



Fluid Arguments: Five Centuries of Western Water Conflict

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Water—or the lack of it—has shaped the contours of the American West and continues to dominate the region's development. From the incursions of the Spanish conquistadores to the dams of the New Deal era, humans have sought water in these arid lands as the key to survival and success. And as the West becomes more urbanized, water is an issue as never before. This book sets contemporary and often bitter debates over water in their historical contexts by examining some of the most contentious issues that have confronted the region over five centuries.

Seventeen contributors—representing history, geography, ethnography, political science, law, and urban studies—provide an interdisciplinary perspective on the many dimensions of water in the West: Spanish colonial water law, Native American water rights, agricultural concerns, and dam building. A concluding essay looks toward the future by examining the impact of cities on water and of water marketing on the western economy.

As farmers and ranchers from Kansas to California compete for water with powerful urban economies, the West will continue to be reshaped by this scarce and precious resource. *Fluid Arguments* clearly shows that many of the current disputes over water take place without a real appreciation for the long history of the debate. By shedding new light on how water allocation is established—and who controls it—this book makes a vital contribution to our understanding of water and growth in the region.

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