Sea-level Rise, coastal adaptation, laws and policies

The Harte Research Institute at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi has received funding from the Houston Endowment for a multi-year project that will provide an assessment of the impacts of sea-level rise on the greater Houston area and upper Texas coast with the goal of providing the knowledge to mitigate and adapt to higher sea level during the next 50-100 years. The assessment will involve projecting the geographic changes that sea level rise is expected to cause, the economic impact on the natural and built environments, and an analysis of current policies and laws for coastal zone management that may create barriers or opportunities in respect to adapting to sea-level rise.

I propose to present findings on the progress to date of the portion of this study addressing how current policies and laws affect potential options available to the State of Texas and local communities in adapting to climate change. I will describe innovative measures that other states and nations are employing to deal with the problem and describe the legal and policy implications of several projected sea-level rise scenarios. The presentation will compare and contrast the likely impacts of sea-level rise on private and public property located on Gulf of Mexico-facing coastal areas compared to bay-facing coastal property. It will also describe how these impacts may be mitigated or exacerbated by potential adjustments in state or local legal and regulatory regimes.