# Rising Sea Levels

Global warming is likely the single greatest problem facing humanity today, but as the Earth continues to warm, the greatest threat caused by the climate change may be the sea levels rising. When sea levels rise rapidly, as they have been doing, even a small increase can have devastating effects on coastal habitats. However, as humanity is not taking the issue as dire as what it necessitates, they are predicting large inevitable increases, such as all of Greenland’s ice melting. Greenland will not face the repercussions alone, and many sea level areas are already spending a large portion of the year under water, which is already a cause for scare. The world is already sinking.

Scientific research indicates sea levels worldwide have been rising at a rate of 0.14 inches per year since the early 1990s, and the Global Mean Sea Level (GMSL) has risen by 4 to 8 inches in the past century alone. While that may not seem as overwhelming to some, even small increases can have devastating effects on coastal habitats. When seawater reaches farther inland, it can cause destructive erosion, flooding of wetlands, contamination of water and food resources, and a loss of habitat for many different species which includes humans. Hundreds of millions of people live in coastal city areas that are already vulnerable to flooding, and that means potentially those hundreds of millions of people being displaced. That will happen in a world where there are already other people referring to themselves as climate refugees as a result of sea levels. It is true that infrastructure could be built to protect from sea level rise, or you could retreat and move inland to avoid this predicament, but could you imagine moving the entire city of New York City somewhere else? In the United States of America, approximately 5 million people live in 2.6 million homes at less than 4 feet above high tide. That is a ton of people to move. This crisis is not something we can simply adapt to and move on, but it continues onward with little to no notice of world’s population. This issue has been treated with indifference by the majority of the people on this planet, or it is being out right denied. If we do not wake up soon, it will become a slippery slope that will affect the entire globe. We need reform now.

Greenland was a region originally thought to be the last bastion of stability in the rapidly warming area of the North Pole, but it is being affected at an alarming rate. In fact, a recent study found that regional warming has likely caused three outlet glaciers bordering the Fram Strait and the Nordic Sea in far northeast Greenland, to lose mass in recent years. One of the outlet glaciers has receded 12.4 miles in just the past 10 years. This is incredibly alarming for many scientists as nature is changing faster than many have expected. Many of the worst circumstances scenarios have already been met, and since Greenland was previously thought to be unaffected so far, previous studies of sea level rise had not included the prospect of melting in that country. Nevertheless, if all of Greenland’s ice were to melt, which is now being argued as a distinct scientific possibility, it would contribute a rise of 21 feet in the sea level (vice greenland). That means 80 of the world’s 100 biggest cities would be underwater.

Venice, Italy is one of those cities, and it already spends 1/3 of the year underwater (vice the world is sinking). The city is actually sinking into the water at a rate of about 2 millimeters per year even as the sea levels rise against it. Nonetheless, Venice is not alone, its neighbor islands are also slowly sinking, and this is very similar to what is happening to other small islands states around the world. Maldives is another example. Maldives is an island state that comprises of a double chain of twenty-six atolls, and it is also sinking into the Indian Ocean-Arabian Sea. Ranked the third most endangered nation due to flooding from climate change, the Maldives islands are only ever 8 feet above sea level at their highest point. There are already 16 small islands of people that need to be relocated, and although they wish they did not have to move, the Maldives are already searching for their new home in Australia, India, and Sri Lanka. Many of those countries include populations that they themselves will be largely affected by the rise in sea levels in the years to come.

People living in the areas still unaffected by this climate change can no longer turn a blind eye. We are already at the point of no return. What will it take for the world at large to consider this problem more detrimental? Scientists have been expecting roughly 2 to 7 more feet of sea level rise in this upcoming century. If the suffering of the Maldives or Venetians is not enough, then will the suffering of the 5 million Americans living only 4 feet above high tide suffice to rouse the world power houses? This is the path we are on, and the motions have been set to change rapidly.

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