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NOAA: 'We have a lot to lose' in sea level rise 'emergency'

FORT MYERS, FL – Scientists describe sea level rise as the change in location of where the shore lies – in other words, where the sea meets the land. Why is this important to you?

Because worldwide, sea level has risen about eight inches during the past century, and according to a report released on June 17 by the U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP), it is rising at double that rate now.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicted a range of 7 to 23 inches of sea-level rise in their latest, 2007 4th Assessment Report. The authors also included a disclaimer that the input from melting continental ice is difficult to model and were not included in their projections. Since then, scientific consensus is settling at a three- to four-foot estimate of sea level rise by 2100, and is reflected in the new U.S. Global Change Research Program report as follows...

“... recent estimates of global sea-level rise substantially exceed the IPCC estimates, suggesting sea-level rise between 3 and 4 feet in this century. Even a 2-foot rise in relative sea level over a century would result in the loss of a large portion of the nation’s remaining coastal wetlands, as they are not able to build new soil at a fast enough rate.”

“It’s very frightening if the predictions on sea level rise are even close to accurate,” says Carol Auer, oceanographer and sea level rise program manager for the NOAA/Center for Coastal Ocean Research (CSCOR). “We have a lot to lose.”

Sea level rise will bring worldwide consequences as it alters ecosystems and the ability to live in coastal regions. The most at-risk areas in the U.S. include low-lying developed areas in the Mid-Atlantic, Southeast and Gulf coasts.

NOAA’s Sea Level Rise program focuses on researching the phenomenon and turning the research into applicable results that will help develop tools for coastal managers to use to lessen the impacts.

The group’s research priorities are directed by Congress, the current administration, NOAA mandates and strategic plans, and the scientific community. They select research projects through a competitive, merit-based process that identifies the most qualified teams of scientists in the nation.

“NOAA is developing tools to predict how sea level rise will affect our coastal habitats which support a diversity of plants and animals, including economically valuable fisheries. One thing we’ve learned is that beach restoration is saving our beaches,” Auer said. “It’s a tool in the toolkit – if we don’t have beaches, we lose an economically significant place where people live, work and play.”

“Our goal at the Sea Level Rise program is to help decision-makers understand the potential impacts of sea level rise and to use the information for planning so we can reduce the amount of future damage and economic losses,” Auer said. “I believe global warming and the associated sea level rise should be treated as a war – as an emergency. We must be diligent.”

For more information, please visit www.asbpa.org.

To view the entire U.S. Global Change Research Program report, click [here](#) or go to <http://www.globalchange.gov/publications/reports/scientific-assessments/us-impacts>.

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