier island ecosystems with established coyote populations
- Honor Sanibel's sanctuary designation by accepting natural ecological processes

Conclusion

The proposal presents a solution in search of a problem. Without evidence that adult sea turtle populations are declining—and with nest counts at historic highs—there is no justification for violating Sanibel's sanctuary principles by lethally removing an established predator species.

Nature is resilient. Sea turtles have survived for over 100 million years by producing enough offspring to overcome natural predation. **Our role as sanctuary stewards is to preserve natural processes**, not to micromanage them based on arbitrary thresholds.

I urge the Council to reject this proposal and recommit to true sanctuary management.

Respectfully submitted,



David Finkelstein
Sanibel Resident



coyotes

From Debra Markovich <debra_markovich@icloud.com>

Date Sun 2/1/2026 8:53 AM

To Scotty L. Kelly <Scotty.Kelly@mysanibel.com>

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Good Morning,

Due to other appointments on the 3rd I will not be able to attend this meeting. I would however like to express my support in lethal removal of coyotes who are destroying our native inhabitants.

I know this is a difficult discussion, however, something needs to be done for these "invasive" predators. They are at the top of the food chain on this island and pose a threat not only to the sea turtles but to anyone who encounters them. They are out during the day which is not generally typical for coyotes. They are not afraid of humans and are bold in their approach. Many residents have expressed their concerns regarding not only their dogs but their safety in walking in the evening hours. I personally have a friend who felt threatened walking their neighborhood in the evening, knowing she was being followed by a coyote.

My concern is if an elderly person or young toddler were attacked, and yes this has been documented, who will be held accountable for this? I sincerely hope the city will address this pervasive problem before a tragedy strikes.

All The Best,
Debra A Markovich
858-245-4290
debra_markovich@icloud.com

"In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks"
John Muir



For the FEB 3rd Council mtg agenda item: Discussion on coyote removal to protect sea turtles

From Allen <cougar3_33@yahoo.com>

Date Sat 1/31/2026 1:57 PM

To Scotty L. Kelly <Scotty.Kelly@mysanibel.com>

Cc Kelly Sloan <ksloan@sccf.org>; Jack Brzoza <jbrzoza@sccf.org>

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To the Sanibel City Council,

I wish I could be at the meeting in person, but I cannot due to work. So please accept this email in place of being there to say it personally.

I have been a permittee with the SCCF Sea Turtle Program for around 25 years. So I have seen a lot. Never have I seen such a detrimental effect on nesting as these past years since coyotes showed up on our island. It's gotten worse and worse as the years have passed. The amount of extra work sea turtle workers have to do to combat it has grown to become hours many mornings. Yet the coyotes keep finding ways to thwart all efforts we make to stop their destruction. Every deterrent we have tried, they have still found ways to keep getting to nests. FWC has even reached the conclusion that we have tried everything there is to try other than lethal action, which is something they allow. But they leave it up to local officials, so here we are.

I am an animal lover, a nature lover, and love our islands because of that. But there are times to draw a line as to what is acceptable. Do we not try and eradicate a rat that keeps getting in our car engine and causing damage? Especially, when a rat is considered a nuisance animal and not something to be protected?

Coyotes are not native on Sanibel. They should be considered invasive, but due to the heavy prevalence of them in Florida, FWC considers them "habituated" (rough def: they're here to stay so they are now part of FL - deal with it). But they are a nuisance animal. They are greatly disrupting the nesting of a threatened species that is native on our beaches. And they are wiping out those nests in numbers never seen before. Florida's iconic mega reptile, the alligator, is taken down lethally at times if it becomes deemed a nuisance animal. I ask you consider this the same. Only, instead of being a threat to humans, coyotes on our islands are a threat to a threatened species that we work hard to protect.

Although, on the note of a danger to humans, that, too, is becoming a concern. Last turtle nesting season, the danger of coyotes escalated from just our sea turtle nests to us humans out there doing the conservation work. The coyotes have started showing up in daylight when most activity before was just at night. There were multiple encounters on the beach. They are losing their fear of humans, which is another factor to toss out there in the correlation of this situation and deciding to remove nuisance alligators and other predators. I and my partner had a couple of experiences with a coyote on the beach last year. Most scary was coming across a coyote digging up a nest and the shocking way it stood its ground against us as we came upon the scene and tried to drive it away.

So if nothing I've said regarding the turtle nests swayed you yet to consider the use of lethal means to deal with this predator hurting our native wildlife, consider that inaction may one day lead to harm to people besides just our wildlife if we don't take the next step. We've tried everything else. And what will be asked is minimal, concentrated, and targeted. It is not wholesale slaughter. You know SCCF and its commitment to responsible stewardship of all nature on the islands. They would never come to you and ask for consideration of such a plan unless it is a last resort to try and protect something very important. So please allow this remaining avenue to try and protect our sea turtles, and even ourselves while doing our work out there.

Thank you for your consideration,

Allen C Dunham

From: Victoria Anthony <vsanthony@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 31, 2026 7:21:22 AM
To: Holly Smith <Holly.Smith@mysanibel.com>; John Henshaw <John.Henshaw@mysanibel.com>; Mike Miller <Mike.Miller@mysanibel.com>; Richard Johnson <richard.johnson@mysanibel.com>; Laura J. DeBruce <laura.debruce@mysanibel.com>
Subject: coyotes

I hope that protection of sea turtle nests is the only reason for taking lethal measures to reduce the coyote situation.

If so, I would like that fact to be emphasized at Tuesday's meeting.

Our concern stems from the observation that over the years, owners and visitors seem less and less concerned with our status as a sanctuary island. We are in danger of shifting from being a sanctuary for humans, animals, plants and the environment; to being a sanctuary for humans where it's nice to see a bit of nature, as long as it's at a safe distance, attractive, and not too inconvenient: Sunsets and shells are lovely; Predatory animals are not. Alligators have been heavily culled; Many wish the same for the coyotes; even to have them eradicated altogether. To the extent that City government bends to placate the fearful, we become less like Sanibel and more like Naples, which would probably be fine with many.

People will still come to Sanibel, but it will no longer be Sanibel.

Perhaps that is what many would prefer.

Best,
Vicky Anthony
408 Old Trail Road