

Dear Mr. O'Donnell:

Here is a brief statement that you can use as you see fit:

Rising sea levels are a fact of life. They come about because our oceans are rising and also because here in Hampton Roads our land is slowly sinking. The combination of the two caused sea levels in our region to rise an average of 17 or 18 inches this past century. If this trend continues, then even ordinary storms will become flooding disasters as the years pass. Physical property (buildings, etc.) will be damaged or rendered useless and valuable economic activity will not occur. Our most vulnerable times will be when the tide is "in" and a major storm hits us.

We in Hampton Roads are positioned roughly where the Netherlands was in about 1960--- rising sea levels are not yet disastrous, but shortly will become so. Following their example, we need to take action in order to minimize adverse effects on us. First, we need more and better information about our region in terms of its topography, asset location and asset values. Second, we need to amend our building codes so that we begin to take rising sea levels in to account. Third, we need to give serious thought to how we can "push" water away from our critical assets. Fourth, we need to give additional consideration to evacuation procedures when natural disasters hit us. Fifth, we need to cooperate regionally to fashion strategies and compete for funds nationally in order to deal with rising sea levels.

I am on the record saying that rising sea levels may well turn out to be the problem of the 21<sup>st</sup> century for Hampton Roads. The tidal gauges at places such as Sewell's point do not lie. Sea levels in our region are rising and we must mobilize to deal with them.

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