

USC report concludes LA risks much from climate-related sea level rise

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Mae Ryan/KPCC

The Hyperion Water Treatment Plant is the largest wastewater treatment facility in Los Angeles Metropolitan Area. A new report says it's at risk from sea level rise.

How vulnerable is Los Angeles to rising sea levels? A report out today from USC says the city's preparations for encroaching shorelines has been uneven.

Extreme weather is the biggest worry when it comes to sea level rise, and **the report from USC's Sea Grant Program** (http://www.usc.edu/org/seagrant/research/sea_level_rise_vulnerability.html) acknowledges LA is taking some steps to prepare. A steady stream of modernization projects at the Port of Los Angeles has factored bigger storms surges into their designs, for example.

But the report finds that historic buildings along the coast are vulnerable. So is the city's wastewater system, including the Hyperion Treatment Plant in Playa Del Rey. It's more than a century old.

Phyllis Grifman is associate director for the Sea Grant Program. She says socio-economic trends put some coastal neighborhoods, like Wilmington and Venice, at higher risk.

"So you kind of have those low income, English as a second language, mostly renters, older housing stock...those are the most vulnerable populations here," Grifman says.

The report says storm water damage to apartments and other buildings could cost the city up to \$700 million.

Grifman says project leaders have discussed strategies for coping with climate risks with city departments and the mayor's office, but they've also identified obstacles. Budget cuts have slowed retrofitting plans. Jurisdictional confusion is also an issue. Consider Venice Beach.

"Where you have a big wide beach in front of a low-lying area like Venice, the most important thing that you can do as a first line of defense is protect beaches," Grifman said. "Which means ultimately that this needs to be a regional project because while the beaches protect the city, the beaches are

managed by the county."

USC Sea Grant will continue to examine regional risks, she says, in future reports.



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