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## Peter McBride & Jonathan Waterman, The Colorado River: Flowing Through Conflict

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**Peter McBride & Jonathan Waterman, The Colorado River: Flowing Through Conflict**

Water agreed to implement a new water conservation program, to mitigate the environmental impacts of the project, and to perform a system-wide environmental impact statement upon initiation of any major future project.

In 1990, Denver Water and a coalition of suburban water agencies faced further conflict and eventual defeat when EPA denied approval of its proposed Two Forks Dam. This defeat presaged a new era for Denver Water; the old approach of aggressive water acquisition at any cost gave way to a new approach of collaborative and conservation-based management. In Chapter Seven: Chipping Away at Tradition, Limerick examines how Chips Barry, Denver Water's manager from 1991 to 2010, oversaw this remarkable institutional change. Limerick notes Denver Water's new management policies belied the old entrenched notion of intractable bureaucracies. Instead, Denver Water faced environmental realities such as climate change and drought by expeditiously instituting water conservation campaigns and techniques to manage demand.

Expanding upon Denver Water's ability to adapt despite low public expectations, Limerick concludes the book by highlighting additional mistaken assumptions and comparing them with proposed better assumptions. Through changes in leadership, environmental conditions, public controversy, and economic challenges, Denver Water has held true to its mission to provide an adequate supply of water to the people of Denver. Limerick tells Denver Water's story from its inception to its current incarnation in a detailed and highly engaging manner. *A Ditch in Time* provides an in-depth and accessible history of Denver Water and its key role in Western water development and the transformation of Colorado's Front Range.

*Sarah J. McGrath*

**Peter McBride & Jonathan Waterman, *The Colorado River: Flowing Through Conflict*, Westcliffe Publishers, Colorado (2012); 160 pp; \$27.95; ISBN 978-1-56579-646-1; soft cover.**

A photographer and author teamed up to capture their geographical, environmental, and historical journey along the Colorado River in the photo-essay book, *The Colorado River: Flowing Through Conflict*. Peter McBride, a photographer from Colorado, visually documented his aerial expedition along 1,450 miles of the Colorado River, from its headwaters all the way to its delta. Jonathan Waterman's accompanying text, informed by his experiences as a wilderness guide, recounts his personal travels paddling the Colorado River and also details the River's history. The authors' intention was to capture the environmental issues facing the River in a photographic record, showing both the beautiful and sometimes-erie nature of the Colorado River Basin. The aerial perspective, McBride explained, "shows where we as humans have been, how we connect to the earth, and how nature relates to itself."

McBride begins by recounting his childhood memories growing up on a Snowmass, Colorado farm near the headwaters of the Colorado River. The introduction to the book, aptly entitled "The River," provides a statistical overview of Colorado River, highlighting the more than one hundred dams ob-

structing the River's natural flow. The Colorado River Basin drains 243,000 square miles of land, spanning seven states and two countries. The River supports thirty species of native fish as well as fourteen coal and natural gas-fired power plants, which demonstrates the range of reliance on the continuous flow of water.

The authors organized the book into three parts, corresponding to various sections of the River as it travels from the Rocky Mountains toward the Sea of Cortez.

In Part I: *The Mountains*, the authors describe the beginning of their journey near the Continental Divide in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. This section geographically documents the River through the Upper Basin. The Colorado River first flows south through Rocky Mountain National Park, then west into Utah, where it winds its way through Cataract Canyon and Canyonlands National Park, eventually spilling into Lake Powell. Part I highlights threats to the Upper Basin ecosystem, including impacts of the invasive species tamarisk and pine beetle on native habitats. Another potential environmental threat is the large number of uranium claims located along the Colorado River. Part I also depicts the River's many benefits to humans. Recreation activities in particular sustain the region's tourism-based economy, including rafting, floating, fishing, and wildlife watching.

Part II: *Big Reservoirs* Grand Canyon depicts the Colorado as it flows southwest from Lake Powell toward Lees Ferry. The Colorado River Compact made Lees Ferry, a historic river crossing in northern Arizona, the arbitrary divide between the Upper and Lower Colorado River Basins. From Lake Powell, the Colorado River winds its way through the Grand Canyon to Lake Mead—the vast reservoir supported by the Hoover Dam, which stores water for downstream consumers in Arizona, Nevada, California, and Mexico. The authors mention that, while the creation of Grand Canyon National Park in 1919 resulted in formal protection of the landscape, wildlife species native to the Colorado River continue to face threats to their survival. For example, the deep water held behind the dams of the Lower Basin is colder and clearer, which nonnative fish species, such as trout, prefer; whereas the humpback chub, a native fish species, is adapted to the shallow, muddy, and warm waters typical of the pre-dammed Colorado River.

Part III: *To the Delta* documents the final leg of the authors' journey on the Colorado River toward the sea. This part maps the River's flow below the Hoover Dam, through the Black Canyon in California, south to Baja California, Mexico. Myriad water diversions, however, have caused the Colorado River to run dry in the Sonoran Desert approximately fifty miles north of the Sea of Cortez. The River Delta itself is ninety-five percent diminished. Agricultural irrigators in the region have diverted much of the river into canals, such as Coachella and All-American. Much of the irrigation runoff in southern California flows into the Salton Sea, which is an important oasis in the desert, visited by over four hundred bird species. The Salton Sea's water level, however, is decreasing six inches each year as more of the Colorado River's water flows to major cities, resulting in increased salinity levels that threaten the resident fish and the birds that prey upon the fish. Part III summarizes these and the other

downriver ecological impacts of damming and diverting the River for human uses in southern California and northern Mexico.

McBride and Waterman depict their personal expedition along most of the Colorado River through colorful photographs and detailed maps that invoke in the reader both feelings of appreciation and concern for the Colorado River. Waterman's text skillfully integrates summaries of the natural history and geography of the Colorado River Basin with meaningful quotes. His passages describe anthropogenic impacts to the surrounding ecosystems throughout modern history. McBride captures the River from both the ground and aerial perspectives, providing the reader with beautiful natural images rarely seen. The use of historical photos for comparison with current conditions visually demonstrates the environmental impacts of damming the River on the local landscape. This photo-essay book is much more than a collection of pictures and would complement any collection for a water enthusiast or one who simply enjoys the natural beauty of the Colorado River.

*Ashley Jackson*

**David Schorr, *The Colorado Doctrine: Water Rights, Corporations, and Distributive Justice on the American Frontier*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London (2012); 235 pp; \$65.00; ISBN 978-0-300-13447-6; hardcover.**

"The country was without law, but each individual brought with him the principles of equity and justice, which were a part of his education."—*Armstrong v. Larimer County Ditch Co.*, 27 P.235, 237 (Colo. App. 1891) (discussing the adoption of the rule of prior appropriation and distributive justice in the arid West).

In *The Colorado Doctrine*, author David Schorr details the historical development of Western water law, and its development in Colorado in particular. Schorr, a senior lecturer and Chair of the Law and Environment Program at Tel Aviv University, centers his discussion on the historical progress of the prior appropriation doctrine. The prior appropriation doctrine is a system of private property rights in water that differs from the traditional riparian doctrine of the Eastern US, which affords water rights only to landowners appurtenant to water sources. Schorr characterizes the development of the appropriation doctrine as part of a radical attack on corporate power and monopoly in the arid West. Schorr explains Colorado's early miners, irrigators, lawmakers, and judges forged a water-rights-as-property system based on a desire to spread property and its benefits as widely as possible among independent citizens, in place of more speculative water rights based on land ownership.

In Chapter One, Schorr introduces the seminal 1882 Colorado Supreme Court decision, *Coffin v. Left Hand Ditch Co.* In *Coffin*, the Court firmly rejected the common law riparian doctrine as applied to Western water rights and deemed riparian doctrine inapplicable to Colorado. *Coffin* rejected a water rights system tied to land ownership and instead laid out a system of "pure appropriation," under which a user may obtain a water right by diverting water