iceland

NAACP'S ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE JUSTICE
YOUTH DELEGATION OVERVIEW

SEA LEVEL RISE
SEEING CLIMATE CHANGE UP FRONT

EDUCATION
HOSTING EVENTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

WITNESS
RECORDING THE IMPACT
The Purpose
May 28th-June 2nd, 2018
Reykjavik, Iceland

Overarching Goal: Inspire, uplift, and build the capacity of youth leadership in coastal states in the United States to address impacts of sea level rise by storytelling, awareness raising, and educating decision makers, through experiencing Iceland, which, like the coastal United States, shares lush and beautiful landscapes and wildlife, as well as being on the originating end of the sea level rise continuum.

To this end, this exchange visit to Iceland will be focused on youth experiential education, including experiencing Iceland with its beautiful landscapes and wildlife as well as being on the originating end of the sea level rise continuum. Through visiting the arctic ice caps that are melting, and tying this to our experiences in the Gulf and in Hawai‘i with the impacts of sea level rise, storm surge, etc., as well as learning about the threatened species of wildlife and discussing their connection with threatened species in the Gulf and Hawai‘i, all bound by our ecosystems, the youth will be making new connections through hand-on learning. In conversations with youth, NGOs, and government officials, the delegation will make connections about the education, policies and practices we are shifting in the context of climate change. In real time, storytelling around these linkages through media will be a major pathway for the learnings from this group’s experience that will be connected with home communities while the delegation is in-country. Upon return, the work continues and deepens as youth engage in: media interviews/social media, report-backs in their communities, meetings with decision makers, training/strategy convening, and state and local level adaptation planning with the increased breadth of knowledge, understanding, stories, and inspiration gleaned from this experiential engagement in Iceland.
The first report of the Hawaii Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission, published in December 2017, provided a statewide assessment of the potential hazards and costly impacts to Hawaii’s economy, shorelines, and communities with rising sea levels. "Between two feet and three feet of sea level rise, normal summer waves on the south shore suddenly go from flooding the first row of houses to flooding the first two blocks of houses," said Chip Fletcher, professor and associate dean at UH Manoa's School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology.

Key takeaways from the report:

- Over the next 30 to 70 years, approximately 6,500 structures and 19,800 people statewide will be exposed to chronic flooding.
- An estimated $19 billion in economic loss would result from chronic flooding of land and structures located in the sea level rise exposure area.
- The statewide sea level rise exposure area covers an area of approximately 25,800 acres -- one third of which is designated for urban use.
- Approximately 38 miles of coastal roads would be chronically flooded and become impassible, jeopardizing critical access to many communities.
- Approximately 550 cultural sites would become chronically flooded with the sea level rise exposure area.
- More than 13 miles of beaches have been lost on Kauai, Oahu, and Maui to erosion fronting seawalls and other shoreline armoring.
- Flooding, hurricanes, and tropical cyclones could occur at any time and would be exacerbated by sea level rise.
Louisiana

Louisiana has 3 million acres of wetlands (40 percent of the wetlands of the continental United States) that protect our coastal communities against increasingly destructive storms. But Louisiana continues to lose a football field of coastline every year and, at the current rate of net loss, Louisiana will have lost this crucial habitat altogether in about 200 years. Communities are already beginning to experience increased flooding during hurricanes, sea level rise, and ongoing coastal erosion caused by the leveeing of the Mississippi River and oil and gas infrastructure. A 2017 study by Tulane University found that without major efforts to rebuild the state’s wetlands, especially in the western part of Louisiana, the coast is unlikely to withstand the accelerating rate of sea-level rise. When Hurricane Katrina came ashore in Plaquemines Parish, LA on August 29, 2005, over 10 communities were devastated. The rural southeast east bank (Phoenix - Bohemia) was inundated with over 14-25 ft of water after the Hurricane. Homes, churches, and businesses were swept off their foundations. Louisiana’s master plan includes a devastating future scenario for Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes, even with multimillion-dollar investments in levee projects.

Mississippi

A report by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources includes a risk assessment and a detailed vulnerability assessment addressing sea level rise impacts to both natural and man-made systems on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi. The study area includes cities and counties in coastal Mississippi with the highest probability of being impacted by sea level rise - including Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson Counties - also representing one of the more densely populated regions of the State. The assessment includes a summary of sea level rise projections from eleven different reports and published research papers. The results indicate that coastal Mississippi could experience sea level increases of 16.6 inches in twenty years, 41.5 inches in fifty years, and 74.7 inches by the year 2100.

Along with sea level rise, other concurrent vulnerabilities are assessed such as impacts to flood zones and elevations, erosion potential, ground water level increases, and salinity. Direct impacts include deterioration of wetlands and other estuarine environments that have the potential to affect these systems’ ability to migrate as sea levels increase or decrease. Indirect impacts include changes in salinity, impacts to emergent vegetation, and the ability of sediments to migrate and settle in areas of potential land loss. The vulnerability assessment studied man-made systems including residential and commercial land use areas, critical facilities and infrastructure, and potentially vulnerable populations. With high population densities and relatively high development densities in the near-shore areas of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, these man-made systems on the coast are all found to be vulnerable to direct and indirect impacts of sea level rise.
Iceland

A country of boiling mud pools, spouting geysers, glaciers, waterfalls, and puffins, Iceland is a beautiful nation with wild lands, flora, fauna, and creatures. On the sea level rise continuum, interestingly, the land in Iceland is rising at a pace of as much as 1.4 inches per year in certain areas, as a result of climate change. The melting of the country’s glaciers reduces pressure on the land below and allows the surface to rise, researchers say. “Our research makes the connection between recent accelerated uplift and the accelerated melting of the Icelandic ice caps,” Kathleen Compton, a University of Arizona researcher and co-author of a recent study on climate change impacts in Iceland.

NAACP's Environmental and Climate Justice Program Mission

Advancing the leadership of frontline communities to eliminate environmental and climate injustices and ignite an environmental, social, and economic revolution.

Contact Us

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