

Isle de Jean Charles: Slipping into the sea

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Water encroaches on houses on Isle de Jean Charles, a narrow ridge located in Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana. (Photo by Paul Morse)

Perched along the lip of Louisiana, an island off the coast of Terrebonne Parish has been home to members of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe of Native Americans for generations.

But now, Isle de Jean Charles is slipping into the sea, meaning a perilous future for those who call it home.

Albert Naquin, chief of the Isle de Jean Charles tribe, is a Vietnam veteran and retired oil field inspector for the federal government. He is well aware that his island's embattled ecology is part of a larger pattern of peril that extends far beyond

Louisiana.

He visited the United Nations on behalf of his tribe in 2010, and he's also traveled to Alaska to gain insights from coastal residents who dealt with the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill.

"We don't have time," Naquin told *National Geographic* last year. "The longer we wait, the more hurricane season we have to go through. We hate to let the island go, but we have to. It is like losing a family member. We know we are going to lose it. We just don't know when."

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