



Local Coastal Plan Update Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the City of Pacifica studying the impacts of sea level rise?

The City of Pacifica currently experiences coastal erosion, flooding and severe storms along its six-mile shoreline that, over the years, have damaged public and private property. The City is preparing a sea level rise Adaptation Plan that will identify potential vulnerabilities to sea level rise, coastal erosion, flooding and severe storms and the options available to help prepare for future climate change impacts.

On March 26, 2018, the City Council unanimously adopted the following goals for the Draft Local Coastal Land Use Plan Update and Adaptation Planning:

1. ***Bolster efficacy of public safety efforts.*** Evacuations of bluff top homes have been necessary to protect the health, safety, and wellness of residents. The Adaptation Plan will assist the City to protect human life, property, and critical infrastructure in response to a catastrophic event.
2. ***Respond to climate change.*** The Adaptation Plan will allow Pacifica to prepare for sea level rise and climate change impacts by identifying policies that enhance the coastal zone's adaptive capacity.
3. ***Preserve Existing Neighborhoods and Promote Environmental Justice and Local Economic Vitality.*** Pacifica's Coastal Zone, i.e. the land area west of Highway 1, includes:
 - 12% of the City's population
 - The majority of older, and therefore more affordable, housing stock
 - Five of six hotels (80% of the rooms) that generate transient occupancy tax revenues for City operations and bring visitors who patronize businesses
 - More than half of commercial businesses, which provide vitality to the community and tax revenue for City operations
 - Public facilities that include City Hall, North Coast County Water District, Ingrid B. Lacy Middle School, the Pacifica Pier, drainage outfalls, waste water pumping stations, sewer force mains, and the Calera Wastewater Treatment Plant
 - Significant historical and public recreational assets including beaches, coastal trails, the Beach Blvd. promenade, parks and golf course.

The loss or disruption of these assets could have far reaching impacts and affect everyone in Pacifica, not just those living or doing business in the Coastal Zone. The Adaptation Plan will allow the city to create policies that will protect these areas from the impacts of sea level rise, erosion, and coastal flooding. Consistent with the Coastal Act, the Adaptation Plan shall protect existing homes, businesses, and infrastructure in Pacifica.



Local Coastal Plan Update / Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning FAQ

4. ***Preserve and enhance coastal access.*** Beach and bluff access to the coastline is a crucial element of Pacifica's coastal character and is valued by the community. The Adaptation Plan will allow the city to identify where bluff erosion, sedimentation, and sea level rise may threaten coastal access.

What is a Local Coastal Plan?

A Local Coastal Plan (LCP) provides policies that guide development within the Coastal Zone. A LCP is comprised of land use policies and an implementation plan.

Under the State Coastal Act, the Coastal Commission has decision making and permit authority in the Coastal Zone. The Coastal Act provides for the adoption of LCPs by cities and counties in conformance with the Coastal Act, and once adopted and approved by the Coastal Commission, transfers permitting authority to the City. This is important in retaining local control over decisions that impact the community and acknowledges the unique characteristic of local communities and regional interests within the framework of the Coastal Act.

The Coastal Commission retains permanent coastal permit jurisdiction over tidelands, submerged lands, and public trust lands, and the Commission also acts on appeals from certain local government coastal permit decisions.

Doesn't the City already have a Local Coastal Plan?

Yes, in 1980 the City of Pacifica adopted its current LCP land use policies and it has not been comprehensively updated since that time. An update to the Pacifica LCP has been drafted, but it has not been adopted by the City or certified by the Coastal Commission. Further, the 2014 Draft LCP Update does not consider impacts from sea level rise or provide comprehensive adaptation policies.

The City is conducting this sea level rise planning effort in order to prepare for future coastal erosion, flooding, and severe storms. In addition, incorporating the Adaptation Plan into the Draft LCP Update will bring the document into conformance with Coastal Commission policy directives for LCP adoption.

Where is the Coastal Zone?

In Pacifica, the Coastal Zone Boundary generally includes all land that is west of Highway 1, with limited exceptions.

In this LCP Update process, what does the City Council have the authority to decide vs. what the Coastal Commission will decide?

The California Coastal Commission will need to approve the LCP Update and will determine if it is consistent with the Coastal Act. There are a variety of ways the City can comply with provisions of the Coastal Act. The City Council will determine the most appropriate policies for Pacifica, then the LCP Update will be forwarded to the Coastal Commission for approval.

How can I determine if my property is in a coastal hazard area?



The [appendices](#) of the Draft Vulnerability Assessment contain maps of the Pacifica coast and identified hazard areas. The maps are at a scale that allows individual buildings and other landmarks to be identified. Contact City staff at sealevelrise@ci.pacifica.ca.us if you are unsure.

How will this study impact public and private properties?

The Adaptation Plan will become a part of the City's Draft LCP and will contain policies that will help the City assist property owners (public and private) in planning for and addressing future sea level rise, storm surge, coastal flooding, and erosion. At the current stage of the process, it is too early to know the exact policy outcomes. It is therefore important to become involved and provide your input.

Will the result of the Draft LCP update process move my property into a flood plain?

No, as stated above, this project is not creating new hazard data. Further, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the only agency authorized to amend flood maps used by insurers.

Why does the coastal erosion hazard assessment not take existing sea walls into account?

Future coastal erosion is predicted by using historic shoreline erosion data. To some degree, very old coastal armoring structures are accounted for as they slowed the historic shoreline erosion rate. More modern armoring structures haven't had a chance to show an impact in the historic erosion data. Therefore, while newer armoring structures are shown on study maps, the Vulnerability Assessment reflects a worst-case scenario and if shoreline protective devices are maintained in place erosion rates will be significantly reduced. This approach is consistent with best practices when considering erosion scenarios including the San Mateo County Vulnerability Assessment.

During the adaptation planning phase of this effort, the City will consider locations of existing armoring structures for future adaptation strategies.

I have read that this study will be used by financial institutions and insurers. Is this accurate?

It is not known if or how third parties will use the City's Local Coastal Plan and Adaptation Plan. However, it is important to note that the City is not creating new hazard data. The study is relying on existing hazard data produced by agencies such as such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and State of California Ocean Protection Council. The hazard data used in the City's study is already readily available to the public and financial institutions and insurers.

If I own property in the coastal zone what will be different about the permitting process between today and when the Local Coastal Plan Update is adopted?



Local Coastal Plan Update / Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning FAQ

The permitting process is expected to remain the same or very similar to how it works today. Properties in the hazard areas are already asked to consider Coastal Commission guidance when contemplating development. After the Adaptation Plan is adopted, property owners will benefit from acceptable strategies as defined in the Plan which will provide consistency and assurance.

Is the City going to prevent development or redevelopment in the Coastal Zone and let the ocean destroy properties?

The City has identified Preserving Housing and Promoting Economic Vitality as two of several goals and benefits of this process. The City is also aware of legal considerations when contemplating any type of policy affecting private property. The Adaptation Plan will identify options available to help public and private property owners prepare for future climate change impacts.

There is much debate about the accuracy of mid to long term sea level rise scenarios. Please provide more information about the scenario selected for this study.

The City of Pacifica will be studying the following proposed sea level rise scenarios for this study:

Year	Low risk (17% chance)	Med-High risk (0.5 % chance)	Extreme risk (n/a)
2050	1 ft	2 ft	-
2100	3 ft	6 ft	10* ft
*The City of Pacifica will analyze SLR of 6 ft at 2075 in place of 10 ft at 2100 to assess flooding impacts under the extreme scenario (H++). This is required because of the lack of erosion and flooding data for 10 ft of SLR.			

The sea level rise scenarios and planning horizon used in this study was selected based on best available science and Coastal Commission guidelines. Detailed information on sea level rise scenarios is available in the [Future Conditions Scenarios Memo](#).

Given the uncertainty about the magnitude and timing of future sea level rise, Pacifica’s LCP Update and Adaptation Plan will study a range of scenarios rather than basing policy on one sea level rise projection. With periodic monitoring and review, the City’s policies can adapt to actual changes in sea level rise whether they be more or less than originally projected.

I’ve heard it said that ESA, the consultant working on this project, favors solutions that let the ocean destroy properties. Is this true?

No, ESA does not have a predetermined opinion concerning various solutions for sea level rise. And, the City Council has the final say on what solutions go into the LCP Update/Adaptation Plan.



Where can I find documents related to Pacifica’s sea level rise planning studies and the LCP?

More information on sea level rise planning and the LCP can be found at the City’s Sea Level Rise project webpage: www.cityofpacifica.org/SeaLevelRise

How is the sea level rise planning effort being funded?

The City received a \$188,000 Local Assistance Grant from the Coastal Commission and Coastal Conservancy. The City is also contributing in-kind staff resources.

What is the schedule for the sea level rise planning effort and modifications to the LCP?

The schedule is available on the City’s Sea Level Rise webpage: www.cityofpacifica.org/SeaLevelRise.

How can I participate in the process?

Public involvement is a very important part of the process! The City will host several public meetings and workshops. Please request to join our mailing list to receive updates on the status of the project and public outreach events by emailing sealevelrise@ci.pacificaca.us. Information regarding upcoming public meetings is available at www.cityofpacifica.org/SeaLevelRise.

Here is a list of scheduled upcoming meetings:

Public Meeting with CWG

Economic Analysis
Methodology
May 10, 2018 6:00pm
(Community Center)

Community Work Group

Draft Adaptation Plan
May 31, 2018 6:00pm
(Community Center)

Public Workshop

Draft Adaptation Plan
June 23, 2018 12:00pm
(Community Center)

Where can I find more information on sea level rise science and potential impacts?

The County of San Mateo has prepared a very helpful FAQ that covers these topics. Please visit <http://seachangesmc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/FAQ.pdf> for more information.