

Issue: Sea Level Rise

## Florida Under Water -- Talking Points

### Why Worry? How Bad Is Sea Level Rise Going to Be?

Sea level rise is inevitable. It's already happening. If no action is taken to address climate change, scientists predict that sea level will rise nearly 7 feet by the year 2100. In Florida alone 90 coastal communities will experience chronic flooding. That means at least 10% of those communities will be flooded by high tides every other week. The area affected will be much greater than 10% in most of those communities, and some will virtually disappear under water. Even if we adopt the extreme measures of the Paris Climate Agreement, sea level will still rise almost 2 feet by 2100, and 19 Florida communities will experience chronic flooding. Three already are.

### What Damage Will the New Floods Cause?

Regularly soaked basements and first floors; declining property values; forced relocations, particularly of lower-income citizens; a decline in tourism and the beach industry; crops harmed by saltwater; flooded roads, refineries and sewage plants spreading hazardous compounds where people live and work; salt contamination of the water supply; relocation of crucial businesses and the power infrastructure.

### If I Live Inland, Does It Matter to Me?

You're part of the Florida economy; what hurts Florida--the potential loss of tourism--hurts you, since a source of state budget revenue will shrink. Your community may have to expand suddenly to accommodate coastal refugees; they will need new schools and services. Your tax dollars will pay for disaster relief. Wildlife sanctuaries and historic sites you care about will disappear.

### Haven't We Been Planning for This?

Once. Not as much now. Gov. Rick Scott has denied climate change. He abolished his predecessor's Energy and Climate Commission. State workers claim they are not allowed to use the term « climate change » in their reports. Scott said that he spent \$350 million on sea-level rise projects, but it was actually spent on coastal projects – like updating the sewage system in the Florida Keys – with no direct relationship to climate-change impacts. Now that it's an election year, Scott has proposed \$3.6 million for the Department of Environmental Protection in the 2018 state budget. That doesn't begin to pay for mitigation and adaptation. Upgrading seawalls across Broward County will cost \$4 billion to \$6 billion. County governments have shouldered the responsibility for addressing sea level rise, but the problem requires a coordinated response across county lines. Smaller communities don't have the wherewithal to go it alone.

### What More Can State Government Do?

- \* Limit coastal development and invest in economic development and infrastructure in safer areas.
- \* Stop paying for roads, bridges, transit, sewer, and water systems that support development in flood zones.
- \* Update building codes, zoning rules, and infrastructure plans to account for sea-level rise projections.
- \* Require flood insurance policies whose premiums reflect actual risk levels.
- \* Beef up emergency response and evacuation programs.
- \* Pay for large-scale home buyouts.
- \* Reduce carbon emissions and support renewable energy development