

Project Update: May 15, 2026

**Mid-Coast Sea Turtle Rescue (MCSTR)
Mitigation Project – Progress Report**



Since the last progress report in September 2025, the Mid-Coast Sea Turtle Rescue has successfully rescued turtles throughout the region, took measures to protect these iconic coastal species, and contributed to scientific research.

In October 2025, ninety-one volunteers completed the state mandated Cold Stunned Sea Turtle training qualifying them for inclusion on the USFWS List of Authorized Individuals (LAI) to handle endangered sea turtles. Our Annual Mid-Coast meeting was held by webinar and in person at the Port O'Connor Library on December 11 to review local processes and reinforce learning of state required procedural changes. It was at this meeting that we announced the appointment of our new Seadrift Site Coordinator, Melissa Alcalá. A Seadrift resident and business owner, Melissa, joined the MCSTR corp of volunteers in 2024 and stepped up to coordinate the transport of turtles during the three cold stunning events in the winter of 2025. With her outstanding leadership and organization skills, we are excited and grateful to her for accepting the official role of Seadrift Site Coordinator. On December 10, both MCSTR coordinators attended the 2025-2026 Coastal Bend Sea Turtle Cold Stunning Pre-Season Coordination Meeting with other statewide sea turtle rescue & rehab leaders.

Just after the new year, the Texas coast experienced a cold stunning event. Planning started on January 20th with a heads-up email to volunteers. As the forecast solidified, emails were sent asking for volunteers' availability and formulating the search and rescue plan. The cold front blew in on the night of Saturday 1/24 with continuing high winds through Sunday. Water temperatures reached the cold stunning threshold and remained there for over 24 hours, thus a cold stunning event was officially declared.

While high winds prevented most boats from getting out on Monday 1/26 our volunteers out of Goose Island State Park, Chase and Courtney Bechtol, launched in the afternoon and found 8 turtles which were transported by Keep Aransas County Beautiful volunteers and taken to the ARK (Amos Rehabilitation Keep) in Port Aransas. Also on Monday ground crews braved the winds and surveyed shorelines in Powderhorn, Magnolia Beach to Indianola, King Fisher Beach, and Boggy Nature Park. Steve Marwitz with his grandkids, Fehrle Rodriguez and Jacob Rodriguez found a turtle on the Matagorda Bay Shoreline in the



Fehrle Rodriguez and Jacob Rodriguez with cold stunned sea turtle from Matagorda Bay shoreline at Powderhorn State Park.


Powderhorn State Park and drove it to the Texas State Aquarium Wildlife Rescue Center (TSAWRC) in Corpus.

A boat captain coordinating meeting was held Monday via zoom to outline the search plan pairing up bay boats and airboats pairing up in designated areas to rescue and transport turtles. The result of Tuesday’s efforts was the transport of 161 cold stunned sea turtles to the TSAWRC. Sixty-one volunteers with 14 boats, 5 vehicles and 2 trailers from Port O’Connor and Seadrift participated in this day’s effort.

Additionally, our MCSTR volunteers in Matagorda provided transportation for the 130 cold stunned sea turtles recovered by Texas Parks & Wildlife Coastal Fisheries and Game Wardens from East Matagorda Bay. These turtles were taken to Lake Jackson for further transportation by the Gulf Center for Sea Turtle Research to their facility in Galveston.

Mon 1/26	Tues 1/27	Weds 1/28
9 Turtles	161 Turtles	31 Turtles
1 Boat	14 Boats	5 Boats
3 Ground Searches	5 Vehicles	5 Vehicles
	2 Trailers	17 Volunteers
	61 Volunteers	
	220 Hours	


On Wednesday, January 28, five boats rescued an additional 31 turtles. See tables below for the data summary of the MCSTR’s efforts during the January 2026 Cold Stunning Event.



Cold Stunning Event

Mon, Jan 26 – Wed, Jan 28, 2026

201 Sea Turtles



Date	Count
20260126	9
20260127	161
20260128	31
Total	201

Condition	Count
alive/moving	159
head missing/fatal injury	17
old dead	2
unsure/not moving	23
Total	201

Disposition	Count
ARK	21
Left	19
TSA	161
Total	201

Boat Type	Count	Percent
Airboat	123	61.19%
Bay	76	37.81%
Land	2	1.00%
Total	201	100.00%

Dock	Count	Percent
POC	149	74.13%
Seadrift	31	15.42%
GISP	20	9.95%
TSA	1	0.50%
Total	201	100.00%

Initials	Count	Percentage
MCM	37	18.41%
CDB	26	12.94%
DKF	23	11.44%
MRS	21	10.45%
ANM	21	10.45%
TMS	20	9.95%
DLM	11	5.47%
DAE	10	4.98%
ARB	8	3.98%
SGR	6	2.99%
JMH	6	2.99%
PLT	3	1.49%
MLT	2	1.00%
TLP	2	1.00%
KAH	2	1.00%
STB	1	0.50%
FER	1	0.50%
BMB	1	0.50%
Total	201	100.00%

ARK – Amos Rehabilitation Keep, Port Aransas
 Left – Dead turtles marked and left
 TSA – Texas State Aquarium, Corpus Christi



MCSTR volunteers assisted the [Marine Mammal Stranding Network \(MMSN\)](#) with 3 incidents of injured or stranded marine mammals in the Mid-Coast region. We provided boat support during a stranded dolphin rescue in January and helped transport MMSN staff to the Gulf Beach for assessment of and DNA sampling of two dead pygmy whales. The third effort was to search for and assess a dolphin calf with fishing line entanglement.

Throughout the year, the MCSTR has assisted Dr. Philippe Tissot, [Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Conrad Blucher Institute](#) and students in the placement of water temperature monitors and sensors throughout Espiritu Santo Bay for collection of bay temperature data for modeling studies and student research.

For the protection of sea turtles and other coastal species, MCSTR volunteers have continued their efforts to install and maintain monofilament recycling bins at fishing piers and boat ramps. Bins are provided by [Texas Sea Grant](#)



Dr. Philippe Tissot, TAMU-CC installing temperature monitor in Espiritu Santo Bay.

Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program. Five additional bins were placed, bringing the total number in the Mid-Coast region to 21. Additional bins will be installed in the coming year. Throughout the year MCSTR volunteers collected the line and we gathered for an annual cleaning party in early May. The result of our efforts was sending 10 pounds of monofilament to the recycling facility, plus removing a large amount of lead, lures, and other non-recyclable materials from our local environment.

Along with the installation of the monofilament bins, Texas Sea Turtle Hotline signs were posted at piers, boat ramps, and areas with high visitation by fisherman and beach goers including Speedy Stop in Port O'Connor and at the public restroom on Magnolia Beach.



Brigid Berger and Debbie Fisher install monofilament recycling bin at Magnolia Beach.

The MCSTR has continued to answer calls to the Texas Sea Turtle Hotline (866-887-8535) and since our last report, we have responded to 16 calls of stranded (non-cold stunned) turtles. Among the reported turtles were 3 live Greens, 1 live Kemp's Ridley, 3 dead Greens, 2 dead Loggerheads. Live turtles were transported to a rehab facility. Dead turtles were appropriately assessed, measured, and documented in the NOAA Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network database. The other calls included misidentified turtles (Diamondback Terrapin), and calls referred to other regional rescues.

A special event was conducted for our MCSTR volunteers at the Texas State Aquarium. In March 2026 a tour and presentation at the Wildlife Rescue Center not only helped to build a stronger relationship between organizations but contributed to the knowledge and understanding of sea turtle rescue efforts and rehabilitation care. MCSTR volunteers were wowed by the hospitality and the state-of-the-art equipment at the Wildlife Rescue Center.

In the hospital was a particularly special patient, it was the cold stunned turtle found on the Powderhorn shoreline of Matagorda Bay during the January cold stunning event. This turtle required special care and antibiotics. And thanks to TSAWRC, on April 24 this turtle was not only released back into the wild, but it was escorted by the very same MCSTR volunteers who had found it.

The Mid-Coast Sea Turtle Rescue is grateful to the Matagorda Bay Mitigation Trust for funding. It is only with this support that we can recruit and train



Releasing the rehabilitated turtle Steve Marwitz with grandkids Jacob and Fehrle Rodriguez, and cousin, Coda King.

volunteers to search for and rescue sea turtles and provide the efforts which support them throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted by Brigid Berger, MCSTR Coordinator 5/15/2026