



Published on *Marine Ecosystems and Management (MEAM)* (<https://meam.openchannels.org>)

From My Bookshelf: The Once and Future Ocean – Notes Toward a New Hydraulic Society

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Sometimes it takes a look from a different direction to develop a fuller view of something you thought you knew well. Peter Neill's new book *The Once and Future Ocean – Notes Toward a Hydraulic Society*, has the potential to create a mental shift in its readers. Part philosophical musings on the relationship between humans and the ocean and the way 'the sea connects all things' and part rational prescription for putting water use and ocean health front and center in policies and management, Neill's voice is a fresh new perspective on a set of problems that have been stewing for quite some time. For seasoned ocean professionals such as I, it is a jarring read – a wake up call that real change will only come from a new way of thinking about the water world.

It cannot be said that Peter Neill is an outsider or an entirely new voice. His voice is actually quite familiar thanks to his broadcasts on World Ocean Radio –some 400 editions reaching around the whole globe. But Neill's journey to the world of ocean awareness and marine policy is not the traditional trajectory – he cut his ocean teeth in the curatorial world, leading the South Street Seaport Museum in New York City. Frustrated with how messages were being delivered to the masses, and by what messages were left unheard, Neill left to establish the World Ocean Observatory (W2O), an organization advocating for the health and sustainability of the ocean through a broad array of communication channels.

Neill's particular journey means that he looks upon ocean issues with the eyes of someone who is neither an academic nor a conservationist nor a marine manager – but who encompasses all these perspectives and more. Much of the book is dedicated to important topics that are rarely if ever raised: the importance of empathy, the need to rethink what oceans mean to humanity, the suggestion that understanding the water cycle provides the foundation for a more holistic approach to addressing ocean issues. Neill questions the ideas and dogma behind the loudest voices in marine conservation and challenges us to think about our preconceived notions and put them aside. His book advocates for freeing our minds - creating the space for the truly creative ideas and disruptive solutions that can lead to the kind of change our ocean planet so urgently needs.

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