

Policy brief recommends ways to track California's coastal climate change preparedness

May 13 2015, by Lauri Gavel



The report highlights how the new law can help protect California's 3,400 miles of coastline and its millions of coastal residents. Credit: UCLA School of Law

In light of the serious challenges posed by rising sea levels, the

California Legislature recently enacted a bill that directs the California Natural Resources Agency and Ocean Protection Council to develop an online database to keep track of actions taken by state agencies and selected other entities to plan for sea level rise.

The innovative law, AB 2516, was signed by Gov. Jerry Brown in September 2014. Now, a report by the UCLA School of Law's Emmett Institute on Climate Change and the Environment provides recommendations for harnessing the law to enhance the state's preparedness for coastal [climate change](#).

["Tracking Coastal Adaptation: Implementing California's Innovative Sea Level Rise Planning Database,"](#) (PDF) a Pritzker Environmental Law and Policy Brief, offers recommendations on the content, format and functionality of the new database, including potential survey questions for reporting entities and indicators of [sea level](#) rise preparedness. The brief suggests that the law can play an integral role in developing and promoting coordinated, integrated and effective state policy to protect California's 3,400 miles of coastline and its millions of coastal residents.

"Although California is a worldwide leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the state has only recently begun to focus seriously on climate change adaptation actions," said Megan Herzog, the report's lead author and the Emmett/Frankel Fellow in Environmental Law and Policy at the UCLA School of Law. "Our goal is to show how this new database could serve as a key resource to assess California's progress toward meeting state adaptation goals and enhancing the resilience of our coastline."

Among the report's recommendations to the CNRA, OPC and California Legislature:

- Obtain data that will help users evaluate the pace and effectiveness of adaptation activities over time.

- Make the database user-friendly.
- As resources allow, incorporate planning information from additional entities and add interactive tools to enhance the database's usefulness.

"This adaptation planning effort is the first of its kind, and the agencies' choices about which information to survey and how to share it have the potential to influence the form and scope of future adaptation efforts in California and beyond," said Susanne Moser, a co-author of the brief and the director and principal researcher of Susanne Moser Research and Consulting.

"The database is an opportunity for California to serve as a nationwide leader on climate change adaptation policy, as it is on mitigation policy, and to help ensure that lawmakers know whether the state is adequately preparing for climate change impacts as they unfold," added Moser, who also is a social science research fellow at the Woods Institute for the Environment at Stanford University, and a research associate at the UC Santa Cruz Institute for Marine Sciences.

The report's other author is Sarah Newkirk, coastal project director at the Nature Conservancy.

"In developing this report, we gathered recommendations about the database from leading experts in coastal law, climate change adaptation, program evaluation and survey research," Herzog said. "Together, we outline a vision of how California can most effectively harness AB 2516 as a cornerstone of the state's [sea level rise](#) adaptation efforts while educating the public about our preparedness for coastal hazards."

More information: The paper is available online:
[webshare.law.ucla.edu/Emmett/p ... PritzkerPaper7-2.pdf](http://webshare.law.ucla.edu/Emmett/p...PritzkerPaper7-2.pdf)

Provided by University of California, Los Angeles

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