

Barriers to Understanding Sea-Level Rise Impacts on Everglades Restoration

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Florida's Everglades restoration partners have long recognized the need to consider the impacts of sea-level rise on restoration efforts. However, many partners are not formally incorporating sea-level scenarios into restoration planning. There are high levels of uncertainty around how sea-level rise will affect the Everglades ecosystem, and what it means for restoration goals and outcomes. To help reduce this uncertainty, partners require tools and methods to confidently include sea-level rise scenarios into restoration plans. We are working with Everglades restoration partners to understand how they each think sea-level rise will impact their restoration efforts, how it may alter their goals and priorities and which resources will be most helpful for evaluating the impacts of sea-level rise on Everglades restoration. We have conducted focus groups and semi-structured interviews with members of RECOVER (REstoration COordination & VERification), a multi-agency scientific group of government, non-profit, and Tribal organizations that provide input on the implementation of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). The results reveal the potential sea-level rise impacts that partners are most concerned about, gaps in data and model limitations that restrict their ability to plan for those impacts, assumptions and uncertainties embedded in restoration planning, and tools that partners would find most helpful for decision-making. These insights are informing the design of data visualization tools that can help partners choose sea-level rise scenarios most relevant to their unique projects, incorporate those scenarios into current planning processes, and decide between competing restoration plans as CERP projects continue to be implemented across the landscape.

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