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Cal/EPA Secretary Calls Sea Level Rise Report an Important Tool to Help Inform Environmental Policy

Report will provide scientific basis for future climate policy and water quality efforts

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Today, Cal/EPA Secretary Matt Rodriquez released the following statement regarding the release of the National Research Council’s report, [Sea-Level Rise for the Coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington: Past, Present, and Future.](#)

“This study provides key findings on how sea level rise will impact the future of California’s environment and economy. The information will help guide California as we continue implementing and developing environmental policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change while, at the same time improving our economy now and in the future,” said Secretary Rodriquez.

The report underscores the importance of California implementing climate laws like AB 32 to reduce greenhouse gases and its effect on the environment. California’s climate laws are addressing both the sources of emissions as well as ways to adapt our infrastructure.

Executive Order S-13-08 directed state agencies to plan for sea-level rise and coastal impacts, and it also requested the National Research Council (NRC) to establish a committee to assess sea-level rise to inform the state efforts.

The Natural Resources Agency’s Department of Water Resources administered the contract with the NRC and Cal/EPA’s State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) provided 20 percent of the funding. Both Agencies have been working to craft policies that help mitigate and adapt to California’s changing climate. The State Agencies work through the Climate Action Team coordinating efforts on both fronts.

The study specifically notes that California’s coastline is most sensitive to sea level rise below Cape Mendocino – and rising ocean waters could affect the most populated areas of the California coast.

Projected impacts of sea level rise on California are outlined below and in the report.

- **2030:** 4cm to 30 cm rise in sea level (1.5 inches to 11.8 inches)
- **2050:** 15 cm to 60 cm rise in sea level (5.9 inches to 23.6 inches)
- **2100:** 42 cm to 166 cm rise in sea level (16.5 inches to 65.3543 inches)

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“California’s beaches and coastline are vital to our state’s economy. This report reinforces why it’s so critical that we continue to plan to make sure important programs like beach monitoring and coastal protections for sensitive ecosystems and wetlands are fine-tuned to anticipate sea level rising,” said State Water Board Chair Charlie Hoppin.

Sea level rise influences several important State Water Board priorities and will serve as a valuable planning resource to refine critical long-range environmental considerations in program areas ranging from wetlands protections, to beach water quality monitoring, and Bay Delta inflow and outflow concerns.

The report notes that wetlands are important to help protect the coast from sea level rise. The State Water Board is considering a new policy on wetlands designed to protect and enhance California’s wetlands which in turn could serve as an effective deterrent to the impact of sea level rise, particularly in Central and Southern California.

The State Water Board has a two-decade long history of providing loans and grants for the construction of publicly-owned facilities such as wastewater treatment plants, sewage systems, and storm water treatment and collection basins (water recycling) through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF). Because of the long-term planning that goes into this infrastructure (50+ years of service life in some cases), this report will be part of the ongoing planning and siting of future infrastructure by the State Water Board so that any projected impacts of sea level rise do not interfere with the performance and viability of these important projects.

Ongoing Water Board activities related to water pollution, storm water reuse, capture and diversion of pollution carried by storm waters into areas of special biological significance will also have to account for rising sea level. Rising sea levels may pose additional challenges to the state in these efforts.

Beach water quality monitoring is overseen by the State Water Board in coordination with local counties. Sea level rise may impact monitoring locations and constituents. California has the most extensive and [comprehensive monitoring and regulatory program](#) for beaches in the nation.

Finally, the Bay Delta Plan -- short for the State Water Board’s San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary Water Quality Control Plan -- can determine the amount and timing of water entering and moving through the Delta. Sea level rise is one of the many factors that must be considered by the State Water Board as it updates the plan’s objectives.

The California Environmental Protection Agency is charged with developing, implementing and enforcing the state’s environmental protection laws that ensure clean air, clean water, clean soil, safe pesticides and waste recycling and reduction. Our departments are at the forefront of environmental science, using cutting-edge research to shape the state’s environmental laws. Cal/EPA is home to the California Air Resources Board, State Water Resources Control Board, Department of Pesticide Regulation, Department of Toxic Substances Control and the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment.

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