
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Environment

REPORT SURVEYS POSSIBLE SEA CHANGE FOR B.C. COAST

VICTORIA – The Province of British Columbia has released a report on projected sea level changes in an effort to help B.C.’s coastal communities prepare for climate change and its serious effects, such as flooding, Environment Minister Barry Penner announced today.

The provincial report, entitled Projected Sea Level Changes for British Columbia in the 21st Century, summarizes a scientific study published by the Government of Canada, which is the first comprehensive analysis of sea level change for B.C.’s coast since 1997.

“This report highlights why it is so important that we continue to aggressively combat climate change by reducing carbon emissions, while helping to prepare British Columbians for, and protect them from, the negative consequences of climate change,” said Penner.

According to scientists involved with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the 21st century will continue to see global sea levels rise as a result of melting continental glaciers and ice caps and warming of the upper ocean. However, natural factors unique to B.C. – such as the Pacific Northwest climate and vertical land movements – could alter sea levels in ways that vary greatly along the B.C. coast.

Another report on sea level rise, published in January 2008 by the University of Washington and the Washington Department of Ecology, came to similar conclusions. Under the terms of an MOU signed in June 2008, B.C. and Washington State will collaborate to address the scientific uncertainties around sea level rise, inform communities and explore how best to protect coastal communities.

“Sea level rise due to climate change is a significant concern for coastal communities in Canada. This report is invaluable as a research and planning tool to guide British Columbia communities on how to prepare for and mitigate the impact of rising sea levels,” said Gail Shea, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans is the lead author of the report – An Examination of the Factors Affecting Relative and Absolute Sea Level in Coastal British Columbia – and co-author of the journal publication Relative and Absolute Sea-Level Rise in Western Canada and Northwestern U.S. from a Combined Tide Gauge-GPS Analysis. These two papers were used to generate the short version published by the Province of B.C.

In 2007, the B.C. government announced a 10-year, \$100-million flood protection program. This year, \$94.5 million was also provided by the Ministry of Environment to support the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions and the Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium for research purposes and adaptation strategies.

An electronic version of the B.C. report can be downloaded at www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/climate/reports.htm.

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