

The natural setting of the City of Punta Gorda coupled with extensive infrastructure investment in the areas closest to the coast have placed the City at the forefront of geographic areas that will be among the first to experience the negative effects of a changing climate. Tropical storms and hurricanes with increased wind speeds and storm surges have already damaged the community. Mature mangrove forest loss, water quality degradation, and barrier island geomorphic changes have already occurred in the adjacent Charlotte Harbor. Longer, more severe dry season droughts coupled with shorter duration wet seasons consisting of higher volume precipitation will generate a pattern of drought and flood impacting both natural and man-made ecosystems. Even in the lowest impact future climate change scenario predictions, the future for the City will include increased climate instability; wetter wet seasons; drier dry seasons; more extreme hot and cold events; increased coastal erosion; continuous sea-level rise; shifts in fauna and flora with reductions in temperate species and expansions of tropical invasive exotics; increasing occurrence of tropical diseases in plants, wildlife and humans; destabilization of aquatic food webs including increased harmful algae blooms; increasing strains upon and costs in infrastructure; and increased uncertainty concerning variable risk assessment with uncertain actuarial futures. The City is working with climate change management adaptations that could be utilized to address the various vulnerabilities identified for the City.