

## RISING WATER LEVEL

**THE ISSUE:** Sea levels are rising due to global warming. Globally, all coastal areas will be impacted. Locally, Sausalito faces dramatic environmental impacts such as flooding and disruption of utilities that must be addressed.

**SEA's POSITION:** The Sausalito City Council and residents must begin now to plan short-term and long-term strategies to deal with the consequences of rising sea levels on our city and its citizens.

**BACKGROUND:** Global warming is a fact. While its causes can be argued, its effects are indisputable. In the last century the average temperature worldwide has risen about one degree Fahrenheit and sea levels about 4 to 8 inches. As temperatures rise, one major effect is melting polar and glacial ice. While melting of floating ice will not raise sea levels, melting land-locked ice will.

Land-locked ice, such as the Greenland ice sheet, is melting at an unprecedented rate. How much and how fast oceans will rise are unanswered questions. As the rate of global warming increases, and all indications are that it is increasing, the effects will be much more dramatic.

BCBC and other agencies have adopted working models of how rising sea levels will impact shoreline communities. Based on an assumption that sea levels will rise at least by one meter (about 3 feet) by 2100, BCDC has prepared a Bay Area map showing which low-lying areas will be inundated.

But sea levels could rise at a much faster rate and to higher levels if other projections and scientific models prove to be accurate. Sea levels could rise by 3 meters (about 9 feet) or more by the end of the century, with a one-meter rise within the next twenty to thirty years.

In any case, shoreline communities such as Sausalito and planning agencies must begin addressing potential environmental impacts within their jurisdictions. For example, even with a 3-foot rise, Large sections of Bridgeway will be inundated. Marinship will be flooded, and all traffic circulation east of Bridgeway disrupted. Large sections of Marin City and Tam Valley will be flooded or inaccessible.

In addition, underground utilities near the shoreline will be flooded and subject to salt-water intrusion. Sewerage and storm-runoff systems will be impacted.

BCDC suggests cities assign priorities to low-lying areas, those uses and amenities that must be maintained, those that might be preserved, and those that cannot be maintained.

While Sausalito might or might not take that approach, all present and future land-use planning within and near inundation zones must take into account potential impacts of rising sea levels. For more, *click here*.