



Just Seconds from the Ocean: Coastal Living in the Wake of Katrina

William Sargent

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The idea of living on the coast conjures images of rolling waves, rocky outcroppings, and sandy stretches of beach. This picturesque conception stands in direct contrast to the reality of the natural world. In *Just Seconds from the Ocean: Coastal Living in the Wake of Katrina*, William Sargent examines the real potential for catastrophe in these seemingly idyllic locations and how coastal dwellers perch precariously on the edge of disaster.

Following the devastation wrought in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the need for a rational policy of coastal regulation and development became alarmingly clear. Sargent combines firsthand interviews with incisive analysis of the natural environment, focusing not only on New Orleans before and after Katrina, but also on how hurricanes and beach erosion have affected communities and cities as diverse as Miami, New York, Atlantic City, and Galveston. A long-time natural scientist and dedicated environmentalist, Sargent argues strenuously that serious consideration must be paid to the natural protection provided by barrier islands, inlets, and free-flowing rivers as man-made features threaten to destroy these built-in environmental safeguards.

Just Seconds from the Ocean is a timely and necessary examination of current coastal communities and recent storms paired with historical insights into human reactions and responses to catastrophic flooding from hurricanes. Analysis of events from the nineteenth century to the present creates a continuum of knowledge and a chance to prepare for the future by examining the past. The science of global warming, sea level rise, and other natural occurrences are woven into this precautionary tale of environmental phenomenon and human resilience.

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