Environmental Defense wanted to make one thing clear Wednesday: It will cost much more to avoid doing something about global warming than to take steps to stop it.

The New York-based environmental group said it will cost Florida upwards of $345 billion in loss of life, property and business by 2100 if action isn't taken to slow rising sea levels, the intensity of hurricanes and rising temperatures.

The group commissioned Tufts University researcher Frank Ackerman to study the costs of not following sound energy policies, such as GOP Gov. Charlie Crist's mandate to slash greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050.

"That's a debate we will relish," said Jerry Karnas, Florida climate project director for Environmental Defense. "This is the first salvo from our side, explaining in detail what price Florida will pay if greenhouse gases aren't reduced substantially along the lines that Gov. Crist has laid out."

For example, a 27-inch rise in sea levels would leave much of Florida's coast vulnerable, along with two nuclear reactors, 74 airports, 247 gas stations and 1,362 motels, hotels and inns, Ackerman's study said.

The group briefed Crist's office as well as the staff of Florida House Speaker Marco Rubio, R-Miami, and Senate President Ken Pruitt, R-Port St. Lucie. Ackerman, director of the Research and Policy Program at Tufts' Global Development and the Environment Institute, then spoke to reporters in Tallahassee and hosted a teleconference.

"When people talk about the cost of climate policy, they often assume this is a purchase that we don't have to make," Ackerman said. "It's sort of like, do you want to buy a new car, or is it something you cannot afford? That's not an available option."

But Myron Ebell, energy and global warming policy director at the Washington-based Competitive Enterprise Institute, called some of this information "scare-mongering."

"In Florida, given the nature of your state, five inches of sea level rise is a problem, and eight inches will be a problem, too, but it's not an overwhelming problem unless you plan on standing on the beach and wait for your feet to rot," said Ebell, whose organization has received millions in donations from oil giant ExxonMobil.

"I don't think sea-level rise is going to destroy Western civilization," he said.