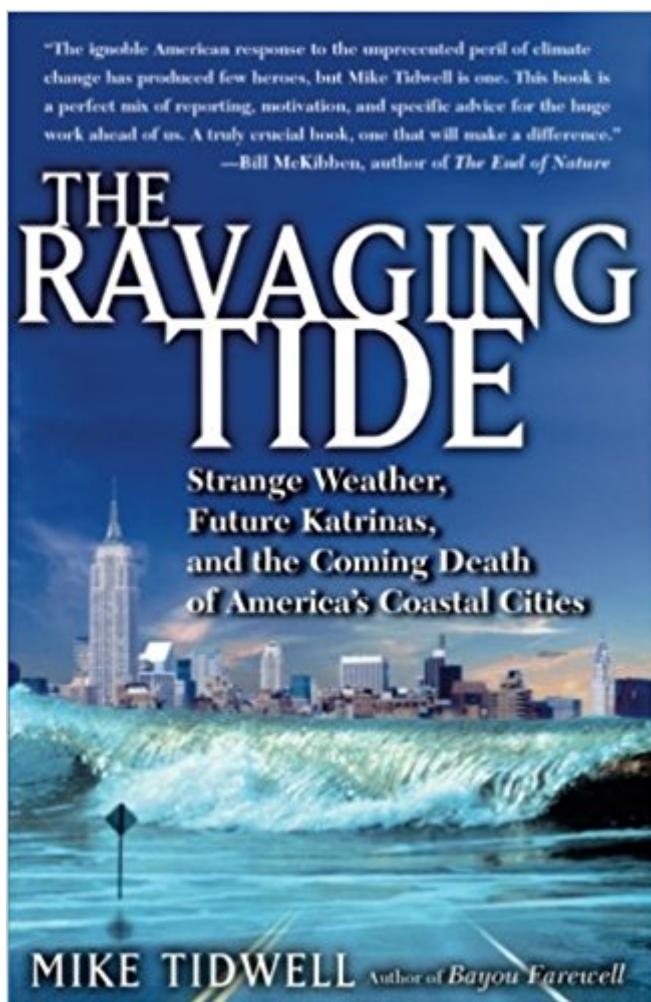


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# The Ravaging Tide: Strange Weather, Future Katrinas, And The Coming Death Of America's Coastal Cities



## **Synopsis**

The question on every American's mind: Can Katrina happen to me where I live? The answer, unfortunately, is yes, yes, and again yes. If you are one of the 150 million Americans who live within 100 miles of a coastline -- and even if you live much farther inland -- you could be inhabiting the next New Orleans. The bad news for you is that there are even more studies full of even more scientific data confirming this fact than the studies predicting Katrina prior to 2005. The issue this time is global warming. We are literally altering the sky above us. And be assured: This is not some "junk theory" peddled by Greenpeace extremists. No less an authority than the Bush Administration itself has officially confirmed, on multiple occasions, that global warming is real and is driven by our use of fossil fuels -- oil, coal, and natural gas. Worldwide, thanks to climate change, sea level is expected to rise up to three feet within the coming decades and extreme weather events will significantly increase, according to the Bush Administration. These two factors -- more intense storms and rising ocean levels -- mean we are rapidly turning every coastal city in America into another New Orleans.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Award-winning travel journalist Tidwell (who predicted a Katrina-like catastrophe in his 2004 book, *Bayou Farewell: The Rich Life and Tragic Death of Louisiana's Cajun Coast*) ramps up the rhetoric to a category 5 intensity in this assessment of how global warming is swelling the volume of water lapping against the world's coasts. Because of society's insistence on re-engineering natural waterways and shorelines, we are committing a form of "group suicide." And, Tidwell goes on,

President Bush, by refusing to fund a \$14-billion plan to bring back wetlands and barrier reefs to protect the Louisiana coast, is committing "federal mass murder." His central thesis is that two conditions threaten to inundate nations like Bangladesh and cities like Calcutta, London and New York: land-based glaciers are vanishing, their meltwater seeping into the seas at the equivalent of a Lake Erie every year; the slowly warming water temperatures causes sea levels to rise even more dramatically. Drastically slashing greenhouse gases is the only way to save the planet, writes Tidwell, who proves "his dire prognostications notwithstanding" to be an optimist, pointing to Japan's success in reforesting its islands as a model for other nations to emulate. (Aug. 16)

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"The ignoble American response to the unprecedented peril of climate change has produced few heroes, but Mike Tidwell is one. Here he shows why -- this book is a perfect mix of reporting, motivation, and specific advice for the huge work ahead of us. A truly crucial book, one that will make a difference!" -- Bill McKibben, author, *The End of Nature*"The Ravaging Tide makes brutally clear that Katrina was but a curtain-raiser, that big oil and big coal have taken our government hostage, and that America's historical legacy may well be as the chief exporter of climate chaos to the rest of the world. The time for action, Mike Tidwell insists, is now. And the most critical actor is you." -- Ross Gelbspan, author, *The Heat Is On* (1998) and *Boiling Point* (2004)

This is a highly emotional work. Mike Tidwell predicted the disasters of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita several years before they happened, and he is justifiably angry that his warnings were not heeded. In *The Ravaging Tide* Tidwell expands on his earlier work to explain why human activities such as building levees actually increased the destruction at New Orleans, and to warn that other coastal areas now face the same sort of threat. At times Tidwell waxes somewhat repetitive, making the same point over and over again, but this stems from the overwhelming frustration he feels over public and government inaction. He also relies heavily on secondary sources such as Jared Diamond's *Collapse* (to which he refers repeatedly) so that those of us who have read that work feel Tidwell's own work is little more than a condensed version of other books. Tidwell is strongest when he concentrates on explaining how so much of what we face from climate change can be alleviated or even avoided through common sense measures, such as using more energy efficient appliances or requiring energy using companies to upgrade to already existing and far more environment friendly technology. He is also at his most eloquent when condemning the fecklessness of the Bush

Administration on energy policy and climate change. Tidwell's work, like those of Jared Diamond, Tim Flannery, Eugene Linden, and Elizabeth Kolbert, should be read by everyone concerned for the future of our world.

I loved this book so much that I've read the first chapter aloud to three appreciative people on the phone, and I'm also planning to buy a copy for every Maryland state legislator. (Let me know if you do the same in your state.) Mike Tidwell writes beautifully. Even though I've seen *An Inconvenient Truth*, and heard Bill McKibben speak, I learned plenty from *The Ravaging Tide* that I hadn't already heard before. Tidwell shares history, science, policy, despair (when we don't act on clean energy policy), and promise (when we do). Yes, it may be odd, but I was walking (not driving!) down sidewalks while reading this book. I couldn't put it down, until the very last page. Mike Tidwell is a former journalist and travel writer for the *Washington Post* and the *National Geographic Traveler*.

No question about it: Mike Tidwell has an axe to grind. And after you read "*The Ravaging Tide*," you may have a few axes to grind as well. The book is partly about Hurricane Katrina, partly about global warming, and partly about what patriotic American citizens can do to fight global warming. The first three chapters explain why Hurricane Katrina was a man-made disaster. New Orleans suffered an indirect hit from a high Category 3 storm--Mississippi bore the brunt of the storm's onslaught. But because of man-made canals and the wholesale destruction of barrier islands and marshes south of the city, there was little natural barrier left to absorb the impact of the hurricane's storm surge. The more powerful Camille (a huge Category 5 hurricane) struck in nearly the same spot in 1969 but did not flood New Orleans--the difference in 37 years is not the power of the storm, but the ongoing subsidence of New Orleans and the destruction of the surrounding landscape. The tragedy is that scientists and public officials knew that this day would come and were unable to do anything to stop it. The government was not willing to spend the \$14 billion required to implement the 2050 plan, which would eventually restore the barrier islands and marshes in the Mississippi Delta. Instead, we'll spend hundreds of billions of dollars rebuilding New Orleans--and it won't be a bit safer than it was before Katrina hit. By being penny wise and pound foolish, we've insured that our government will be a big, wasteful spender for decades to come. So much for the polemic. The parable is that Katrina is a warning about what will happen throughout the United States and the world in the next few decades because of global warming. Scientists know what's coming and they have some good ideas of what to do about it, but few policy makers are willing to listen. That doesn't mean the problem doesn't exist: the insurance companies, who are not known for their sympathies with

environmentalists, can read the writing on the wall. That's why they are withdrawing from insurance markets along the Gulf Coast and other extremely vulnerable places like New York state. Tidwell's book isn't total doom and gloom, however. He spends the last several chapters of the book explaining how he changed his home and his life so that his family drastically reduced green house gas emissions. The result was a win-win arrangement for a lot of people and for the economy as well as for the environment. Tidwell hopes that his example will lead others to act before it is too late. Still, if Tidwell and others are right, there's not much time to turn things around before global warming really starts to have a devastating impact. There's a lot of hope at the grass-roots level and at the local level--Portland, Oregon, for example, has reduced its green house gas emissions by 12.5% since 1993, while the rest of the United States has increased emissions by 15.8%. Business is also rallying--wind energy, solar power, ethanol, biodiesel, geothermal, distributed energy, conservation and other business sectors are burgeoning and attracting large influxes of capital. But the complete lack of leadership at the national level (with the noteworthy exception of Al Gore) makes me hope that some of the best scientists in the world are completely wrong and that we have more time to change our ways than we think.

Tidwell's argument is simple: we created the damage Katrina caused, and we are going to create more destruction to coastal cities, by bulldozing, filling, removing the natural protections against storm surges. The book rips right along in making this argument--I would call it an "enjoyable" read except that he is so dead serious about the issue. As a part-time resident of Long Island, I have to hope he is wrong, and he certainly presents no counter-evidence (this is NOT a scientific book), but I fear he probably is right. The high tides out where I live have risen a good foot in the past forty years...

no problems - very good transaction

Great book! Well-written and witty, not dry at all! Most of the book talks about America's drowning coastal cities, how Hurricane Katrina will be the norm, and how it has been purely luck that NYC has yet to endure the same magnitude of destruction. Astounding facts! There is also a section at the end that doesn't really connect with the rest of the book, but gives tips on how to make your home more eco-friendly. The author has some really great ideas that he, himself, has employed and nearly his whole house is off the grid. I also recommend "Against the Tide" by Cornelia Dean, another excellent author and book written on the same general topic of coastal inundation and

erosion.

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