

## Book review

### Beach Management: Principles and Practice

Allan Williams and Anton Micallef. Earthscan, London, UK 2009, ISBN 978-1-88407-435-8, £65.00, 445 pp.

The preface of this book sets out its scope and context, differentiating it from those publications that concentrate on managing beaches to provide an adequate buffer against the threats of erosion or flooding by the sea. Instead, this book concentrates on the socio-economic values of beaches, especially their recreational and aesthetic attributes.

The first two chapters provide a broad and loosely structured introduction to the remainder of the book. Their main emphasis is on the various definitions, and the fundamental concepts, of beach management. Typical issues influencing beach users, such as pollution including poor water quality, safety and the facilities available to visitors, are illustrated by examples from coastal resorts in the UK and overseas. These chapters also touch on the benefits of the appropriate management of beaches, not only in financial terms, for example by increasing revenues and reducing erosion and flooding risks, but also in less tangible ways, such as enhancing the natural environment and contributing to the health and well-being of the wider community.

Chapter 3 advises on forming both a management policy and a strategy framework within which management plans for individual beaches can be developed. To help make such plans, chapter 4 discusses and presents some management guidelines, providing examples for both beaches and bathing areas.

Throughout the book, the authors stress the importance of gathering the opinions of both visitors and the local community on the existing merits and failings of beaches as well as the possible improvements that could be

made. To support this approach, chapter 5 advises on the design and use of questionnaire surveys to elicit the views of beach users. The authors point out that a 'bottom up' management approach often needs to be locally funded and organised, while according with both international and national legislation and regional development and management plans.

Chapter 6 discusses the assessment of hazards faced by bathers and visitors to beaches, and how to reduce these, for example by use of effective signage. Chapters 7 to 9 outline alternative approaches to classifying beaches and bathing waters both as an aid to visitors and as a basis for their governance and improvement, providing examples of some of the rating and award schemes used in the UK and overseas.

The latter half of the book comprises a dozen case studies contributed by other authors, and these provide more detailed and usually site-specific examples of beach management around the world. These illustrate the broad range of problems, conflicts and management approaches that make this subject area so interesting, and serve to reinforce many of the analyses and suggestions made in earlier chapters.

This book is mainly written by professors and academic researchers and its style reflects this. However, it is discursive rather than didactic, often reflecting the strong opinions of the contributors rather than seeking to be an instruction manual based on a consensus view of 'best practice'. While civil engineers may be most attracted to the case studies describing specific beach improvement schemes, this book should widen their perspective of the needs and opportunities for different types of beach management around the world.

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