

NASA now better able to measure sea level

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NASA officials said they finally [have the tools and expertise](#) to understand the rate at which the world's sea level is changing.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration scientists estimate more than 100 million lives would be impacted by a 3.3-foot (one meter) increase in sea level.

Although sea levels have been monitored since the early 20th century, it wasn't known how many changes were related to land movement. Now satellites can provide such information.

"In the last 50 years, sea level has risen at an estimated rate of .07 inches (.18 centimeters) per year, but in the last 12 years that rate appears to be .12 inches (3 centimeters) per year," said Associate Professor Steve Nerem at the Colorado Center for Astrodynamics Research.

The most likely factor for sea level rise is changes in the Earth's ice cover. NASA said three-fourths of the planet's freshwater is stored in glaciers and ice sheets -- or about 220 feet (67 meters) of sea level.

By integrating satellite and surface data, NASA says its scientists can now better determine the causes and significance of sea level changes.

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