



GREATER ESTERO COMMUNITY REPORT

First Quarter – 2021

The ECCL wishes you a Very Happy New Year, and we hope that you continue to stay safe and well and benefit from the COVID vaccine "rollout" as soon as possible.

We are pleased to provide you with the first of four planned GECR Reports for 2021. Our objective is to continue providing essential and informative articles that are a key focus of the ECCL's vision: "To make the greater Estero area the best place to live, work, and play." If you would like to read any of the previous GECR documents we released last year, you can find them on our website <http://www.esterotoday>.

Our first report illustrates the potential impact in Southwest Florida from **global warming**. The question for residents is not whether they will be affected by global warming, but by how much! The ECCL is a supporter of the Southwest Florida Regional Resiliency Compact (SWFRRC), an agreement between its members, county and municipal governments in Southwest Florida, to collaboratively identify, prepare for, adapt to, and mitigate climate change impacts which will have positive benefits. However, we all must take steps, even small ones (outlined in the article), to help mitigate this growing threat to our way of life.

The second article provides an update on the ECCL's involvement in supporting and assisting in enhancing our **local schools' educational standards**. Even if you do not have children or grandchildren attending our local schools, many significant benefits result from enhancing education quality in the greater Estero area. A 2017 study by the National Association of Realtors (NAR) found 26 percent of home buyers considered the quality of schools when looking for a new home. But there are other additional indirect benefits, all of which positively impact our local community's quality of life. We hope you find both articles of interest.

SPOTLIGHT:

Global Warming: The Risk to Southwest Florida. How can we help?



Storm surges and sea-level rise are significant concerns across the globe but particularly important in Southwest Florida. Water levels could increase one to eight feet by 2100 based on a study completed in 2018. This increase would have a major impact on Southwest Florida. Action is needed to reduce global warming, which is considered the primary cause and prepare regional plans to address this issue.

Warming and acidification are likely to harm Florida's marine ecosystems, fisheries, and tourism. Climate change is impacting weather patterns and melting glaciers, which cause storm surges and sea-level rise. The question for Floridians is not whether they will be affected by global warming, but by how much! ¹

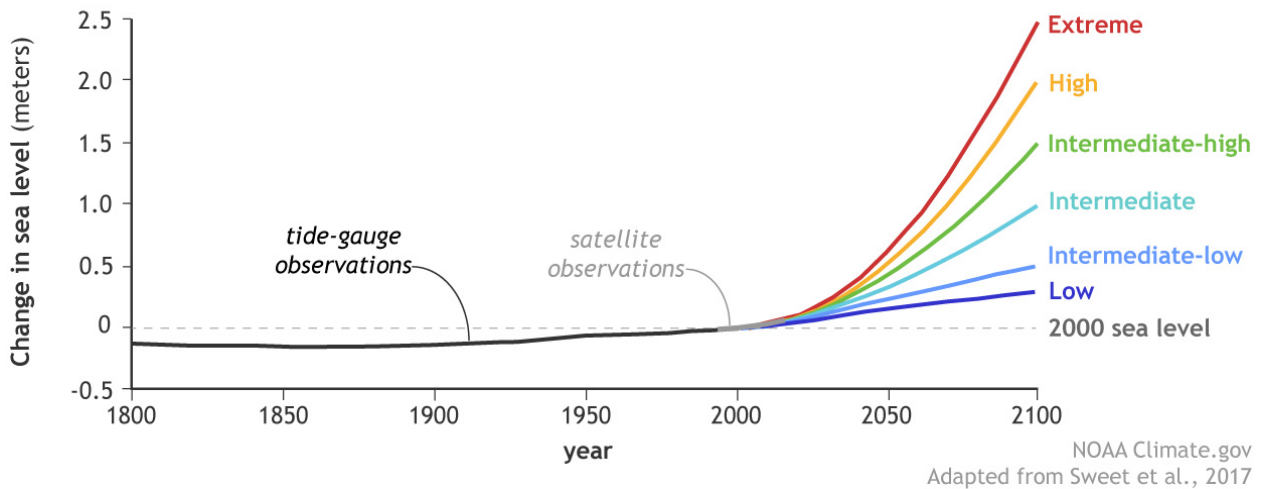
With over 1,200 miles of coastline, around 4,500 square miles of estuaries plus almost 6,700 miles of other coastal waters and low-lying topography, Florida is especially vulnerable to any future rises in sea levels. The impact on food production, the marine ecosystem, and our quality of life will be considerable if we don't act.



The *U.S. Interagency Sea Level Rise Taskforce* has provided new figures for assessing the likely rise in the sea level by the end of the century. They indicate that the global sea level is very likely to rise at least 12 inches (0.3 meters) above 2000 levels by 2100 even on a low-emissions pathway. They suggest that based on the highest greenhouse gas emissions, sea-level rise could be as high as 8.2 feet (2.5 meters) above 2000 levels by 2100 see graph below².

The consequences of such a rise in Southwest Florida, where many homes are only a few feet above sea level, would be significant.

Possible future sea levels for different greenhouse gas pathways



The ECCL has already expressed support for the *Southwest Florida Regional Resiliency Compact*³ (SWFRRC), an agreement between its members, county, and municipal governments in Southwest Florida, to collaboratively identify, prepare for, adapt to, and mitigate climate change impacts. The SWFRRC will address sea-level rise, water quality, harmful algal blooms, erosion, greenhouse gas emissions, heat events, droughts, flooding, and intensifying hurricanes. With limited resources, it makes sense that the 13 county and municipal governmental entities should work together on this effort. The Village of Estero has already voted to be part of this Compact. The Water School at Florida Gulf Coast University is seeking external funding to support the program. Cities and counties are not being asked to provide funds.

The Compact's unified voice will also improve Southwest Florida's position to apply for federal funding and grants, secure the necessary resources to move climate solutions forward, and advocate for state and federal legislation that is responsive to the region's needs. Further, this effort will support current local resilience efforts, such as addressing aging infrastructure, emergency management, and public health.



It is encouraging to note that in 2009 the *Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact*, comprising Broward, Miami Dade, Monroe, and Palm Beach counties, has implemented many initiatives to help lower climate change impact there. These initiatives have involved the lowering of emissions and establishing an ad hoc Sea Level Rise Working Group to update their

projections. The group comprises scientific experts within the academic community and staff from local, regional, and federal government⁴.

Other regional compacts in Florida have been created in the following areas: Tampa, Orlando, Jacksonville, and Metro Tallahassee.

So how can we help as individuals?

Here are some examples of how you can slow or stop the human-causes of global warming and what we can do to help.

- If possible, **switch to renewable energy sources** (such as solar and wind energy) to power our homes and buildings, thus emitting far less heat-trapping gases into the atmosphere.
- If possible, **drive electric vehicles** instead of those that burn fossil fuels; or use mass transit instead of driving our gas-powered cars.
- Conserve energy by better **insulating your home** and replace old, failing appliances with more energy-efficient models.
- Counterbalance annual carbon dioxide emissions by investing in services that drawdown an equal amount of carbon out of the atmosphere, **planting trees**, or carbon capture and storage techniques.
- Support more **local businesses** that use and promote sustainable, climate-smart practices.
- We can also place an upper limit on the amount of carbon dioxide we allow ourselves to emit into the atmosphere within a given timeframe. See sidebar for ideas.



Reducing Carbon

Turn off our auto engines when idling.

Reduce the number of journeys by car whenever possible

Use a bicycle when convenient rather than a gas-powered car.

Use electric leaf blowers, not gas.

Reduce water consumption.

Eat the food you buy and use less meat

Replace old light bulbs with fuel-efficient LED bulbs.

Pull the plug on electrical equipment when not in use.

Let's keep Southwest Florida a safe place to live in for many more years to come!

References:

1. The effects of Climate Change on Florida's Ocean & Coastal Resources.
https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/The%20Effects%20of%20Climate%20Change%20on%20Florida%27s%20Ocean%20and%20Coastal%20Resources_0.pdf
2. Climate Change: Global Sea Level, Rebecca Lindsey, August 14, 2020, <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/understanding-climate/climate-change-global-sea-level>
3. An Explanation of the Southwest Florida Regional Resiliency Compact by Audubon.
<https://fl.audubon.org/faq/southwest-florida-regional-resiliency-compact>
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<https://southeastfloridaclimatecompact.org/about-us/what-is-the-compact/>

EDUCATION:

Concerned About Your Home Value? Why the Very High Educational Standards in Estero, Are Having a Positive Effect!



A 2017 study by the National Association of Realtors (NAR) found 26 percent of home buyers considered the quality of schools when looking for a new home.

Schools aren't the only determinant of home

prices—safety, commute times, jobs, and housing inventory all play a part in any market. But a good home in a good school district can draw a higher price and hold a better resale value than a similar home in a less-stellar district¹.

"Economists have estimated that within suburban neighborhoods, a 5 percent improvement in test scores can raise house prices by 2.5 percent," reports the New York Times².

Highly effective educators and good quality schools are the foundation for a thriving, prosperous community. Moreover, other indirect benefits from high school standards include:

- The ability to **attract commercial enterprises** to utilize the skills of students
- **Lower crime rates** when students are motivated to learn and move into higher education
- Reducing drug-taking, contributing to a **safer environment** that results in an enhanced quality of life.

How The ECCL Supports Local Education

The ECCL has made several commitments to improve Estero Schools' educational opportunities with a focus on reading, writing, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) skills.

In 2018, the ECCL initiated the "2-5-8 Graduate" Junior Achievement Program. Developed as part of the Estero Educational Initiative (EEI), it was a formal collaboration between the Village of Estero and the Lee County School Board. The effort continued when the Village of Estero and ECCL collaborated to engage with Junior Achievement (JA) to implement the program to all 2nd, 5th, 8th, and 11th-grade students in the Estero-area schools. Nick Batos, Estero Village Councilperson, was a key and early advocate of this initiative and to whom we are sincerely indebted.

Students from 2nd through 12th-grade experience JA programs that focus on financial literacy, work readiness, and entrepreneurship skills, to name a few. Taught by community volunteers, this educational program provides students the skills to navigate real-world experiences and become better Estero citizens.



During the 2018-2019 school year, 108 volunteer ambassadors provided JA curriculum to 1,365 students in all the Estero area schools, including Pinewoods Elementary, Three Oaks Elementary, Three Oaks Middle, and Estero High School. Unfortunately, classes in the 2019-2020 school year were cut short due to the Covid-19 pandemic; however, 92 volunteer ambassadors completed programs reaching 1297 students. Students and teachers appreciate the sincere interest of adult volunteers. They recognize that the community supports them; the excellent volunteer effort says, "We Care."

In 2019 Estero High School administration requested ECCL volunteers to team-teach a Personal Finance course to 12th-grade students. As requested, a team of volunteers was teaching this pre-approved JA Program focused on personal financial management, just before the Covid-19 pandemic. Another example of how the ECCL, in conjunction with its many partners, provides much-needed support to our schools.

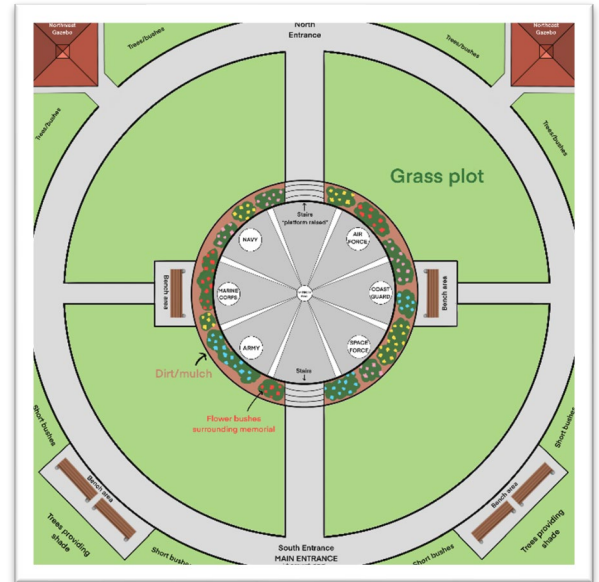
Volunteers, many of them retired professionals as well as active Estero businesses, see benefits as well. "Seeing the excitement, engagement, and enthusiasm of the kids was very fulfilling," says Dr.



Kevin Tolliver, who, along with his wife Melanie, facilitated 2nd grade JA classes at Pinewoods Elementary. There is nothing more attractive to students than dealing with money. Students enjoy learning about financial literacy through engaging exercises that have a practical use and real-world application. The ECCL acknowledges the businesses belonging to the Estero Chamber of Commerce for their support and involvement.

For her fantastic contribution to the program, Amy Kuchenbecker was named the ECCL 2020 Volunteer of the Year for her work in facilitating Junior Achievement in the greater Estero area schools. Our schools are committed to being strong supporters of our community here in the Greater Estero area. The Estero High School student's enthusiastic support of the proposed Veterans Pocket Park, which ECCL advocated, is a good example.

The students prepared 20 designs for the project won by Gracie Goll. The designs were included in an online survey. Five hundred survey participants reviewed and rated the designs. The submissions were of exceptional designs demonstrating the students' flair and ingenuity. This is Gracie's excellent design.



Quality Higher Education in Estero

In addition to our excellent schools, Estero is blessed by also having high-ranking FGCU on our doorstep. FGCU was ranked #16 in being the most innovative school amongst Regional Universities South³. FGCU has also been named the top public college/university in Florida for undergraduate entrepreneurship studies, according to *The Princeton Review and Entrepreneur Magazine*. At No. 29 out of more than 300 schools, FGCU ranked higher than entrepreneurship undergraduate programs at DePaul University, Florida State University, the University of St. Thomas, and Syracuse University, among others⁴. It was the #1 Undergraduate Entrepreneurship Degree Program in the State of Florida!

Local Business Supporting Local Students

The ECCL would also like to make students and parents aware of the following scholarship available. The 2020-21 Hutt Scholarship Essay Contest is open to Florida residents. The contest provides local high school seniors with the opportunity to win one of twenty \$2,000 college scholarships. Applicants must be high school seniors and plan to enter a trade school, college, or university in the next academic year. The deadline for entries is January 31, 2021. Please go to this website for more information and an application form online:

<https://www.lmcu.org/about/community-relations/hutt-scholarship/>

In conclusion, even if you do not have children involved in our local schools, please support their efforts and the ECCL's involvement. Having excellent schools in our locality enhances our home values and quality of life in more ways than you might imagine.

Researched and written by The ECCL's Communication Committee members.

References:

1. How school ratings impact home prices, by Angela Colley October 6, 2017, <https://www.opendoor.com/w/blog/how-school-ratings-impact-home-prices>
2. Good Schools, Affordable Homes: Finding Suburban Sweet Spots, by Quoctrung Bui and Conor Dougherty March 30, 2017, *New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/03/30/upshot/good-schools-affordable-homes-suburban-sweet-spots.html?mcubz=1>
3. <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/rankings/regional-universities-south/innovative>
4. <https://fgcu360.com/2020/11/17/fgcu-named-best-public-school-in-florida-for-undergraduate-entrepreneurship/>