

Shifting Shorelines: Messages From a Wiser Self

The coast is a dynamic and ever-changing environment. The shoreline is constantly shifting, shaped by the forces of waves, tides, and currents. In recent decades, however, the rate of shoreline change has accelerated due to climate change. Rising sea levels and increasingly frequent and severe storms are eroding beaches, destroying dunes, and flooding coastal communities.

These changes are a wake-up call for coastal communities. We can no longer afford to ignore the impacts of climate change. We need to take action now to adapt to the changes that are happening and to build more resilient coastal communities.

One way to do this is to embrace the concept of shifting shorelines. This means recognizing that the shoreline is not a fixed line in the sand, but rather a dynamic boundary that is constantly changing. We need to plan for and manage our coastal communities with this in mind.



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by Terry Helwig

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This will require us to adopt a more long-term perspective. We need to think about the future of our coastal communities and the challenges that they will face in the years to come. We need to make decisions that will protect our communities from these challenges and that will ensure their long-term sustainability.

We also need to be more patient. The process of adapting to climate change will take time. We need to be patient and persistent in our efforts. We need to work together to find solutions that are both effective and sustainable.

Finally, we need to collaborate. No one organization or government can solve the challenges of climate change alone. We need to work together, across all levels of government and with the private sector and civil society. We need to share ideas and resources. We need to learn from each other.

By embracing long-term thinking, patience, and collaboration, we can create coastal communities that are more resilient to the challenges of the future. We can create communities that are sustainable, vibrant, and livable.

Here are some specific examples of how we can apply the concept of shifting shorelines to coastal management:

- **Plan for shoreline change.** When we plan for new development or redevelopment in coastal areas, we need to take into account the potential for shoreline change. We need to set back new development

from the shoreline and to design buildings and infrastructure to withstand flooding and erosion.

- **Restore and protect natural ecosystems.** Natural ecosystems, such as beaches, dunes, and wetlands, provide natural protection against coastal hazards. We need to restore and protect these ecosystems to help buffer our communities from the impacts of climate change.
- **Invest in infrastructure.** We need to invest in infrastructure that will help to protect our coastal communities from flooding and erosion. This includes seawalls, levees, and storm surge barriers.
- **Educate and engage the public.** It is important to educate the public about the challenges of climate change and the need to adapt. We need to engage the public in the planning process and to get their input on how we can best protect our coastal communities.

By taking these steps, we can create coastal communities that are more resilient to the challenges of climate change. We can create communities that are sustainable, vibrant, and livable.

The coast is a precious resource. It is home to some of the most beautiful and productive ecosystems on Earth. It is also home to millions of people. As the climate changes, the coast is facing unprecedented challenges. We need to take action now to adapt to these challenges and to build more resilient coastal communities.

The concept of shifting shorelines can help us to understand the changes that are happening to our coastal communities and to develop new strategies for adaptation and resilience. By embracing long-term thinking,

patience, and collaboration, we can create coastal communities that are more sustainable, vibrant, and livable.

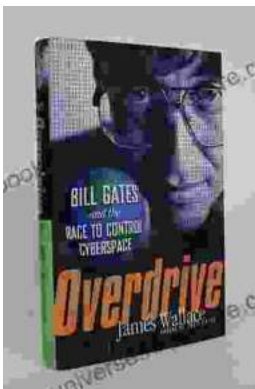


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