

# Cuba faces vast land losses as sea levels rise

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A woman observes waves hitting the Malecon waterfront in Havana, on December 13, 2010. Cuba risks losing a vast stretch of beach front homes and pristine coastal habitat by 2050, because of rapidly rising sea levels, a top environmental official warned Thursday.

Cuba risks losing a vast stretch of beach front homes and pristine coastal habitat by 2050, because of rapidly rising sea levels, a top environmental official warned Thursday.

At a panel discussion on Cuban environmental policy, Tomas Escobar,

director of the island's National Environment Agency, said rising oceans could submerge huge areas of the [Caribbean island](#), with potentially devastating consequences.

The changes "could affect ecosystems, increase the vulnerability of coastal settlements, reduce agricultural soil productivity, crops and forestry and reduce the quality and availability of water," the Prensa Latina news agency quoted Escobar as saying.

"At the current rate of increase in sea level, by 2050 we will have lost nearly 2,700 square kilometers of land area and 9,000 homes," he said.

Cuba has an area of 109,884 square kilometers (42 square miles), and more than 5,700 kilometers (3,500 miles) of coastline that includes everything from steep cliffs to sandy beaches to swamps.

Escobar said President Raul Castro's government had established a policy to try and mitigate the effects of [rising sea levels](#), centered on "the goal of reducing vulnerabilities identified in disaster prevention studies."

Policy priorities include the conservation and rehabilitation of coastal ecosystems, including the island's [coral reefs](#), mangroves and beaches.

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