

and a progressive tale of environmental enlightenment. But what emerges is a much more nuanced and novel account of how ecosystem management was influenced by contingencies ranging from the requirements of NEPA and the ESA to the varied agendas of scientists, activists, and presidential administrations. Using the development of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, the Northwest Forest Plan, and the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project as case studies, Skillen illustrates how the ecosystem concept accommodated two very different inflections—what he calls “substantive” versus “procedural” ecosystem management. The former, shaped by the mandates of the ESA, forced agencies to protect imperiled nature. The latter, guided by the mandates of NEPA, required agencies to consult with many, often mutually antagonistic interests. On the whole, this is a persuasive and useful way to parse late twentieth-century environmental regulation, but there are missteps. One is a tendency to understate the extent to which governments had a vested interest in the production model, not just to facilitate industry but to generate revenues for their own coffers. The other is an assessment calculus that marginalizes social disruptions. Skillen is not blind to the costs to communities, but the relative success or “failure” of each case study ultimately seems to hinge more on what happened to nature than to humans (p. 260). The unexamined intersection of those two considerations is where anger still erupts in western debates over federal land management. Skillen’s book is a smart and insightful study of environmental management in the late twentieth century, but its gaps reflect the cultural disconnect that haunts this subject in the American West.

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A Land Made from Water: Appropriation and the Evolution of Colorado’s Landscape, Ditches, and Water Institutions. By Robert R. Crifasi. (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2015. xv + 424 pp. Illustrations, maps, charts, table, notes, bibliography, index. \$50.00, £36.00.)

Donald Worster remarked in his 2013 Western History Association presidential address that the twenty-first century American West is suffering from a “heightened sense of vulnerability.” This region, “once almost immune to a tragic sensibility, now feels its vulnerability and fears what may come.” Certainly, water is key to these worries. Questions about ownership, economic value, and scarcity persist throughout the modern West. Historians such as James Earl Sherow (*Watering the Valley* [1990]), Mark Fiege (*Irrigated Eden* [1999]), and Karl Boyd Brooks (*Public Power, Private Dams* [2006]) provide the scholarly grounding for this hydrologic past through their studies of farmers, ranchers, engineers, and policymakers, as water changed landscapes and complicated laws, often in unpredictable ways.

Robert R. Crifasi builds on their work by showing how water made Colorado’s Front Range, Boulder and Left Hand Creek Valleys reflect a water-governed land that shaped “all aspects of life and the environment” (p. xii). But making sense of Colorado’s hydrology means viewing human and ecological change as “inextricably entwined and intermingled” (p. xii). As a former water resources administrator for the City of Boulder’s Open Space and Mountain Parks Department, as well as the president of several ditches, Crifasi has stood knee-deep in these interconnections as he cleaned ditches and managed their companies.

A Land Made from Water largely surveys the Front Range’s waterways to understand

larger regional transformations related to industrial agriculture, corporate interests, and natural resource management. In subsequent chapters, Crifasi explores how the control of water led to environmental disasters, gave economic advantages to some while exploiting others, encouraged additional technological advancements, and incentivized shady politics.

Crifasi excels in his case for Colorado's waterscape—that new discoveries are derived through blurring historical lines between natural resources, technologies, policies, and peoples in the American West. His enthusiasm to try and explore *all* of these linkages, however, obscures more than elucidates. *A Land Made from Water* constantly oscillates between broad histories of corporate control and water law (a huge undertaking alone), mini-histories about weeds colonizing the fertile space around ditch headgates, and personal experiences as a ditch manager. Certain chapters, such as “Making the Great American Desert” and “Left Hand Ditch and the Emergence of Colorado's Prior Appropriation Doctrine” offer rich studies on the U.S. Corps of Topographical Engineers and the implications of local water law, but others, such as “Taking Colorado,” which discusses colonization and Native American dispossession but says very little about water's role, seem completely out of place.

A Land Made from Water is an important case study of how Colorado's Front Range moved from desert to irrigated metropolis. Perhaps most crucial is Crifasi's conclusion that this region's complicated, contested, and unpredictable watered past serves as a guide for our vulnerable present.

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Strangers on Familiar Soil: Rediscovering the Chile-California Connection. Yale Agrarian Studies Series. By Edward Dallam Melillo. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. xix + 325 pp. Illustrations, maps, chart, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.00.)

Turning his gaze on a relatively understudied corner of the Pacific World—the relationship between Chile and California—Edward Dallam Melillo expresses his intention to “avoid producing ‘contributionist’ history” (p. 11). Yet, reflecting on the work, it is impossible to avoid thinking of the word *contribution*. Pacific histories have examined the transoceanic movement of people, biota, and ideas between Northeast Asia and the western coast of North America, Australia, and Oceania, and Melillo's book forges an important link in the circum-Pacific chain. He shows how two geographically distant places were bound together by ecological and cultural exchange. The book is reminiscent of Ian Tyrrell's environmental history of U.S.-Australia relations, *True Gardens of the Gods* (1999), but, as Melillo points out, with considerably more working-class people.

Strangers on Familiar Soil is divided into two roughly equal parts. The first focuses on how Chilean migrant workers, technologies, and commodities shaped California during the gold rush and the industrial agricultural boom. Eight thousand Chilean miners and sex workers were among the sea of humanity that swept ashore in the gold rush era. With them came Chilean boats that—once scuttled—built San Francisco's infrastructure, Chilean wheat that fed California's workers, and Chilean technologies that pulled gold from riverbeds. Melillo confronts the typical challenges working with primary sources that privilege the voices of elite migrants or describe Chileans, Mexicans, and Peruvians as an undifferentiated group. The sources do not