

## New report underscores urgency for climate action

By Captain Dan Kipnis

The new report from the U.S. Global Change Research Program holds no punches in laying out future climate change impacts for our state. In addition to the stark impacts we have heard before—sea level rise, hotter temperatures, more intense hurricanes and water shortages—the report sounds the warning bell on several ecological thresholds we are close to breaching. From the sudden loss of coastal landforms that serve as storm surge barriers, to widespread, rapid saltwater intrusion into our coastal forests and freshwater aquifers, to an abrupt decline of fish and shellfish populations, we face multiple tipping points.

As an angler, I am deeply concerned about what these changes would mean for our outdoor way of life. I worry that the Florida I call home today, with its unique fish and wildlife and beautiful land and seascapes, will not resemble the Florida that future generations will know tomorrow. Fortunately, the scenarios laid out in the report do not have to come true. As the report states, “future climate change and its impacts depend on choices made today.” By taking bold action we can avoid the most catastrophic consequences of global warming and pass on healthy communities, wildlife and natural resources to our children and grandchildren.

Legislation currently moving through Congress gives us all the tools we need to meet the challenges of climate change. By “capping” global warming pollution, the American Clean Energy and Security Act will drop our emissions 83 percent by 2050. Doing so could mean the difference between a 4.5° F temperature increase and a 9° F temperature increase. It could mean the difference between a 1-foot sea level rise and 3-foot sea level rise.

The bill also invests in global warming safeguards that protect ecosystems for people and wildlife in a warming world. Without conservation, many coastal communities will lose freshwater supplies and protections against higher seas and storm surges. In addition, many of Florida’s charter and commercial fishermen and countless other businesses rely on healthy coastal ecosystems for their livelihoods. By investing in large-scale conservation projects such as wetlands and mangroves restoration, the ACES Act can help build resiliency into Florida’s ecosystems so both people and wildlife can continue to thrive.

I hope our leaders in Congress will read this report and realize that we have a choice in how severe the impacts of climate change will be. Now is the time for leadership. Now is the time for us to recognize that the consequences of our actions are serious and if we do not do something now, there may not be enough time later.

Protecting natural resources from the impacts of global warming means ensuring that our children and grandchildren have the same outdoors experience that we have had. Passing the American Clean Energy and Security Act will help conserve our outdoor heritage, our hunting and fishing traditions and the wildlife and landscapes that help make Florida beautiful and unique.

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