



A Vision for Resilient Florida Coasts

What's at stake

Florida's communities, infrastructure and resources are at immense risk from sea level rise, hurricanes and heavy precipitation events. It's estimated that over 1.8 million Florida homes have a substantial risk of flooding today – and this number could increase by nearly 20 percent over the next 30 years. Tourism generates more than \$90 billion annually for the Florida economy in addition to over 1 million direct jobs, but also faces extreme uncertainty due to climate change impacts. Sea level rise also contributes to saltwater encroachment and is a potential threat to the primary source of drinking water for South Florida, the Biscayne Aquifer.

Florida has nearly 620,000 people 65 and older or under 5 years old below the poverty line, far above average for the contiguous US. These groups are especially vulnerable to extreme heat and face more challenges during flood events, hurricane evacuations or long-term relocation from high-risk areas. Despite these challenges, the state has an emerging opportunity to establish a long-term, meaningful and unified resilience effort to create a safer, more prosperous and equitable future.

Building climate resilience is a national priority for elected officials from both major parties because all Floridians are facing impacts of climate change and roughly half of the nation's vulnerable property value is located in Florida, with specifically at-risk communities across the state.

Our approach

EDF envisions communities and ecosystems with the capacity to sustain, adapt or transform to anticipated climate driven future conditions that safeguard their economy, ecology and community well-being. EDF focuses on building resilience while protecting valuable and functioning coastal and riverine ecosystems.

Our focus areas:

EDF is committed to developing and implementing locally-designed and locally-supported solutions that will help governments, businesses and communities not only recover from sudden and disruptive events, but also ensure long-term resilience to the constant threat of climate change.

- Expanding cutting-edge science and modeling to inform planning and decision-making over time.
- Guiding proactive, inclusive and adaptive policy, planning and governance to secure long-term funding.
- Advancing natural infrastructure to reduce flood risks and restore ecosystem health and productivity.
- Diversifying resilience funding with innovative mechanisms and engaging the private sector.
- Guiding communities and individuals to define their own better future.
- Empowering the State Chief Resilience Officer with implementation authority, technical and other resources to ensure integration and coordination of agencies on collective resilience efforts.



Aerial photograph of a boat navigating Florida tidal marsh lands (Credit: UF/IFAS photo by Tyler Jones)

94% of Floridians agree that climate change is real.

Ongoing efforts in Florida

- EDF works with elected federal, state and city officials and federal agencies to integrate natural solutions into ongoing regional Federal studies, including the Miami-Dade County Back Bay and Collier County Coastal Storm Risk Management studies, to advance policies and funding to support implementation of natural infrastructure.
- We continue to foster a network of key Chief Resilience Officers and staff from across the country working to develop best practices for resilience planning and governance. This network provides a forum for knowledge sharing and identify common needs for advancing resilience planning and implementation at scale.
- We are advancing state science by working on project prioritization metrics and overall goals and objectives guidance for state funded investments and rule-making of a statewide resilience plan.
- We continue to advocate for the establishment of the Office of Resilience and State Chief Resilience Officer under the Governor's Office with long-term funding and provide strategic direction for coordination of cross-government resilience initiatives.



Homes and roads near the Peace River in Punta Gorda, Florida subject to frequent flooding (Credit: UF/IFAS photo by Tyler Jones)

Key opportunities

- Utilize expertise to establish a coordinated and aligned agency approach at the state level, building off on-going regional and local planning efforts, to ensure consistency and transparency in decision-making across the state. Vertical and horizontal integration of agencies with cross-jurisdictional responsibilities of resilience efforts to facilitate collective and coordinated action.
- Develop a natural infrastructure repository to identify projects across the state that improve community resilience and share publicly to provide an overview of natural

- infrastructure efforts to date, guidelines and best practices, successful examples and lessons learned, science framework and information gaps to advance future resilience projects.
- Partner with community leaders and organizations to transparently and equitably engage and educate the public about their risks and give them an opportunity to build their own more resilient, equitable future.
- Communicate goals of resilience, manage expectations of future avoidable and unavoidable climate change impacts, and account for uncertainties and residual risk.
- Understand behavioral thinking of individuals about their own risk and reduce barriers to personal action to reduce risk.
- Elevate local and regional voices to advance state and federal resilience policies, including large-scale funding needed to address the scale of the impacts.
- Build the scientific, engineering and economic case for the use of natural and nature-based features and account for the ability of coastal and riverine ecosystems ability to provide ecosystem benefits such as risk reduction, carbon sequestration, water quality and habitat
- Conduct analysis of cost-benefit methodologies to appropriately account for multiple ecosystem service benefits and costs of natural infrastructure, as well as address issues of inequity in coastal risk reduction efforts.

“EDF does constructive thoughtful, hard work, and that gains respect – and results,” said George P. Sultz, former U.S. Secretary of State.

Our experts

EDF is a proven leader on coastal resilience, stemming from decades of experience, with staff in Florida.



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