Every year, the Holiday Festival of Lights at James Island County Park transforms the season into a spectacular display of color, creativity and holiday magic. But among the millions of twinkling lights and festive displays, there's one attraction that might surprise visitors: a massive sculpture made almost entirely of sand.

This year's sand sculpture takes inspiration from the sea serpent light display, bringing an imaginative coastal creature to life in a way that's both intricate and impressive. The sculpture is the work of Dean Arscott and his team at Team SandTastic, a Tampa-based company that has been creating professional sand sculptures for 36 years. Arscott has been with the team for 16 of those years and has helped bring several Holiday Festival of Lights sculptures to life in recent years. In fact, he says the festival is one of his favorite projects.

And while the finished sculpture might look like something you'd expect to find on a beach, getting it there takes a whole lot of planning, teamwork and, of course, sand.

This year's sculpture is built using approximately 50 tons of locally sourced sand, delivered to the park in two full dump trucks. From there, the team begins the process of shaping and carving the massive pile into its final design. The material list is surprisingly simple: sand and water. Once the sculpture is complete, the artists apply a finishing spray to help set and preserve the details.

The construction process takes about a full week, with the team carefully building, packing, shaping and carving the sculpture along the way. It's a craft that requires both patience and precision. Every curve, scale and detail has to be thoughtfully formed, turning loose grains of sand into a piece of art that can stand up to the elements and capture the attention of thousands of festival visitors.

So, the next time you make your way through the Holiday Festival of Lights, take a moment to stop and admire the sea serpent. Think about the two dump trucks of sand, the week of work and the years of experience behind every carefully carved detail. It's a pretty remarkable transformation, especially when you consider that it all started with a pile of sand and a little water.

The Holiday Festival of Lights runs nightly at James Island County Park through December 31.