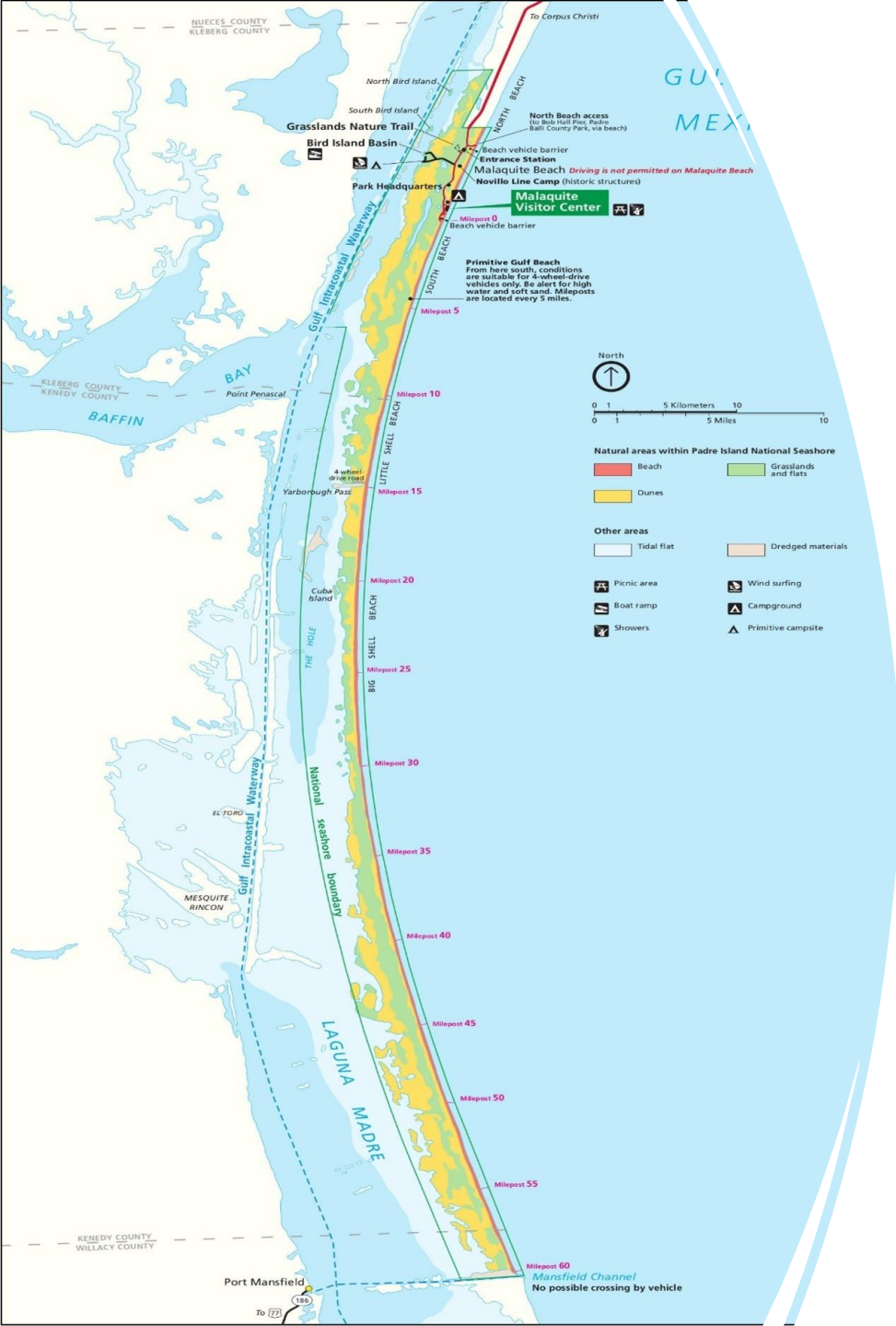


Sea Turtle Science & Recovery Program Update

Padre Island National
Seashore

March 2024

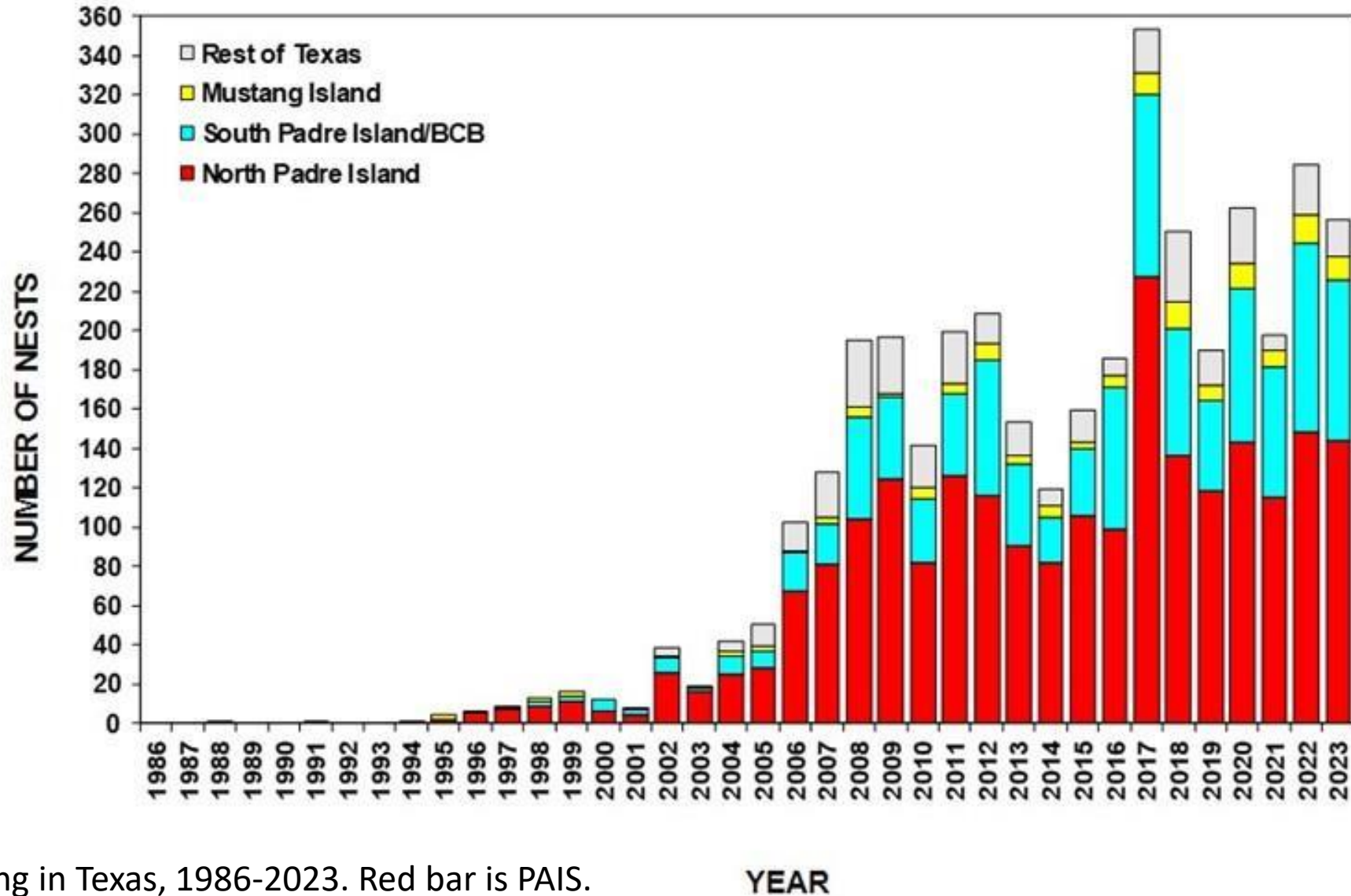




Padre Island National Seashore

- Established 1962
- 65 miles of beach (longest undeveloped barrier island beach in U.S.)
- Year-round public beach driving on all but 4 ½ miles
- 150 sensitive (at-risk) species including 5 sea turtle spp.
- 5 ESA-listed sea turtles
 - Kemp's ridley
 - Green
 - Hawksbill
 - Leatherback
 - Loggerhead

Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Nesting (Texas and PAIS)



Kemp's nesting in Texas, 1986-2023. Red bar is PAIS.

Program Budget

PAIS ONPS Base Budget

Budget Allocation Method	Year	Sea Turtle Allocation	Parkwide Authorization	% of PAIS budget going to sea turtles	Total \$ allocated to parkwide resource management	% of parkwide RM \$ going to sea turtles
Budget Allocations Based on Fixed Annual Amounts	2014	\$1,374,902	5,553,100	24.76	1,623,572	84.68
	2015	\$1,374,902	5,587,000	24.37	1,623,572	84.68
	2016	\$1,374,902	5,683,900	24.19	1,623,572	84.68
	2017	\$1,374,902	5,699,400	24.12	1,623,572	84.68
	2018	\$1,374,902	5,774,500	23.81	1,623,572	84.68
	2019	\$1,374,902	5,903,094	23.29	1,653,572	83.15
	2020	\$1,374,902	5,812,000	23.66	1,603,572	85.74
Allocations Based on Park Needs	2021	\$1,374,902	6,064,500	20.82	1,663,053	82.67
	2022	\$1,259,330	6,195,100	20.33	1,672,382	75.3
	2023	\$1,438,408	6,450,900	22.3	1,841,332	78.12

***FY2022 base budget was lower due to vacant positions*

Additional Funding

DWH NRDA Early Restoration Funds

Nest Detection & Enhancement

- Additional ~\$1.5M. Annually through FY25

Other Project Funds

- Additional \$100-500k annually for sea turtle science

Changes Following the 2020 Program Review

- Implemented Incident Command System for public events
 - This has reduced the number of public hatchling releases.
 - This has not reduced number of sea turtle hatchlings that are released by the park. Hatchlings continue to increase.
- Better distributed workload, including hiring seasonals and limiting overtime, to reduce risk of burnout and injury
 - This has reduced costs associated with overtime (was ~15% of base).
 - This has not impacted program mission or outcome. More seasonals hired.
- Realigned the sea turtle education program to the Interpretation + Education Division
 - This has not impacted availability of public education programming.
- Clarified process for media and social media engagement
 - This has established appropriate channels to vet media requests.
 - This has not prohibited staff from speaking to the media.



Next Steps for the Program

- PAIS is dedicated to supporting listed species recovery and the financial sustainability of the program.
- Strategic and operational planning is needed to design a sustainable program.
 - Includes identifying staffing needs, budget resources, FWS consultation, and NEPA planning.
 - Align NPS actions with its commitments in species recovery plans.
- The turtle program will be relocated under the park's Resource Management Division.
 - Will ensure resources can be maximized by sharing positions, leveraging partnerships, and integrating new technology.

