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Florida challenged to protect coast

Groups to pressure Crist to fund programs

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A coalition of environmental groups says Florida should take a leadership role to protect the coast from the effects of global warming and sea level rise.

The Florida Coastal and Ocean Coalition held a news conference Wednesday to call on Florida to develop strategies that include protecting shoreline vegetation and removing incentives for developing in coastal areas.

Gov. Charlie Crist and the Legislature this year did not provide funding for the Florida Ocean and Coastal Council created in 2005, said David White, regional director for the Ocean Conservancy.

"Passing laws that aren't funded, then calling for stakeholders groups whose recommendations are ignored, is not going to get us out of this problem," White said. "That is why we are asking for specific leadership."

Meanwhile, a report released today by the Brookings Institution shows that four Florida metropolitan areas have among the highest carbon emissions per person of 100 cities nationwide. Carbon is a greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming and climate change.

Miami-Fort Lauderdale was ranked 28th, meaning it had one of the smaller per capita carbon "footprints" while Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater was ranked 47th and Orlando was 54th.

The Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville area ranked 59th; the Cape Coral-Fort Myers area ranked 70th and Jacksonville was ranked 80th, meaning it had one of the largest carbon footprints.

Although Florida cities generally ranked favorably because of the state's mild climate and use of natural gas at power plants, some cities fared poorly because of their lack of mass transit and sprawling layout, the report's authors said.

"There is an economic vulnerability these areas with large (carbon) footprints have," said Marilyn A. Brown, a professor in the School of Public Policy at Georgia Institute of Technology.
