



From the Forest to the Sea: The Ecology of Wood in Streams, Rivers, Estuaries and Oceans (Sustainable Community Development)

By Chris Maser, James R. Sedell

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From the Forest to the Sea: The Ecology of Wood in Streams, Rivers, Estuaries and Oceans is a fascinating new scientific work that discusses the role wood plays in very complex and diverse aquatic ecosystems. Until now almost nothing has been published on this little understood topic.

1. Wood in streams and rivers is a source of food energy for invertebrate organisms; habitat for vertebrate organisms, such as fish; and a structural component that shapes, diversifies, and stabilizes channels while helping to dissipate the water's energy before it can scour channels.
2. Wood in estuaries is a major source of food and habitat for obligate, wood-boring, marine invertebrates that in their feeding, break it down and pass usable carbon into the water's current where it enters the detrital based marine food web.
3. Wood along the coastline stabilizes sand spits, beaches, and dune complexes, as well as battering rocky shores where it creates new habitats for intertidal organisms and provides small splinters of wood to the coastal food chain.
4. Driftwood floating in the open ocean attracts a variety of marine invertebrates and fishes, forming a floating surface community that help organisms colonize new areas. Large fishes, such as tuna, not only feed on smaller fishes attracted to the wood but also drift with it because its movement is controlled by wind and current; thus tuna find the best feeding areas-current interfaces rich in food species.
5. A common textbook perception on marine biology is that, while communities of bacteria can use sulfur compounds as energy and animals can and do live around deep-sea hydrothermal vents through which hot water issues in the ocean's floor, the rest of the oceans bottom is almost devoid of life. But as driftwood becomes waterlogged and sinks, it represents terrestrially-fixed carbon in the energy poor deep-sea where at least three species of wood-borers convert it into a readily available source of detritus that in turn supports the development of complex communities of bottom-dwelling organisms.

6. The loss of wood to aquatic ecosystems means destabilization of streams, estuaries, dunes and beaches as well as food chains in the oceans of the world. Sooner or later it may mean the loss of jobs and unique cultural ways of life such as the commercial fishing of certain species.

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- Rank: #2855974 in Books
- Published on: 1994-05-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: .88" h x 6.38" w x 9.35" l,
- Binding: Hardcover

- 200 pages



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Review

...the book makes a very significant contribution. (It) manages to highlight (aquatic environments) in a way that...impart(s) genuine understanding to the...reader. -- *Forestry*

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