The Battle for North Carolina’s Coast
Evolutionary History, Present Crisis, and Vision for the Future

STANLEY R. RIGGS, DOROTHEA V. AMES, STEPHEN J. CULVER, AND DAVID J. MALLINSON

A must read for all North Carolinians and those who love its coast

The North Carolina barrier islands, a 325-mile-long string of narrow sand islands that forms the coast of North Carolina, are one of the most beloved areas to live and visit in the United States. However, extensive barrier island segments and their associated wetlands are in jeopardy. In The Battle for North Carolina’s Coast, four experts on coastal dynamics examine issues that threaten this state treasure.

According to the authors, the North Carolina barrier islands are not permanent. Rather, they are highly mobile piles of sand that are impacted by sea-level rise and major storms and hurricanes. Our present development and management policies for these changing islands are in direct conflict with their natural dynamics. Revealing the urgency of the environmental and economic problems facing coastal North Carolina, this essential book offers a hopeful vision for the coast’s future if we are willing to adapt to the barriers’ ongoing and natural processes. This will require a radical change in our thinking about development and new approaches to the way we visit and use the coast. Ultimately, we cannot afford to lose these unique and valuable islands of opportunity. This book is an urgent call to protect our coastal resources and preserve our coastal economy.

The authors are members of the geological sciences department at East Carolina University. STANLEY R. RIGGS is Distinguished Research Professor and Harriot College Distinguished Professor; DOROTHEA V. AMES is research instructor; STEPHEN J. CULVER is Harriot College Distinguished Professor and chair; and DAVID J. MALLINSON is associate professor.

April 2011
ISBN 978-0-8078-3486-2, $25.00t Cloth
160 pp., 6 x 8, 38 color and 3 b&w illus., 31 figs., notes, bibl., index

“... This fascinating and informative book provides the field evidence of past sea level rises for all to see. Through the book’s beautiful aerial photos the mysteries of how barrier islands and beaches work are revealed, and we are reminded that the coast is actively evolving as the sea level rise accelerates. The authors emphasize that the past is the key to the future and urge us to prepare for sea level rise now. We must listen to them.”

—Orrin H. Pilkey,
James B. Duke Professor Emeritus,
Nicholas School of the Environment,
Duke University

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