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Prestigious Independent Study Underscores Need to Address Impacts of Sea Level Rise

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – A National Research Council (NRC) study released today confirms the need to take action to address the impacts of rising sea levels. The review, requested by numerous state and federal agencies, will be used to ensure that California is safeguarding its citizens, strengthening its economy, and minimizing impacts to natural resources by investing in climate-ready development and infrastructure.

“Our coast and ocean largely define California. Because of that, we must be keenly aware of and plan for sea level rise,” said California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird. “The National Research Council’s study will help policymakers and planners prepare for the next century.”

The NRC study, entitled *Sea-Level Rise for the Coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington: Past, Present, and Future*, finds that previous data showing accelerated sea level rise is consistent with their research conclusions. The full study can be found [here](#).

The NRC study was made possible through a collaborative effort of West Coast state and federal agencies, including the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), Ocean Protection Council (OPC), California Energy Commission, Caltrans, State Water Resources Control Board, Washington Department of Ecology, Oregon Water Enhancement Board, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), working in partnership through the West Coast Governors’ Alliance on Ocean Health.

Governor Brown has long-recognized the urgency of climate impacts and held a conference, *Extreme Climate Risks and California’s Future*, in December 2011. The state of California has developed a statewide approach to reducing the risks from climate change impacts, summarized in the [California Adaptation Strategy of 2009](#), which is currently being updated with an anticipated completion date of December 2012.

In March of 2011, the OPC adopted a non-binding sea level rise resolution asking state agencies to incorporate consideration of sea level rise into all decisions and programs (including funding) and to follow interim state guidance on sea level rise projections. The OPC, through collaboration with other state and federal agencies, provided funding to support the collection

and dissemination of [high resolution mapping data](#) to support communities in conducting more detailed vulnerability assessments.

State agencies are already integrating the state guidance on sea level rise projections into their regulatory and funding decisions. In 2011, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) unanimously adopted policies to consider sea level rise for major shoreline projects and to prepare a regional adaptation strategy. Recognizing that most response to sea level rise will occur at the local level, BCDC is also working with local, state, and federal partners on its Adapting to Rising Tides project which is formulating measures and approaches to respond to sea level rise.

NOAA's Hydrometeorology Testbed program and DWR are taking action to improve monitoring of the extreme winter storms that cause most episodes of major West Coast flooding, helping prepare for increased coastal inundation and erosion during large winter storms as a result of sea level rise. This new California observing system for extreme precipitation will improve forecast lead times and precipitation estimates, providing better information for local emergency responders.

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