

RESILIENCE TO FUTURE FLOODING IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

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The Gulf of Mexico is an area of rich culture and beautiful coastlines, but coastal living comes with ever-increasing risk. Sea-level rise (SLR) is a ubiquitous issue directly affecting coastal communities. While it is crucial that coastal decision-makers understand SLR and its potential impacts, SLR science is complicated and advancing rapidly. Additionally, practical solutions for small coastal communities to address SLR impacts are not well described or shared. Stakeholders have expressed that these conditions make it difficult to understand their vulnerabilities and the best way to respond. To reduce communication barriers around SLR science and encourage actions to address risks, we developed two video series (<https://vimeo.com/channels/gulfslr/>) in collaboration with coastal decision-makers. Meeting monthly, our team provided guidance and expertise for the implementation of the project including scripting, filming, editing, distribution, and discussion of video case studies addressing important needs or gaps in the northern Gulf of Mexico. The first series communicates the science around SLR, how it may impact the northern Gulf of Mexico, and potential solutions to address or avoid these impacts. The second series highlights case studies of communities that have taken in five different Gulf states to reduce their vulnerability to sea-level rise and flooding. A 30-minute “news” segment to be aired on public television stations knits these videos together to help residents better understand the risks and ways to respond. Altogether, this collaborative, multi-state project aims to help communities across the northern Gulf of Mexico prepare for this pressing issue. The team has won multiple state and national awards for our work over the past few years. Objectives for participants during this session include improved understanding of SLR science; appreciation for the efforts of small Gulf Coast communities that have taken towards coastal resilience; a source of education, and contacts from which other communities can learn.

PRESENTER BIO: Carrie Stevenson has been a Coastal Sustainability Agent with UF/IFAS Extension for 18 years. Her educational outreach programs focus on living sustainability in coastal ecosystems. Her goal is to help residents protect and preserve local ecosystems, water resources, and prepare and mitigate for flooding, coastal storms, and climate impacts.