

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and Committee members, thank you for the invitation to testify on the issues of importance to my constituents as the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee develops its legislative agenda.

I want to begin by giving you some numbers:

Since 1950, the sea level in South Florida has risen 8 inches, and it is only speeding up. By 2030, the sea level in South Florida is projected to rise up to 12 inches, and by 2100, perhaps 80 inches.

According to UN projections, the average temperature on the planet will rise by 5 to 9 degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the century. This will cause a sea level rise that will virtually submerge all of South Florida.

If we continue to do nothing on climate change, my community, as we know it, will disappear.

We have a moral obligation to mitigate and adapt immediately, as we are already seeing the effects of climate change and sea level rise.

It no longer takes a strong hurricane to flood our streets; they now flood just from a particularly high tide – such as the King tides. In fact, tidal flooding has become three times as common in South Florida in just the past 19 years, causing so-called sunny day flooding.

When people can't get to work because the streets are underwater, when tourists can't walk around shops and restaurants, when children can't go to school, our economy and our future suffer.

This flooding is putting even our most basic human necessities at risk.

90 percent of South Florida's drinking water comes from the underground Biscayne Aquifer.

Because of Florida's porous limestone bedrock and the diversion of fresh waterways, as sea levels rise, salt water reaches further inland and our

drinking water is seriously threatened.

If we do not address sea level rise through infrastructure, this salt water intrusion will destroy our only source of drinking water long before Miami is underwater.

And with hurricane season around the corner, we are already bracing for the worst, with more powerful storms causing more destruction than ever before.

Category 4 and 5 hurricanes are projected to be at least 45% more common because of rising ocean temperatures.

Combined with higher sea levels, when these storms make landfall, they don't just flood roads and stop traffic, they destroy homes and lives.

Hurricane Irma caused \$50 billion of damage to Florida.

Hurricane Maria caused the deaths of 3000 Puerto Ricans.

But with thorough legislation from this Committee, we can combat rising sea levels and be more prepared for these looming threats.

Clearly, climate change and sea level rise are environmental issues. Clearly, they're public health issues. And today, I will make the case that climate change and sea level rise are infrastructure issues.

At the most basic level, what is the point of investing in infrastructure that will be underwater in 10 years?

We have a real opportunity to use climate-smart infrastructure to prepare for higher sea levels, mitigate the effects of climate change, and protect our communities.

So I ask my colleagues on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to make sea level rise and climate resilient infrastructure a

fundamental component of their infrastructure legislation.

We have already had success designing effective infrastructure projects in Miami that are actionable and scalable to the national level.

In my district, the City of Miami Beach raised many of its public roads by two feet and is considering zoning adjustment to raise base flood elevations for new construction.

Miami Beach spent \$500 million installing massive water pumps that can move 30,000 gallons of water a minute from streets into the ocean, draining over 7 inches of water a day.

Combining these projects with natural “green” infrastructure can result in even better - and more environmentally friendly - results.

Miami Beach completed a dune restoration project along the beaches. Dunes, which are beach side habitats for flora and fauna, minimize coastal erosion and help protect against storm surges. Similar dune restoration projects across the coasts would provide substantial protections from storm surges.

Public parks are also effective green infrastructure projects, as they can absorb many times more water than concrete, helping to prevent flooding while providing green spaces for communities.

In addition to raising or reinforcing sea walls, constructing natural sea walls from coral or oyster reefs is often an even more effective solution, as these barriers only grow stronger with time.

And South Florida’s mangroves and other marine flora, which are similarly at risk by rising sea levels, can be effective ways of lessening wave impacts on coastlines.

Restoring fresh waterways to the ocean, such as the diverted rivers and canals from central Florida, can combat saltwater intrusion into drinking water in Florida and other coastal communities

Ultimately, this Committee has the opportunity to address sea level rise and protect communities across the country by integrating projects such as these into your infrastructure bills.

We cannot wait. My district, and many others, are already seeing the disastrous effects of sea level rise, as homes and lives are destroyed by flooding and storms.

I hope you will address sea level rise with the seriousness it demands.