

Study: Increasing sea level in Gulf

Higher Gulf of Mexico sea levels ups flooding risk

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Variations in sea level are increasing and potentially increasing the risk of flooding.

Around the globe, sea levels typically rise in winter. Now, a new study in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters* shows that, from the Florida Keys to southern California, sea levels are intensifying over the past 20 years, potentially increasing the risk of hurricanes and stressing delicate ecosystems.

The trend is strongest in Florida, such as in Miami, which regularly inundates low-lying city [streets](#) by several inches higher than before 1993, and the study shows a sea level rise. This means that in the past 20 years, sea level rise has increased on Florida's Gulf Coast by a foot.

"We don't know whether this is climate change or part of a natural cycle, but the increase over the last 20 years is not found elsewhere in the world. Lead study author and coastal engineer at the [University](#) of South Florida in St. Petersburg, Thomas Wahl, said.

Additionally, the growing difference in the region between summer and winter sea levels might be disrupting coastal ecosystems adapted to what was once a relatively stable difference from season to season, Wahl said.

"Very sensitive ecosystems along the Gulf coast depend on the seasonal cycle," he said. "If there are significant changes in the seasonal cycle then this very likely has an effect" on these ecosystems.

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