

# Rising Seas a Rising Threat to Florida

July 23, 2017



Salt intrusion in crops

Climate change and rising seas is the topic of the editorial in the [Gainesville Sun](#) today July 23, 2017. Nathan Crabbe points out that it is not just the coasts which will be affected, but also inland areas. Creeks and rivers will rise, weather patterns will change from what we are used to, agriculture will suffer changes, and we will have to deal with high temperatures and more intruding saltwater.

The already inadequate plans and projections for future availability made by our water managers will fail even more, as they happily continue to give our water away to all comers.

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

-A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back-

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## EDITORIAL

### Rising seas a rising threat to Florida

The Gainesville Sun editorial board

While some skeptics argue that climate change is an overhyped issue, the science suggests it might not be hyped enough.

GateHouse Media's "Rising Seas" series explores the monumental threat that climate change poses to Florida in particular. The first installment, published in The Sun last Sunday, cites scientific research that has found sea levels are rising and projected to make a more dramatic jump as the planet is further warmed due to carbon dioxide emissions.

Coastal areas in Florida from Miami Beach to Cedar Key are already seeing effects such as sunny-day flooding and powerful storm surges, and conditions are likely to worsen. Even mid-range projections by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration scientists put the seas around Florida up to 17 inches higher by 2030 and up to 5.5 feet higher by 2070.

Just three feet of sea level rise could force at least 1.2 million Floridians to leave low-lying communities for higher ground, according to one study cited in the article. But any Alachua County resident who dismisses climate change as a problem just affecting the wealthy owners of beachfront homes has another thing coming.

Long before low-lying parts of Florida are inundated, researchers project that coastal rivers and tidal creeks will see rapid increases in the frequency and duration of flooding. Rising sea levels can also cause saltwater intrusion in groundwater, threatening drinking water supplies.

Those leaving the coasts will have to go somewhere, stretching the resources of inland areas such as

Alachua County. These areas at the same time will be coping with other impacts of climate change, such as shifting agricultural conditions and weather patterns.

Another study, published last month in Science, found that Union County and other rural counties in our region will experience some of the worst economic damage from climate change in the U.S. So the harm posed by climate change will cross over Florida, from coastal areas struggling with the effects of rising seas to poorer inland areas suffering from the effects of rising temperatures.

Some public officials in Florida are facing the challenge, such as Miami Beach officials working to improve infrastructure to deal with flooding. But too many of the Republicans running the state and federal governments have refused to acknowledge the reality of climate change or do anything to prepare.

Thankfully there are exceptions such as U.S. Rep. Carlos Curbelo, a Miami Republican who co-chairs the bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus. The group of 24 Democrats and 24 Republicans banded together recently to ensure a defense bill required a report detailing climate change's impact on national security.

Other policy makers need to stop listening to climate change skeptics and starting looking at the scientific evidence. It shows rising seas will be a rising threat to the coastal areas of Florida and other parts of our state in the decades ahead. We all have a responsibility to reduce carbon emissions and prepare for the problems that can't be prevented.