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Review: Living With Florida's Atlantic Beaches: Coastal Hazards from Amelia Island to Key West

David M. Bush ...[et al.].

Reviewed by [Ryder W. Miller](#)
San Francisco, USA

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David M. Bush, William J. Neal, Norma J. Longo, Kenyon C. Lindeman, Deborah F. Pilkey, Lucianna Slomp Esteves, John D. Congleton and Orrin H. Pilkey. *Living With Florida's Atlantic Beaches: Coastal Hazards from Amelia Island to Key West*. (Series Editors for Living with the Shore: William J. Neal and Orrin H. Pilkey.) Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004. 338 pp. ISBN:0-8223-3251-5. US\$79.95 (trade cloth) Acid free paper.

Part of the *Living with the Shore* Series (from editors William J. Neal and Orrin H. Pilkey), and geared for those who need to make practical decisions about coastal mitigation issues, *Living With Florida's Atlantic Beaches* is one of many books that explores our vast national coastline. The series also includes books about the coasts of Alaska, Lake Erie, South Carolina, Puerto Rico, New Jersey, and other regions.

The many authors of *Living With Florida's Atlantic Beaches* describe the dynamic coastline, which is at the mercy of natural forces like erosion, detrimental tidal actions, and strong coastal winds. The book describes the wrath of Mother Nature that exerts itself in Florida through oceanic and weather processes.

The book explores in detail the detrimental effects of shoreline erosion and efforts to build shoreline structures. The authors relay the lessons they have learned from unsuccessful attempts to fortify the coast against the onslaught of nature. The work provides guidance for those who wish to pursue their dream of living close to the coast, and provides advice for the potential property investor, decision-making public official, community planner, and visitor.

Mitigation efforts have not always been successful in the past:

"Coastal engineering is the usual choice of those attempting to protect property and hold the shoreline in place, but more than a century of experience with seawalls and other engineering structures shows us that trying to anchor the shoreline eventually leads to the loss of the beach. The real issue is how to save both buildings and beaches-a most difficult task."
(p.67)

Not only does the sand need to be managed at local beaches, they also need to be prepared for inevitable storms. The Atlantic Coast of Florida has seen powerful storms and hurricanes over the years. The intensity of the storms has been devastating:

“The worst storm so far ever to hit the Keys occurred on September 2, 1935, when a hurricane with sustained winds estimated at 200 mph struck, causing massive damage and killing 400 people, even though the strip of maximum devastation was only 40 miles wide. Flying debris decapitated some victims, others were impaled, and some were actually sandblasted to death. Incredible winds were followed by an 18-foot tidal wave that smashed houses and drowned occupants, scattering bodies everywhere. ” (p.246)

Florida’s coast is lined with failed attempts at erosion mitigation, and the authors suggest talking with experts before taking mitigation efforts into one’s own hands. Given its wealth of practical advice, this book is especially helpful to the future homeowner.

Included in the book are chapters on construction guidelines (mobile homes on the Florida Coast must be tied down, for example), and coastal regulations protecting marine wildlife. The book does not provide a nature guide or an extensive amount of information about Florida’s native wildlife or habitats. *Living with Florida’s Atlantic Beaches* does include a county-by-county description of Florida’s Atlantic coast. Despite the risks, ocean lovers still flock to Florida’s coast. This book can better prepare one for living at the mercy of the Atlantic Ocean.

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