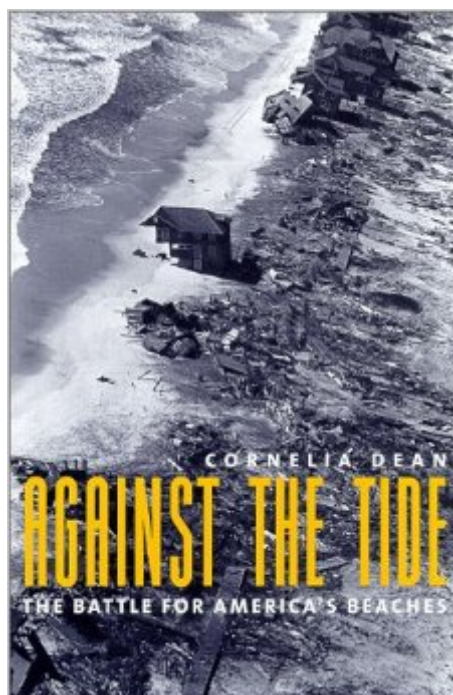


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# Against The Tide: The Battle For America's Beaches



## Synopsis

Americans love to colonize their beaches. But when storms threaten, high-ticket beachfront construction invariably takes precedence over coastal environmental concerns—we rescue the buildings, not the beaches. As Cornelia Dean explains in *Against the Tide*, this pattern is leading to the rapid destruction of our coast. But her eloquent account also offers sound advice for salvaging the stretches of pristine American shore that remain. The story begins with the tale of the devastating hurricane that struck Galveston, Texas, in 1900—the deadliest natural disaster in American history, which killed some six thousand people. Misguided residents constructed a wall to prevent another tragedy, but the barrier ruined the beach and ultimately destroyed the town's booming resort business. From harrowing accounts of natural disasters to lucid ecological explanations of natural coastal processes, from reports of human interference and construction on the shore to clear-eyed elucidation of public policy and conservation interests, this book illustrates in rich detail the conflicting interests, short-term responses, and long-range imperatives that have been the hallmarks of America's love affair with her coast. Intriguing observations about America's beaches, past and present, include discussions of Hurricane Andrew's assault on the Gulf Coast, the 1962 northeaster that ravaged one thousand miles of the Atlantic shore, the beleaguered beaches of New Jersey and North Carolina's rapidly vanishing Outer Banks, and the sand-starved coast of southern California. Dean provides dozens of examples of human attempts to tame the ocean—as well as a wealth of lucid descriptions of the ocean's counterattack. Readers will appreciate *Against the Tide's* painless course in coastal processes and new perspective on the beach.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An astounding book that will not be read by enough people. Ms. Dean provides us with a well-researched book on the physics (don't let that word throw you off; she makes it all quite understandable) of beaches, and how, in one century, we have managed to destroy them. Quite simply the ocean cannot and should not be conquered. While capable of causing intense damage to our shores, the ocean, given time, will also inevitably repair the damage it has caused. But, build houses, hotels and other structures as well as jetties, revetments, seawalls, and groins on the beaches and you will ultimately destroy them. The truly sad part of this book is not just that we have destroyed thousands of miles of our beaches, but that we are led by ignorant, self-serving politicians and greedy commercial and private interests to build even more damaging structures on what's left of our shores. To add insult to injury the taxpayer continues to be dunned for the money to pay for continued "beach management" (read: mismanagement), and for rebuilding destroyed structures in areas where nothing should be built. I no longer have the slightest sympathy for people whose shorefront homes are destroyed by storms. Move inland where you belong. A must read for the concerned citizen.

I don't know Cornelia Dean but I wish she was my neighbor. This daring, wonderful, woman should be given a national award for her works in "Against the Tide." She blows the whistle on widespread negligent coastal management practices that are evident everywhere. It was extremely unsettling to me to read about almost identical patterns of coastal abuse that I have observed where I live at Alligator Point, Florida. A revetment was constructed in 1994 despite the warnings of coastal experts that it would contribute further to erosion rather than preventing it. This was done at a staggering waste of taxpayers' money and with the permission of county, state, and federal governments. Today, the beach area that once provided recreation and a protective buffer is gone because of revetment-caused erosion. Turtle areas are destroyed. Dwellings are sitting dangerously in water. The road is ruined and unsafe. And, there is no required accountability for removing the wall. It is now a permanent monument to disaster. Cornelia Dean articulately reveals how shamefully common this is. She has superbly documented the inept practices of coastal management efforts that are prevalent all along America's coasts. Nothing was written, however, about how to undo this American tragedy. I will, therefore, offer one suggestion based on Cornelia

Dean's numerous contacts and her rapport with coastal planners. She should be given a special Presidential appointment to head up a commission to consolidate all coastal management agencies and to develop and enforce a unified set of standards. Ms. Dean's outstanding book certainly qualifies her for such a step.

This book is a must-have for anyone interested in beach erosion and overdevelopment. The author clearly lays out the arguments against such beachfront "improvements" as armoring, sandtrapping, etc. As a hydrologist, I was already well aware of the futility of most attempts to preserve beaches in their existing configurations, yet this book explains these issues in a very compelling and succinct fashion. The author also describes those rare occasions when intervention can indeed be helpful, and the special circumstances under which it is justifiable. Yet what is most compelling is the overall argument that in the majority of cases, most attempts at beach and property preservation actually hasten the destruction of the very things requiring protection. Ultimately, a particular beach structure is by its very nature a transient thing, yet it is most durable in its present form if left alone.

Unfortunately, with beachfront development continuing at its currently rapid pace, it is unlikely that much of this important information will be heeded. Nevertheless, it is necessary to disseminate this knowledge. Perhaps this book can help inform the public of the need to let beaches be beaches.

If you LOVE the beach or have the SEA in your veins, this is a must read book! It was sad to learn that mankind and our quest to make what we believe is a perfect beach front has and will destroy the beaches. The book is very informative and teaches us that we are responsible for most of the beach erosion that we see today because we are ultimately destroying the ability of the sea to replenish what it lost during storms, by placing retaining walls. We just do not have the patience to wait !

An excellent summary of everything wrong with current public policy regarding America's beaches that is especially relevant after Hurricane Sandy.

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