

Manley Fuller: Lawmakers should consider impact of Florida's changing coastline

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Sea level rise and a changing South Florida coastline is not something the average Floridian thinks about, but the potential impact that residents could experience in their lifetimes should not be overlooked.

Recently, Florida Atlantic University hosted its second annual Sea Level Rise Summit to address the increasing and immediate risk that rising sea levels pose to our state.

Experts from around the world provided our local governments with a better understanding of the current situation and the appropriate steps we need to take as a state to adapt and protect Floridians and our environment.

Sustained reliance on the state-run Citizens Property Insurance Corp. and Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund as presently structured continues to be a problem along our low-lying, flood-prone coast. Higher sea levels make these problems worse. According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, this rise will be anywhere from three to seven inches by 2030 along the East Coast of the United States.

During the 2013 legislative session, the **Florida Legislature** passed a law that prohibits Citizens from covering new coastal construction built after July 1, 2014, that lies seaward of the Coastal Construction Control Line or within designated Coastal Barrier Resources Units — which are congressionally-designated coastal areas not eligible for federal flood insurance or other federal developmental subsidies that also buffer built areas from storm damages.

Supported by business, consumer and conservation groups, it was an important step toward addressing our state's current and increasing exposure to storms, flooding and sea level rise.

Adapting to Florida's sea level rise, storm surge and other climate change impacts requires our elected leaders to continue on this path of reform and introduce additional legislation that acknowledges our changing environment.

Mother Nature is unpredictable. However, it is the responsibility of our elected leaders to implement real change that ensures we are planning for our future, and taking into account the geophysical realities of living along our changing shorelines.

Manley Fuller is president of the Florida Wildlife Federation.