

Living with Sea Level Rise in Texas

Organization Summary and Mission

The Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies is based at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. It was established in 2002 by a generous gift from publisher Ed Harte who, in his words, “wanted to make a difference.” Harte’s mission is to conduct research in both the natural and social sciences that supports a more economically and environmentally sustainable Gulf of Mexico. All of its research is responsive to current conservation needs and challenges.

Summary

“Living with Sea Level Rise in Texas” is the most comprehensive, multidisciplinary sea level rise assessment ever performed for the state of Texas. It will provide Gulf Coast stakeholders with information they need to adapt to higher sea levels within 50 to 100 years. The Harte Research Institute was inspired to develop this project in response to the state’s growing need for a sea level rise assessment that encompasses global sea level rise trends and includes an economic impact assessment. The project was also inspired by the following: 1) the urgent need to objectively evaluate the growing list of proposed coastal restoration projects; 2) the need to improve evacuation procedures and routes in major storms and hurricanes; and, 3) the need to develop adaption strategies to protect Texas’ highly vulnerable coastal population—a population that is projected to increase by 33 percent by 2035. (Not only is this projected growth greater than Texas’ average projected growth, 67 percent of the population living along our coast are considered “at risk.”)

The project will project geographic changes that sea level rise is expected to cause; the economic impact on natural and manmade environments; and an analysis of current policies and opportunities for coastal zone management with respect to sea level rise. Results will be disseminated through a data- and information-rich website that will enable policy makers, managers, landowners, developers and the general public to evaluate the impacts or risks of private and public land-use decisions with greater precision and accuracy. To ensure this website is used and recognized as a meaningful public resource, Harte is investing heavily in its design and strategic outreach to stakeholders who will most benefit from its information and are most likely to serve as ambassadors of its content and public benefit.

“Living with Sea Level Rise” will also help private investors and funders evaluate the long-term merits of their investments in coastal restoration activities—a list that is growing exponentially due to rapid coastal change, more frequent storm surges, coastal population growth, and the deterioration of critical marshes and wetlands.

“Living With Sea Level Rise in Texas” Team

Lead is Dr. Jim Gibeaut, Chair, Geospatial Sciences, with Dr. David Yoskowitz, Chair, Socio-Economics, and Dr. Richard McLaughlin, Chair, Marine Policy and Law

Project Timeline

2013-2017

Project Budget

\$1.3 million, with \$272,264 remaining to raise as of March 2015.

Supporting Materials

Corpus Christi *Caller Times* article, November 29, 2014

Population Projections for Texas Coastal Counties

Map of Texas Coastal Counties