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Peer reviewed

Review: The Rising Sea
By Orrin H. Pilkey and Rob Young

Reviewed by Ryder W. Miller
San Francisco, California, USA

Pilkey, Orrin H. and Young, Rob. *The Rising Sea*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press/Shearwater Books, 2009. 203 pp. ISBN 9781597261913. US \$25.95, recycled, acid free paper.

The Rising Sea from Orrin H. Pilkey, professor emeritus in the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University (and also 20 year editor of the *Living with the Shores* series), and Rob Young, Director of the Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines and Professor of Geosciences at Western Carolina University, is a book that is likely to inspire many. The authors knowledgably and effectively sound the retreat from the coast.

Rather than focusing on arguments about global temperature rise, the authors focus on the physical evidence of global warming. They cite measurements that show the ocean has risen, and is rising by one to three millimeters a year. The pictures and diagrams are dramatic: glaciers have shrunk and disappeared around the world, shorelines have moved inland and inhabited islands are in danger of being inundated. Though seeming dramatically alarmist, the authors are convinced that we are in the thick of a sea level rise. After reading the evidence presented here you are likely to be so even if you still have a few doubts.

Pilkey and Young also provide a working predictive figure for ocean level rise by the turn of the century: "For planning purposes, we think that a 7-foot (2 m) sea level rise by the year 2100 should be assumed. It is thus our belief that coastal management and planning should be carried out assuming that the ice sheet disintegration will continue and accelerate. This is a cautious and conservative approach." (p. 79). The predictions have also grown more worrisome because the polar caps are also melting at an unexpected rate.

The book will also benefit natural scientists with chapters that detail how the rising sea will affect coastal, wetland, and marine ecosystems. The coral reefs may not be able to survive the rising sea levels, nor will root sea plants that rely on sunlight. The intended readership for the book is not only academics. It will also benefit coastal planners and those who want a clear picture of what is at stake. It also serves as a nice summary for those who want to have a global picture of the effects of global warming. Those living along the Mississippi Delta are also likely to benefit from the book because it includes a chapter that serves as a case study of the area. The book will also be helpful for those who live near the seashore and in coastal cities. The authors contend that people need to prepare to move away from the shorelines: "In early 2009, the Corps [The Army Corps of Engineers] made it official that relocating coastal property is more cost effective than trying to protect the property by building artificial beaches" (p. 164). The book is dramatic enough to rivet a general or concerned reader.

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