

Poll Shows Vast Majority of Americans Favor Sea-Level Rise Adaptation. Now, Time to Start Planning. | 1



Credit: Ed Hart via Flickr

Stanford University's [Woods Institute for the Environment](#) and the [Center for Ocean Solutions](#) recently released the results of a [survey](#) finding that the majority of Americans favor proactive sea-level rise adaptation actions.

According to the [survey results](#) (margin of error: +/- 4.9% at the 95 percent confidence level),

82 percent of the Americans surveyed said that people and organizations should prepare for the damage likely to be caused by sea level rise and storms, rather than simply deal with the damage after it happens. Among the most popular policy solutions identified in the survey are strengthening building codes for how to build new structures along the coast to minimize damage (favored by **62 percent**) and preventing new buildings from being built near the coast (supported by **51 percent**).

The survey also inquired about respondents' opinion on particular adaptation strategies, and found that only **33 percent** of respondents supported seawall construction. (Compare this to the fact that one-third of the Southern California coastline is already armored with seawalls.)

The Los Angeles Times [notes](#) that the survey respondents likely still had fresh memories of Super Storm Sandy's damage and the "protracted, expensive rebuilding, whose cost was picked up largely by taxpayers." In a [previous post](#), I discussed the [troubling fact](#) that the public historically has rewarded politicians for disaster response instead of disaster prevention, despite [studies](#) showing that every dollar spent on disaster preparedness equals 15 dollars in future damage mitigation. The Stanford survey suggests that, as storms like Sandy batter our coastlines with increasing frequency and intensity, the American public

grows less willing to rebuild and more interested in preventative action.

Given solid evidence that the overwhelming majority of Americans favors proactive sea-level rise adaptation, it's time for America's coastal states and cities to make adaptation planning a priority. In California, for example, a recent [National Research Council study](#) reports that sea levels south of Cape Mendocino are expected to rise 4.7 to 24 inches above 2000 levels by 2050. There is no time to lose.