

# Planning for Coastal Change in *Levy County*

## Help Us Help You!

This project runs from Spring 2012 to Fall 2013. Your input is critical to ensure our project is focused on relevant coastal planning questions and that the resulting information and tools are relevant to you.

**Summer 2012:** Project team members and University of Florida educators will contribute lessons on coastal change and community planning at the City of Cedar Key's Summer Youth Program. The project team will also work to determine coastal change impacts to Levy County.

**Fall 2012:** The public and interested community groups will receive information on coastal change impacts to Levy County and will provide input to the project team.

**Spring 2013:** The public will work with project members to develop future scenarios and visions in response to potential coastal change.

**Summer 2013:** The public and other interested persons from the surrounding Big Bend region will participate in a regional workshop on planning for coastal change. The workshop will showcase lessons learned from the Levy County project and set the stage for future planning.

**Fall 2013:** The project team will develop a rural coastal communities planning toolbox and work with Levy County decision makers to identify next steps to plan for coastal change.

## What's Happening?

Florida Sea Grant is funding an interdisciplinary team of University of Florida researchers to study potential impacts of future coastal change in Levy County, Florida, and to work with local leaders and citizens to identify possible strategies for adaptation.

It is hoped that the Levy County project will provide lessons about planning for coastal change that can be used by other coastal communities, especially in the Big Bend region of the Florida Gulf Coast. The project team will develop and test a participatory planning process for rural areas to provide residents the knowledge and potential tools to plan for future adaptation. Undergraduate and graduate students will also assist the project through studio courses, theses, capstone projects, and internships.

## Why This Project?

Tide gage measurements show that sea level is rising. Scientists are predicting the rate to increase over the next several

decades. Rising sea level will impact coastal communities, residents, and regions in a variety of ways. Some of the first observed impacts may be increased flooding during storms and high tides, greater salinity in coastal aquifers, and changes in shoreline marshes and forests. Timely information about potential impacts from coastal change is critical for local decision makers, businesses, and citizens to make wise decisions to protect public health and safety, jobs, and financial investments.

Rural areas and communities are often overlooked, or are not actively engaged in the conversation, when planning for coastal change in Florida. However, rural areas, such as Levy County, have important social, cultural, economic, and ecological assets that are worthy of proactive planning for coastal change. The connection between people and natural environment is especially apparent in rural areas, so it is important that planning is integrated to minimize potential conflict that may arise between varying interests.

[Learn more on the back page...](#)



*The coastal community of Cedar Key and similar communities along the Big Bend's coast may be vulnerable to impacts from coastal change.*



**Left:** A hammock of dying cabbage palms located in the marshes of Waccasassa Bay. Increases in salinity are responsible for the tree deaths. Scientists have been recording the retreat of coastal forests for over thirty years in the marshes of Levy County. Scientists attribute the retreat to chronic stresses from increases in sea level and periodic intense storm events and droughts. Photo Credit: Frances (Jack) Putz

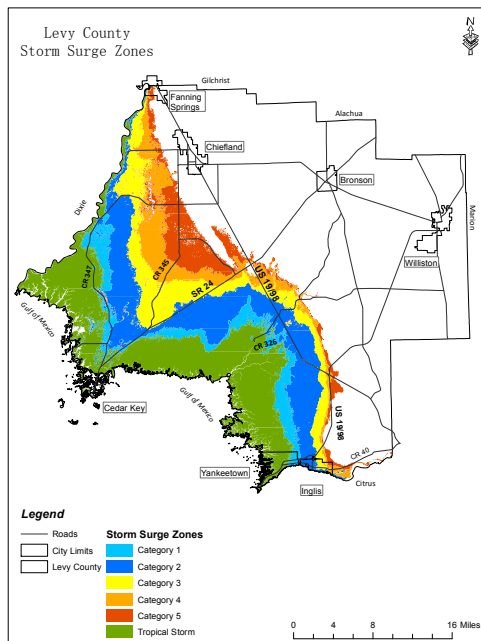


**Right:** The economy of Yankeetown, like most coastal communities in the Big Bend, is tied to numerous natural resources and amenities that may be impacted by future coastal change.

## How will this project work and what information will it provide?

In Levy County, the University of Florida research team will partner with local leaders and interested community members to:

- (1) Identify important current and future community assets and concerns, as well as existing planning approaches and resources.
- (2) Determine potential coastal change impacts using locally relevant scientific information, geospatial data, and computer models.
- (3) Share the results of the coastal change impact analyses with local decision makers, businesses, and citizens across Levy County, and receive input.
- (4) Facilitate civic engagement and dialog with special groups, including youth and artists, and through community events such as festivals and public workshops.
- (5) Create a custom toolbox of possible adaptation strategies and encourage continued planning for coastal change.



*Hurricane storm surge zones extend far inland in Levy County. This means coastal areas are highly sensitive to changes in sea level and are vulnerable to flooding and frequent inundation.*



*A beautiful sunset over the Waccasassa Bay Preserve State Park. The state park is one of numerous conservation lands on Levy County's shoreline that may be affected by changes in coastal dynamics. Photo credit: Florida Park Service.*

## About This Project

This project is a Florida Sea Grant funded project and is lead by faculty from the University of Florida's College of Design, Construction, and Planning. Intended users of the information and planning tools generated by this project include public officials, planners, residents in Levy County and the Big Bend region, and other rural coastal communities that may be affected by future change in coastal areas.

## For More Information

Visit our website at <http://ChangingLevyCoast.org>.

For questions about the project, please contact Kathryn Frank from the University of Florida's College of Design, Construction, and Planning. [kifrank@ufl.edu](mailto:kifrank@ufl.edu)

For questions about the participatory planning process of the project, contact Gail Easley from the University of Florida's College of Design, Construction, and Planning. [easleyg@ufl.edu](mailto:easleyg@ufl.edu)

## About the Funder

This project is supported by Florida Sea Grant, a university-based program that supports research, education, and extension to conserve coastal resources and enhance economic opportunities for the people of Florida. Florida Sea Grant is a partnership between the Florida Board of Education, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Florida's citizens and governments. Florida Sea Grant extension, education, and outreach programs are done in partnership with UF/IFAS Extension and coastal counties of Florida. For more information visit:

<http://www.flseagrant.org/>