



Laboratory for Coastal Research  
& National Healthy Beaches Campaign  
Florida International University, Miami, FL  
Contact: Ava Reich, Communications  
[Ava.Reich@fiu.edu](mailto:Ava.Reich@fiu.edu) 305-348-6304  
Website: [www.NHBC.fiu.edu](http://www.NHBC.fiu.edu)

## “Dr. Beach” Names

### Fort De Soto Park's North Beach America's Best

#### 2005's Top Beach Offers So Much That Matters

MIAMI, FL - If a beach were equated to a favorite person, Dr. Beach's top pick for 2005 would be the much admired girl next door. Beautiful but unpretentious, substantial and full of fun, and part of a nurturing family that keeps her healthy and helps her be all she's meant to be.

**Fort De Soto Park's North Beach, southwestern neighbor of St. Petersburg, Florida**, is just such a place. It heads the Top 10 Beaches list for 2005.

On an island a short drive across Tampa Bay off the Florida coast, "North Beach at Fort De Soto Park is a natural jewel on the finger of a sun-drenched city," says Dr. Stephen Leatherman, known best as "Dr. Beach." "It's a long, wide, sugar sand beach with great shelling and thriving natural dunes, on the Gulf of Mexico. There's a 105-year-old fort that's a landmark of Florida history. Along with being a wonderful place to swim, there's fishing, boating, canoeing, kayaking, bird-watching, camping, biking, walking trails, and even a dog park for enjoying the outdoors with your four-legged pals", he adds with a wide grin. The beach also offers modern facilities and plenty of parking, key ingredients for top swimming beaches.

Just as important as these natural assets, is that Pinellas County officials and park administrators do an extraordinary job of caring for their place. Planned management, and intelligent projects and activities at the park are displayed at [www.pinellascounty.org/park](http://www.pinellascounty.org/park). "A huge part of good beach management is about involving the public and offering a meaningful connection with the environment", says Leatherman. "Each of the Top 10 Beaches is a stellar example of what we all look for in a rejuvenating place by the sea."

As "Dr. Beach" ([www.DrBeach.org](http://www.DrBeach.org)), Leatherman has selected an annual Top 10 Beaches since 1991. Each list comprises the best swimming beaches in the country, chosen with 50-criteria to evaluate scientific and ecologic factors, facilities and management.

What makes Leatherman's selections unique is his knowledge as a coastal scientist with 30 years of international experience studying storm impacts, erosion and ways to improve beach health. He is **Florida International University's** director of the **International Hurricane Research Center** and the **Laboratory for Coastal Research**. The center is also home to the **National Healthy Beaches Campaign**, [www.NHBC.fiu.edu](http://www.NHBC.fiu.edu), founded by Leatherman. The NHBC website offers an additional list of beautiful and "healthy" beaches around the country with seaside and lakeshore destinations for any taste in almost any coastal region. Website visitors can nominate their favorite beaches to the group.

#### TOP 10 BEACHES 2005

1. **Fort De Soto Park - North Beach**, St Petersburg, Florida
2. **Ocracoke Island**, Outer Banks, North Carolina
3. **Hanalei Bay**, Kauai, Hawaii
4. **Caladesi Island State Park**, Clearwater, Florida
5. **Fleming Beach**, Maui, Hawaii
6. **Coast Guard Beach**, Cape Cod, Massachusetts
7. **Coronado Beach**, San Diego, California
8. **Cape Florida State Park**, Key Biscayne, Florida
9. **Main Beach**, East Hampton, New York
10. **Hamoa Beach**, Maui, Hawaii