



Preparing Coastal Parks for Future Sea Level Rise

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The United States National Park Service (NPS) manages significant stretches of shoreline along the U.S. Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf Coasts that are vulnerable to long-term sea level rise, shoreline erosion, and storm impacts. These parks have a wide variety of missions—protecting some of the nation's most important natural and cultural resources. The parks must also provide visitor access and education requiring infrastructure such as roads, visitor centers, trails, and buildings for facilities management. Planning for the likely impacts from sea level rise to both resources and infrastructure is a complex balancing act. Using coastal engineering to protect cultural resources or infrastructure may harm natural resources. At the same time, there are clearly some cultural and historical resources that are so critical that they must be protected. In an attempt to begin to attack this dilemma, the NPS Climate Change Response Program has initiated a sea level rise adaptation study that will provide a first-order tally of the park assets at risk to sea level rise and to begin to develop a plan for prioritizing those assets that must be protected, those that can be moved or abandoned, and an examination of how best to approach this without harming critical natural resources. This presentation will discuss the preliminary results of this effort along with several relevant case studies.