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Daniel McCool, *River Republic: The Fall and Rise of America's Rivers*

informative tool, *Buckled* succeeds. Anyone who is not an expert in Colorado water law will learn something from this book.

Chris Stevens

Daniel McCool, *River Republic: The Fall and Rise of America's Rivers*, Columbia University Press, New York (2012); 304 PP; \$34.50; ISBN 978-0231161305; hardcover.

Daniel McCool is the Director of the Environmental and Sustainability Program at the University of Utah. His previous works include *Native Waters: Contemporary Indian Water Settlements and the Second Treaty Era*, and *Command of the Waters: Iron Triangles, Federal Water Development, and Indian Water*. *River Republic* focuses on the history, transformation, and destruction, of the rivers of the United States. The book is divided into three parts. Part One, "The Fall," sets the historical context of the book. Part Two, "Dismemberment," explains what people have done and are still doing to the rivers of the United States. And Part Three, "Resurrection," focuses on less harmful ways to use our nation's rivers and how to implement these methods going forward.

PART ONE: THE FALL

River Republic begins with the stories of the Matlija and Glen Canyon Dams. These dams, the stories of their construction, and Matlija's removal serve as a cautionary tale of what will happen to America's rivers if the U.S. allows what McCool calls "water hubris" to cloud its judgment. According to McCool, "water hubris" is the combined false beliefs that: (i) water development can occur without costs or tradeoffs, (ii) humans are inherently superior to nature, and (iii) society has a moral right to conquer rivers. McCool concludes, however, that a new water ethic, a "River Republic," is slowly replacing "water hubris." This new ethic involves treating rivers as common property—cared for and maintained by all for future generations.

In Chapter Two, McCool details the history of the U.S Army Corps of Engineers ("Corps") and explains the Corps' role in managing our Nation's rivers. McCool states that the Corps, like the nation as a whole, is a work in progress. This chapter focuses for the most part on the early failures of the Corps, such as the environmentally disastrous Kissimmee River channelization in Florida. Instead of being wholly critical, however, McCool details how the Corps is correcting past mistakes through restoration processes and applauds the cutting-edge engineering that makes such projects possible. Essentially, McCool argues that the Corps is learning and evolving from its philosophy of conquering rivers to a more modern, balanced approach.

In Chapter Three, McCool focuses on the period of American history in which the Bureau of Reclamation launched massive plans for the expansion and development of America's rivers. The chapter focuses on countless, often ill-conceived, dam projects throughout the U.S., highlighting the key supporters and opponents of each. McCool focuses on "agents of change" like Jimmy Carter, who McCool believes changed the way the Bureau of Reclamation

functions as well as changed general perceptions of water and its role in our everyday lives. Toward the end of the chapter, McCool makes his main point: the democratization of rivers into a River Republic benefits everyone and better balances extractive and sustainable water uses.

PART II: DISMEMBERMENT

Chapter Four examines corporate farming and the subsidies corporate farms receive from the federal government. McCool states the problem with these subsidies is that they often fund farming in desert climates. McCool argues that growing overproduced crops that consume great amounts of water in arid regions does not make sense and depletes resources that are not naturally found there. McCool insists, however, that he is not against agriculture (as anyone who eats cannot be) but there needs to be a better way to consider the costs and benefits of growing certain crops in certain areas of the country.

Chapter Five discusses in length the so-called "cash register dams"—dams with the exclusive purpose of generating electricity for commercial sale. Like anything else, there are mixed costs and benefits in hydroenergy. As a result, McCool notes, disputes over dams are constant in the United States. Disputes over destruction of fish habitat also naturally accompany controversies over dams, especially within the State of Washington. Essentially, the chapter argues that hydropower makes sense in most places, but in others, different values trump hydropower interests.

In Chapter Six, McCool details the history of navigating rivers from the first steamboats in the 1820s to barges of the present day. McCool gives a detailed description of his trip aboard the riverboat *Harriet Bishop*, which travels the Ohio and upper Mississippi Rivers. Aboard, McCool obtained firsthand experience with the economy of the two rivers and the positives and negatives of the lock-and-dam system. In the end, McCool realizes that America's waterways will always have a role in transportation and economics, but the vitality of our rivers is also of prime importance.

Chapter Seven puts forth a critique of America's obsession with building within flood plains. Here, McCool details how the levee and lock-and-dam systems eliminated the flow of sediment downstream, which in turn resulted in land loss when Hurricanes Rita and Katrina struck. McCool points out that floods are natural occurrences that cannot be controlled. Building levees does not mitigate the flooding; levees simply redirect the flood somewhere else. McCool argues that levees simply lure people into vulnerable areas with a false sense of safety and thereby increase flood damage rather than mitigate it.

Chapter Eight focuses on pollution and what needs to be done to mitigate and reverse it. The chapter highlights three cities—Atlanta, Washington, D.C., and Seattle—and their respective efforts to clean up local watercourses. McCool believes that a holistic approach is the correct way to solve the problem of widespread water pollution. Essentially, he argues that the quality of water is linked to all the other uses of water. Whether those uses include dredging channels for barges, construction of levees, or building dams; those actions will affect the water's quality as a whole there and in other areas. Therefore, meeting the lofty goals of the Clean Water Act requires a reexami-

nation of all aspects of water policy and action like that taking place in Atlanta, Washington D.C., and Seattle.

PART III: RESURRECTION

In Chapter Nine, McCool details urban river-restoration projects in Richmond, Virginia, Boston, and Los Angeles. In each of these cities, small grass-roots efforts have successful projects, creating sanctuaries for nature in some of the most urban areas of the country. At the close of the chapter, McCool expresses his sincere hope that these types of projects become widespread in order to provide open, quiet space in the midst of crowded urban centers.

Chapter Ten focuses on rivers as a habitat. Here, McCool advocates for a comprehensive study to determine how much money, how much water, and how many miles of river should be devoted to fish and wildlife as opposed to economic or transportation needs. Hotly contested debates over the uses of rivers and the conservation of wildlife will remain, but McCool firmly believes that with smart management, there is enough water in rivers for both humans and nonhumans alike.

In Chapter Eleven, McCool discusses America's fascination with rivers in noneconomic or conservationist terms. Americans, almost unanimously, love to recreate on, near, or among the flora and fauna that are made possible by rivers. McCool states that rivers, along with our other natural wonders, are of incalculable value and will hopefully last forever. But that future is only possible if we, as a nation, take care of our rivers and ensure their survival.

In the final chapter, McCool describes his view of a new water future: the River Republic. He believes that we must democratize water policy and give everyone a voice; from, as McCool describes them, "Joe Six-Pack" to "Charlene Chablis." McCool argues that we need to treat rivers as the natural, interconnected systems that they are, not as separate parts. He also argues for a grass-roots approach—an army of instigators who ideally, according to McCool, are not entrenched in politics, but are committed to a nonpartisan brighter future. In the end, McCool exclaims that when rivers die, we die, and when they flourish, we do the same. In sum, we must become partners with rivers, not exploiters of them.

CONCLUSION

River Republic, despite its tremendous scope, is a relatively easy and enjoyable read for anyone interested in water, water law, and the history of the two. There is something for everyone within its three hundred plus pages; from excerpts from William Cullen Bryant's poem "Green River" that serve as the epigraph for each chapter, to constant references to and quotes from literary figures like T.S. Eliot and Mark Twain. Additionally, Tim Palmer, an award-winning author of twenty-two books in this field, provided great praise for *River Republic* stating: "[t]his well-crafted page-turner is history and journalism at their best. The book tells with passion, precision, and clarity what has happened to a vital force of nature and offers a vision we can embrace and work toward with enthusiasm. Daniel McCool has given all who want to un-

derstand rivers a rare and precious gift." McCool's book provides a breadth of information and witty dialogue that will keep both experts and novices entertained and interested. Overall, *River Republic* provides a comprehensive overview of America's rivers and is a book of hope—hope for brighter days for our rivers and ourselves.

Chris Stork