Ban set to preserve hatchlings

■ Glenn Cordingley

A night-time ban has again been placed on four-wheel-drives entering Cable Beach for five months, during turtle nesting season.

The Shire of Broome will close the Cable Beach North access ramp to vehicles between 8pm and 6am each day during nesting season from October 1, 2013, to February 28, 2014.

Cable Beach will also be closed to vehicles two hours either side with high tides of 9m or more.

Acting Shire president Anne Poelina said the gate installed at the Cable Beach Amphitheatre access ramp would be locked during the closures.

"Vehicle closure times are primarily at night and during the period when the beach is least used and turtle nesting season is underway," Cr Poelina said.

She said the main species nesting on Cable Beach was the flatback turtle, which is threatened and protected under WA legislation.

"Turtles generally nest at the top of the beach just above the high tide mark, and their nests can be damaged by vehicles compacting sand and crushing nests," Cr Poelina said.

"Wheel ruts can prevent hatchlings making their way to the water's edge, and vehicle lights can disturb and confuse hatchlings."

Conservation Volunteers Australia has managed a community turtle monitoring program along a 6km stretch of Cable Beach for the last seven years.

More information on vehicle access and driving techniques during turtle nesting season is on the Shire website at www.broome.wa.gov.au/comm/tnsvc.htm.

A turtle digs a hole in preparation for egg laying on Cable Beach. Picture: Glenn Cordingley

The flatback turtle is protected under legislation. Picture: Kevin Smith