'King tide' could cause flooding at Shore and area rivers over next few days

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The story will likely be the same all along Barnegat Bay and up and down the Jersey Shore, so Walzer's group is inviting people to take before-and-after photographs of the king tide and its effects in areas that are known to routinely flood during weather events such as extreme tides.

Walzer said the "Barnegat Bay King Tide Photo Initiative" will be posted on the partnership's website (bbp.ocean.edu) to try to help researchers and planners better understand the vulnerable geography along the coastline and aid them in making development decisions.

While king tides are not a new phenomenon - they have been widely studied for decades in Australia and other the Pacific regions - in recent years their twice-annual arrival, once in spring and again in fall, has provided environmental groups in the United States with an opportunity to show what higher sea levels could look like across North America.

While some scientists say that scenario is inevitable as part of climate change, others dismiss it as needless alarm over a natural phenomenon.

Still, in some regions, including the West Coast, king tides are being carefully studied for clues to the future.

"For us, the king tide has allowed a teachable moment," said Curt Hart, a spokesman for the Washington State Department of Ecology.

Hart said his state has been working with the University of Washington's Climate Impacts Group for more than six years to educate people about the effects of the king tide on Puget Sound, the nation's second-largest marine estuary in the country after the Chesapeake Bay estuary.

Efforts to track the before-and-after effects of the king tide in Puget Sound provided the template for the photography project in Barnegat Bay, he said.

"It's a great way for people to get involved because people can go outside and really see firsthand what the effects of sea-level rise looks like in their own backyard," Hart said.

Angela Andersen, 42, a resident of Long Beach Township on Long Beach Island, who says she has spent every summer of her life at the New Jersey Shore, said she noticed the effects of the king tide on the barrier island as early as this past weekend.
Flood-prone spots, as at Brant Beach between 70th and 84th Streets, took on water, while most of the wetland areas between the mainland and Long Beach Island were completely submerged by Tuesday afternoon, she said.

"To be able to document an actual before and after, for people who really know a particular area well, is something that really sticks with you when you see it," said Andersen, who serves as Long Beach Township's recycling coordinator and is also education coordinator for the Barnegat Bay Partnership.

Andersen said she had never heard of the king tide phenomenon before, but had noticed past flooding not linked to a particular storm and wondered about it.

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**Base Flood Elevation**