Joint Penrose/Chapman Conference
April 14-19, 2013
Galveston, Texas, USA

Key Messages

Earth scientists agree that the global sea level is rising at an accelerated rate overall in response to climate change.
Scientists have a professional responsibility to inform government, the public, and the private sector about the impacts of rising sea levels and extreme events, and the risks they pose.

The geological record indicates that the current rates of sea-level rise in many regions are unprecedented relative to rates of the last several thousand years.
Global sea-level rise has changed rapidly in the past and scientific projections show it will continue to rise over the course of this century, altering our coasts.

Extreme events and their associated impacts will be more damaging and pose higher risks in the immediate future than sea-level rise.
Increasing human activity, such as land use change and water management practices, adds stress to already fragile ecosystems and can affect coasts just as much as sea-level rise.

Sea-level rise will exacerbate the impacts of extreme events, such as hurricanes and storms, over the long-term.
Extreme events have contributed to loss of life, billions of dollars in damage to infrastructure, massive taxpayer funding for recovery, and degradation of our ecosystems.

In order to secure a sustainable future, society must learn to anticipate, live with and adapt to the dynamics of a rapidly evolving coastal system.
Over time feasible choices may change as rising sea level limits certain options. Weighing the best decisions will require the sharing of scientific information, the coordination of policies and actions, and adaptive management approaches.

Well-informed policy decisions are imperative and should be based upon the best available science, recognizing the need for involvement of key stakeholders and relevant experts.
As we work to adapt to accelerating sea level rise, deep reductions in emissions remain one of the best ways to limit the magnitude and pace of rising seas and cut the costs of adaptation.