

Study: Global warming threatens Florida

A study of nine Florida coastal areas suggests many bays and estuaries will be inundated by 2100 due to sea-level rise from global warming.

The survey, commissioned by the Florida Wildlife and National Wildlife federations, projects if global warming continues, a resulting sea-level rise would dramatically alter the extent and composition of important coastal habitats and fishing, as we know it, could disappear in a matter of decades.

The study included Pensacola Bay, Apalachicola Bay, Tampa Bay, Charlotte Harbor, Ten Thousand Islands, Florida Bay, Biscayne Bay, St. Lucie Estuary and the Indian River Lagoon.

Based on a projected 15-inch rise in average sea levels during this century, the study found nearly 50 percent of critical salt marsh and 84 percent of tidal flats would be lost. The area of dry land is projected to decrease by 14 percent, or 174,580 acres, and roughly 30 percent of ocean beaches and two-thirds of all estuarine beaches would disappear.

Among the species considered most at risk are Bonefish, Flounder, Gag grouper, Gray snapper, Permit, Pompano, Redfish, Snook, and Tarpon, while essential habitat would be reduced for such prey species as shrimp, crabs and smaller fish, researchers said.

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