SOUTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL COMPACT CLIMATE CHANGE

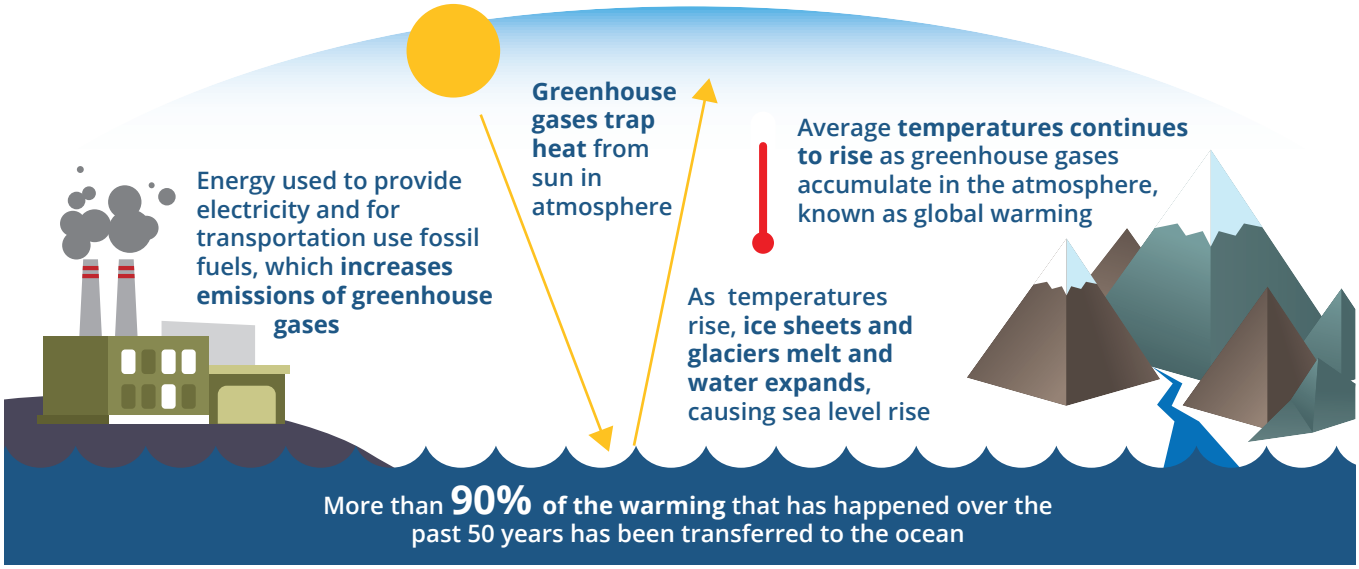
WHY IS SEA LEVEL RISE IMPORTANT TO ME?



Sea level rise describes how the world's oceans are becoming higher, on average, relative to land.

The land in Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe, and Palm Beach Counties sits at some of the **lowest elevations in the country**, placing our region at particular risk for sea level rise.

Why are the seas rising?



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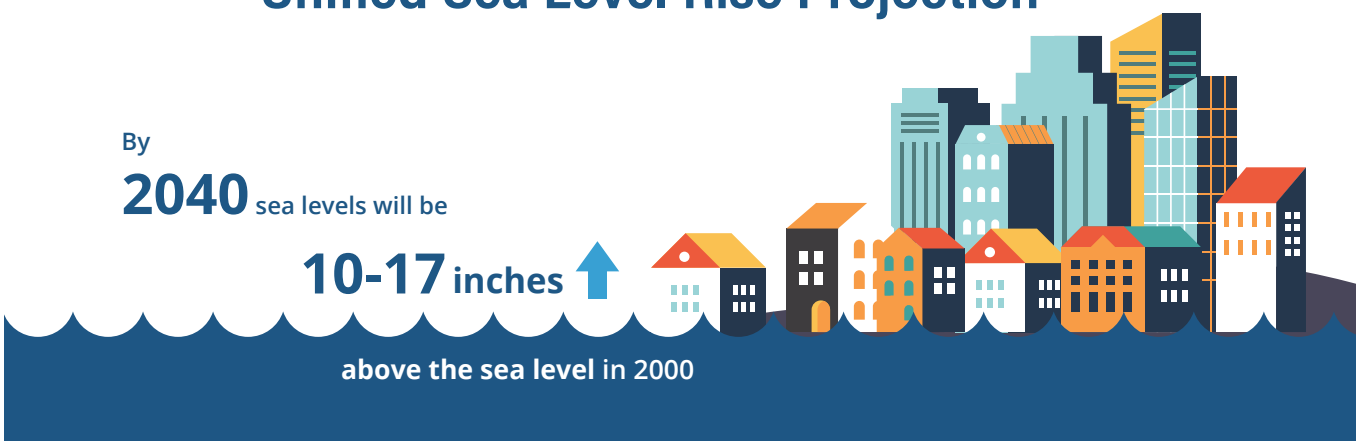
Unified Sea Level Rise Projection



How does sea level rise impact my community and my life?



Sea level rise means more flooding of our streets and homes. As sea level rises, nuisance flooding associated with naturally occurring high tides is becoming more frequent and extending further inland. These "sunny day" flood events—floods that occur when we have no rain at all—have increased in the past two decades[1]. Because the flood water is saltwater, these sunny day floods can damage our cars and other property due to corrosion from the salt.



Sea level rise impacts inland neighborhoods. Because Southeast Florida sits on porous rock, sea level rise is not just a problem for our coastal communities. As seas rise, the underground water table also rises. When it rains, there is less space for the ground to absorb rainwater, which can cause stormwater flooding. In fact, some inland communities are most at-risk for flooding.



Sea level rise can pose health risks. Flooding can reduce our ability to get around, requiring people to move through water that may be mixing with pollutants on our roads, which is a health risk. Flooding can also impact homes sitting at very low elevations, creating mold which is a health hazard. Chronic flooding and sea level rise can erode critical infrastructure that we all rely on, like underground sewage pipes and septic tanks, resulting in leaks that can make us sick. Upgrading and fixing infrastructure is expensive and can tax city budgets—costs that are passed on to residents.



Sea level rise threatens our drinking water. As saltwater from the ocean encroaches further inland it can impact our water supply, which in South Florida, comes from underground aquifers that store freshwater. Longer term, as freshwater becomes less available, the cost of water could increase. Reduced freshwater supply also hurts agriculture, which is one of the largest economic drivers in ourregion.



Sea level rise may increase our insurance. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) produces flood maps by "flood zone" based on where flooding is most likely to occur. FEMA flood zones determine a property owner's flood insurance rate. As flood risk increases and maps are updated, some properties may be required to pay more for flood insurance, increasing costs for homeowners—costs that are frequently passed on to renters. Increasing flood hazards can also make higher elevation neighborhoods more desirable. Without careful planning, affordable neighborhoods on higher-ground could become more expensive, leading to displacement of long-time residents.



Sea level rise will make hurricanes more dangerous. Rising seas mean that when a hurricane hits, storm surge will be higher and therefore more damaging and dangerous. If a wet storm—a storm that brings lots of rain—hits while tides are high, the rainwater can't quickly drain off the landscape because it has nowhere to go.



How local government is working to lessen impacts

Assessing risk. Identifying which communities, critical infrastructure, and economic sectors are most vulnerable and exposed to sea level rise.

Updating regulations to increase protection. Requiring that future development is built higher standards to accommodate rising sea levels, and updating land use plans and zoning codes to ensure that development keeps people out of harm's way.

Engaging with those most impacted. Engaging with neighborhoods and communities where flooding is occurring to co-create adaptation strategies and investments.

Investing in green spaces. More parks and greenspaces can reduce flooding impacts, while providing other community benefits.

Elevating and protecting critical community assets. Where chronic flooding is already occurring, local governments are elevating roads and other critical infrastructure that communities depend on, and investing in pumps and other engineering solutions to remove water.

Buying properties that experience repeat flooding. In some cases, local governments are buying flood-prone homes to allow homeowners to be fairly compensated while reducing their exposure to flood hazards.



What can I do?

Learn the flood risk of your home. Enter your address to ***this tool*** to view the risk of sea level rise, high tide flooding, and storm surge for your property.

Reduce your exposure to sea level rise risks. Don't walk or drive your car through standing flood waters. Have a plan and prepare early for hurricanes. In the event of a hurricane, follow local emergency management guidance to relocate to a local shelter if you live in a storm surge evacuation zone that is at risk.

Use your voice for climate action. Attend your city or county commission meetings, write to your elected officials about your sea level rise concerns, and vote in every election.



Photo credit: Miami Community Newspaper

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For more information, visit: www.climatecompact.org