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## Sherry L. Smith, ed., *The Future of the Southern Plains*

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science, the process, and the law. *Instream Flows* is an important contribution to ongoing efforts to ensure that America's water resources are serving today's needs.

**SHERRY L. SMITH, ED., THE FUTURE OF THE SOUTHERN PLAINS**, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Ok. (2003); 275 pp; \$29.95; ISBN 0-8061-3553-0, hardcover.

This book contains collection of eight essays about the past, the present, and the future of the Southern Plains. The authors each wrote sections to collaborate with the others, never overlapping but always complementing each other's work. The topics include: the history of the people in the Plains, the development and evolution of family farms, the history of droughts and their implications on the Plains, an overview of the Ogallala Aquifer and a comparison of how water districts deal with the limited water supply, the role of the petroleum industry in the Plains, the political history and future of the people in the Plains, the history of Hispanic people in the area, and conservation plans and parks. Larry McMurtry, author of *Lonesome Dove* and resident of the Southern Plains, called the collection "informative, provocative, and stimulating."

Each essay incorporates the same themes that make up the character and essence of the geographic area that primarily includes western Texas, Oklahoma, and eastern New Mexico. The book starts with an essay about the human history of the Southern Plains, including everything from early American Indians, to their eradication and the eradication of the buffalo, to present-day tourism. The book concludes with an essay summarizing the results of human action and several suggestions for the restoration of the wild, animal-filled, expansive grasslands that used to make up the area. In between, the essays cover specific aspects of the Southern Plains. Each essay paints a vivid picture of both prosperous and desperate times with the bleak resignation of the fact that people migrating away from the area. This movement results from a combination of natural and manmade factors including weather, climate change, drought, depletion of resources and natural ecology, fewer jobs, and the demise of the family farm.

The first essay, *Trails and Footprints*, by Elliott West, compares the oldest known human history of the Plains with the present day. The author describes the importance of the area for early Americans because of the trade of flint, bison, people, crops, and horses and the impact of European settlers on these practices. American Indian tribes who hunted in the area, and those who farmed elsewhere, engaged in a huge bison and crop trade. The author goes into detail about the arrival of Coronado and the Spanish, giving a description of the native people and their practices from the Spanish point of view. In addition

to these descriptions, the Spanish forever put their mark on the area by introducing horses, which changed the way tribes interacted with each other and with newcomers.

The essay also describes the decimation of the once seemingly endless bison herds in concert with the displacement and near-eradication of the American Indian tribes. Even with small numbers of these Plains icons, trade in the area continued with the invention of the railroad and automobiles. However, as people constructed roads into and out of the area, the incentives to stay in the Southern Plains have gone the way of the buffalo. The author describes towns that once boomed with the discovery of oil only to become remnants of their former selves, with more ghosts and stories than actual residents. These places use their history to draw people into the Plains, advertising themselves with small town festivals and chili contests in an effort to draw tourists looking for something different.

The second essay, *When Corporations Rule the Llano Estacado*, by John Miller Morris, gives an in-depth history of the family farm in the Southern Plains, also known as the Llano Estacado, or Staked Plains. The history of farming in the Llano Estacado includes major ranching enterprises, the expansion of the railroad, the sale of land for little, if any profit, and the constant struggle with Mother Nature. Using his own family's farm as an example, the author describes how some farms survived while most did not, making room for corporations to move in and redefine the concept of farming. Drought and inconsistent crop production pushed family farmers to a corporate style of business, with more emphasis on larger, more intensive land use, and less on the environmental impacts and conservation practices.

The author explains the struggle between the small family farm and the ever-increasing corporate presence as the "little men" against the "big men," but also describes the optimistic view that the corporations never actually ruled the area despite their perceived domination. The area experienced different movements in response to the social and environmental climate including conservation, colonization, and creative movements that colored the Southern Plains for the rest of the world to see. Conservation plans became important in times of drought when water was scarce and crop yields were low. Painters, photographers, writers, and musicians romanticized the area, giving it a certain appeal that waned in the aftermath of constant dry seasons and economic failure. The author describes the farmers of today and the obstacles they face, with a call for a renewed conservation movement to ensure the survival of the family farm tradition.

The third essay, *Droughts of the Past, Implications for the Future?*, by Connie Woodhouse, gives a history of drought in North America and particularly the Southern Plains. The author focuses mainly on droughts of the twentieth century, when they occurred, how severe, and how long they lasted. She explains different methods of tracking

droughts including tree rings, layers of sand dunes, historical documents, and archaeological artifacts. The sand dunes represent climatic events as far as twelve thousand years ago, and the author compares the long-term history of droughts with those from the last millennium, the last four hundred years, and the last century. The last century's droughts are consistent with past droughts, but they have generally been less severe than those that occurred in the last century. The author concludes that drought is a way of life on the Plains and that it will continue as a prominent feature of the climate in the area.

The fourth essay, *A Tale of Two Water Management Districts*, by John Opie, begins with an overview of the Ogallala Aquifer and the human impact on the that Aquifer. The author explains the history of the Southern Plains farmers' dependence on the water once considered limitless. People quickly realized that the aquifer had a limited supply and that the end was a lot closer than comfortable. The aquifer also faces threats in the form of water pollution from industrial hog confinement operations that have become more prevalent in the area. The waste management practices include disposal in lagoons and neighboring fields, resulting in irreversible pollution of the aquifer.

The author describes two groundwater conservation districts, one in Texas and one in Kansas, that both depend on the Ogallala Aquifer for their water supply. The Texas conservation district, originated in 1949, encountered fierce resistance from farmers who did not want to give up their personal rights to groundwater. The conservation plan made participation voluntary and, as a result, changes in pumping practices have been slow coming. A 1997 report set a long term planning goal of fifty years, focusing on the conservation of groundwater for harder times to come. In contrast, the Kansas conservation district focuses more on conserving for the present. The author compares Texas's long-term plans with Kansas's immediate implementation of water banking and describes Kansas's plan as putting the protection of the aquifer above economic, social, and political goals. The author then explains how the government kept Southern Plains agriculture alive and addresses the question of whether humans should have settled the Plains at all.

The fifth essay, *Exploitationists and Depletionists*, by Diana Davids Olien, addresses the importance of the oil and gas industry in the Southern Plains, especially in the Permian Basin. The author describes the history of the industry, and how major oil company mergers have affected the area. Mergers resulted in corporate restructuring and many of the major companies moved out of the Permian Basin in favor of offshore and international drilling opportunities. This left room for independent oil companies to move in and exploit the abandoned wells. Takeover of well operations by independent companies created a problem because the independents lacked the money to replace the jobs the majors eliminated during their exodus. Nor did the inde-

pendents have the money for new research or technology, which will cause their own exits. The author compares the oil industry to the overall situation of the Southern Plains—fewer jobs and less money contribute to the movement out of the Plains.

The sixth essay, *Identity and Conservative Politics on the Southern Plains*, by Jeff Roche, explores the political history of people living in the Plains. The author describes the importance of individualism, the pride of being a pioneer on the frontier, and how these ideals formed the basis of their political affiliation. The Great Depression and the subsequent Dust Bowl in the 1930s reinforced a sense of community in the minds of the people as they fought the New Deal and anything else from the federal government. Conservatives in the Southern Plains focused on fighting Communism and reducing the centralization of government.

As minorities in predominantly white towns started the fight for equality, southern politics focused more on race. The ideals of the Republican Party, with which the southern Conservatives aligned themselves, shifted towards white supremacy. The author notes in the later half of the twentieth century, the racial demographics of the Southern Plains changed as Hispanics predominantly populated more and more towns. The author predicts a political shift towards the Democratic Party as the changing majority and the remaining southern Conservatives find their ideals less in line with those of today's Republican Party.

The seventh essay, *Hispanics on the Texas South Plains*, by Yolanda Romero, gives a history of the in-migration of Mexicans, especially into Texas. Mexican Americans did not arrive in large numbers until after the 1920s. They came in as sheep farmers, railroad workers, and seasonal farmhands, working in sub-par conditions for little money. However, Hispanic settlers found support in the Catholic Church and started their own civil rights movements, demanding equal pay and better conditions. The author emphasizes the importance of tradition and culture for Mexican Americans and their adaptation to life in a primarily Anglo American setting. The author gives population predictions for towns and cities in the Southern Plains and discusses challenges Hispanics continue to face, including providing and taking advantage of education opportunities.

The eighth and final essay, *Loving the Plains, Hating the Plains, Restoring the Plains*, by Dan Flores, provides a summary of the changes humans have made to the Southern Plains. The author starts with a series of quotes from people, spoken during the beginning of the colonization of the area. He compares those views with recent descriptions that characterize the area as "un-country" and explains how and why such a transformation occurred. The author describes the ongoing struggle for National Park status in the Plains, using Palo Duro Canyon as an example. He calls for a revived conservation and envi-

ronmental movement to restore this vast area to its previous state and leaves the reader believing and hoping that it can succeed.

*Kathleen Booth*

**CARL J. BAUER, SIREN SONG: CHILEAN WATER LAW AS A MODEL FOR INTERNATIONAL REFORM**, RFF Press, Washington, DC 20036 (2004); 172 pp; List Price \$33.95; ISBN 1-891853-79-1, hardcover.

*Siren Song* describes the political and legislative history of water law in Chile, focusing specifically on the 1981 Water Code, the leading example of a free-market approach to water rights. The book examines the strengths and weaknesses of the Code, and analyzes both its effectiveness as a model for reform in other countries and the challenges faced within Chile as the government debates reforming the Code.

Chapter 1, *The International Context: the Water Crisis and Debates about Water Policy* focuses on integrated water resources management ("IWRM") and the role economics plays within the interdisciplinary approach to water issues espoused by IWRM. The chapter lays out a framework for understanding competing economic theories that underlie water policy debates. Bauer categorizes schools of economic analysis as either "narrow," focused on formal, quantitative approaches to neo-classical economics or "broad," focused on qualitative, interdisciplinary analyses such as political economics. Neo-classical economists focus on the concept of economic efficiency, the idea that a resource will go to the user who places the highest value on it. Political economists, by contrast, focus on the role political and legal institutions play in shaping the values the market reflects, arguing that markets are the effects of those institutions, not autonomous mechanisms. Bauer analyzes the theoretical frameworks of a number of water economists whose views range from a narrow, neoclassical view of water as an economic resource to a broad, interdisciplinary perspective of water as an "ecosocial" asset, or an asset that satisfies social and environmental, as well as purely financial functions

Chapter 2, *The Free-Market Model: Chile's 1981 Water Code* describes the basic legal framework for the Chilean Water Code ("Code"), gives a brief history of the development of water law in Chile, and describes the changing political regimes that influenced the development of the law. The Code not only privatized water rights, giving them explicit status as private property, but also treated water as a fully marketable commodity. Chile grants an unconditional private water right allowing private owners to freely change type of water use without government approval. Owners are under no obligation to use their water, a characteristic that led to unrestricted speculation in water rights. While the code establishes non-consumptive rights, it contains no provisions for