SEA LEVEL RISE PHONE APP CROWDSOURCES FLOODING DATA

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Wetlands Watch has developed a mobile app, “Sea Level Rise,” that allows the crowdsourcing of flooding information. The app provides reliable information over time about the location of problem flooding areas as well as outlines and shape files of the extent of flooding during inundation events. This information is of use to researchers, storm surge/flooding modelers, emergency managers, planners, and others.

As important, the app provides an avenue for outreach and engagement to sectors of the community who might not otherwise respond to conventional outreach requests: “come to a flood meeting,” or “read this flood flyer,” or “take this sea level rise survey.” However, busy family members, millennials, people averse to events/organizations, etc. might download an app that allows them to contribute to the solution of a community problem on their terms, to be used when they want to engage the issue. Once they download the app, they are part of a virtual network and become electronically accessible and can potentially become more deeply engaged in adaptation efforts.

The app was put to an interstate test in 2015 around the time of Hurricane Joaquin. Hurricane Joaquin was a category 4 storm with the potential for storm surge to produce days of unusually high tides along the Atlantic Coast from Florida to New York. At almost the same time, email circulated that the Wetlands Watch Sea Level Rise phone app for mapping coastal flooding was working in the field. A pressing need, a way to capture important data for our communities, and a few phone calls brought together a network of organizations from Florida to New York interested in helping partner communities document flooding. A quickly organized call identified and trained managers in each state about the process for training and approving users and then managers reached out to contacts to train people to map flooding. Partners include Sea Grant Programs in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, UGA’s Carl Vinson Institute of Government, UGA Marine Extension, Stetson University, Science and Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay, Southern Climate Impacts Planning Program, and Carolinas Integrated Sciences and Assessments. Subsequent interstate trials were planned around the “King Tides” of October and November, 2015. These events will also be discussed by some of the collaborating partners present at the meeting.