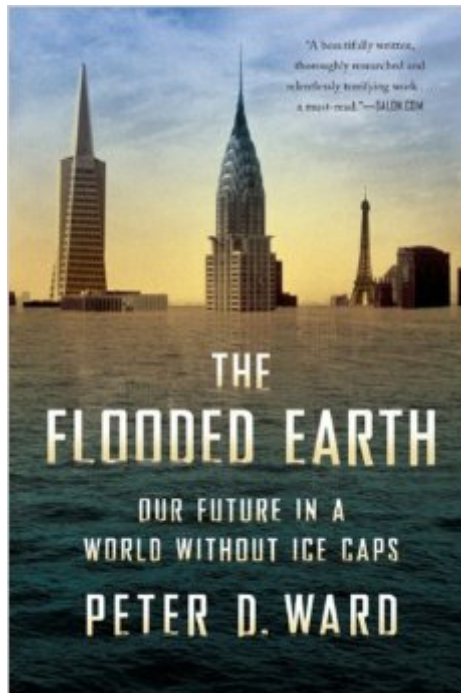


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The Flooded Earth: Our Future In A World Without Ice Caps



Synopsis

No matter what efforts we make to halt global warming, sea level rise will be an unavoidable part of our future. In *The Flooded Earth*, species extinction expert Peter D. Ward describes in intricate detail what our world will look like in 2050, 2100, 2300, and beyond. Even if we stopped all carbon dioxide emissions today, according to Ward, the seas will rise three feet by 2050 and nine feet by 2100. The effects of one meter of sea-level rise will be massive; three meters will be catastrophic. Incursions of salt into the water table will destroy most of our best agricultural land, and corrosion will devour the electrical and fiber-optic systems of coastal cities, as well as our roads and bridges. Amsterdam, Miami, Venice and other cities might have to be abandoned. As icebound regions melt, meanwhile, new sources of oil, gas, minerals, and arable land will be revealed; and geopolitical battles will erupt over who owns the rights to them. Laying out a blueprint for a foreseeable future, Ward explains what politicians and policy makers around the world should be doing now to head off the worst consequences of this cataclysmic and frighteningly inevitable transformation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

One of the more confusing aspects of the IPCC report was how far oceans will rise. The numbers in the report were not very worrisome, but many scientists said the seas could rise much further. Peter Ward tries to bring some clarity to the confusion. He says anything over 5 feet is beyond civilizations ability to deter and thus many places will be abandoned. Certain hot spots like Bangladesh, Holland,

San Francisco, Venice, New Orleans and southern Florida make appearances as Ward envisions what they could look like in the future. His book is not a prediction. He offers instead scenarios that are within the realm of possibility because *they have happened before*. The geological record is chock full of evidence of rapidly rising seas. This is not debateable, it's as clear as a dinosaur bone (although some people deny dinosaurs existed). How exactly our future unfolds no one knows, Ward doesn't know either, but he looks at parallels between the past and present atmosphere and it's not pretty. One thing we are certain of however, as CO2 levels rise, so do the oceans. 25% of CO2 released by humans stays in the atmosphere for over 50,000 years, longer than the half-life of radiation. It's a permanent gift to the future and how it impacts sea level rise is significant - actions today will impact the future for a very long time. Oceans are currently rising 2mm a year, this is well documented. About 10,000 years ago they were rising at 2 inches per year, or 16 feet a century - again, well documented and not debated. The earth is very capable of doing it again.

Last week, a chunk of ice four times as large as Manhattan Island broke off the tongue of the Petermann Glacier in Greenland and went swimming in the sea. For me, immersed in *The Flooded Earth: Our Future In a World Without Ice Caps*, it was striking evidence of what Peter D. Ward writes about: the loss of the polar icecaps and the melting of ice sheets and glaciers, caused by rising global temperatures. (At the same time, Russia was experiencing its worst drought and heat wave in recorded history, further evidence of the erratic weather created by warming.) Ward, a paleontologist who has studied the rise and retreat of ancient oceans and the mass extinctions related to ocean rise, knows what he's talking about, and his book is a full treatment (at least for the general reader) of the science behind his basic argument: that the oceans are rising and will continue to rise--unless humans reduce the emission of greenhouse gases. What I found most interesting about Ward's book (and perhaps most compelling, for many readers) are the dramatic fictionalizations of the impacts of greenhouse gases that appear at the beginning of each chapter. Chapter One opens in the drowning city of Miami, in 2120, with CO2 at 800 ppm--and Miami joining New Orleans and Galveston as abandoned cities. Chapter Three begins in Tunisia in 2060 CE, with carbon dioxide at 500 ppm--and features (I suspect) Ward himself, by this time an "old geologist" who studies evidence of mass extinctions. Food for the still-rising population is scarce, transportation fuel is not available for personal use, and the study of the past is a luxury that society can no longer afford.

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