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THE POLICY PROCESS AND THE AMERICAN WEST:
AN ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

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Public policy making in the United States rests in a seemingly inexhaustible set of concepts and processes that have been described as predominantly “chaotic” (Birkland 2001, 3). The diligent student of American public policy must deal with the fact that public policy is said to be inclusive of all political activities and institutions, “from voting, political cultures, parties, legislatures, bureaucracies, international agencies, local governments, and back again, to the citizens who implement and evaluate public policies” (John 2003, 483). One must differentiate between federalism and separation of powers, between pluralism and elitism, and between fragmentation and incrementalism. Simply put, we are faced with the proposition that the sheer complexity of what is going on in public policy making precludes simple, straightforward, sequential explanations (John 2003).

There should be no doubt that the subfield within political science titled “public policy” is a dynamic and complex area of study. As James Anderson

has noted: “Public policies in a modern, complex society are indeed ubiquitous. They confer advantages and disadvantages, cause pleasure, irritation, and pain, and collectively have important consequences for our well-being and happiness” (2003, 1).

When one adds environmental issues to this public policy mix, things become even more entangled. Environmental politics entails conflicts between value systems: conservation versus preservation, natural resources development versus environmental protection, individual property rights versus the government’s right of eminent domain, and command-and-control regulatory systems versus market-oriented approaches. Such a combination makes for difficult reading and difficult analysis. More than two decades ago, Dean Mann—a highly respected environmental scholar—expressed the frustrations of dealing with environmental policy:

Environmental policy is not an artifact of administrations, grandly enunciated by presidents, duly enacted by responsive legislatures, and efficiently administered by the executive establishment. It is . . . a jerry-built structure in which innumerable individuals, private groups, bureaucrats, politicians, agencies, courts, political parties, and circumstances have laid down the plans, hammered the nails, plastered over the cracks, made sometimes unsightly additions and deletions, and generally defied “holistic” or “ecological” principles of policy design. (1986, 4)

Within this environmental context I will add one final ingredient—the American West. The imagery and reality of the American West is undauntedly clear and contradictory. On the one hand, there is the majestic beauty of the mountains, deserts, and wilderness areas. On the other hand, there is the spirited and often fierce battle over the rights of a much-needed and scarce natural resource—water. Contrasting the vast open spaces is the booming growth in urban population centers. The frontier ethos of rugged individualism is offset by the dominance of and reliance on the federal government. These special characteristics make the West unique within the sphere of environmental policy making. To study environmental policy making in the United States is one thing. To study environmental policy making in the American West is distinctive in important and interesting ways. The following sections lay the groundwork for such a study.

OVERVIEW OF THE POLICY PROCESS

To comprehend western environmental policy making, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of the overall policy-making process.

DEFINITION OF PUBLIC POLICY

Because the study of public policy is a fairly recent phenomenon within political science, we are still struggling to grasp the essence of exactly what it entails. In fact, it is a common technique to begin books about public policy by simply asking, “What is public policy?” James Anderson (2003), Clarke Cochran and colleagues (2003), and Thomas Dye (2002) have done just that. Anderson answers this question by stating: “A policy is defined as a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors dealing with a problem or matter of concern” (2003, 2). Cochran and colleagues similarly observe that policy is “an intentional course of action followed by a government institution or official for resolving an issue of public concern” (2003, 1). Dye posits what may be the most straightforward and frequently cited definition: public policy is simply “whatever governments choose to do or not to do” (2002, 1).

While these definitions portray slightly different perceptions of exactly what the policy-making process entails, each contains a common theme—the idea that the making of public policy involves the government attempting to deal with society’s problems. Viewed in this light, the study of public policy is firmly grounded in the study of politics (Birkland 2001) and in the question of how political communities struggle with ideas (Stone 1997). More to the point, public policy making is cast as “a contest over conflicting, though equally plausible, conceptions of the same abstract goal or value” (Stone 1997, 12). It is within this context that I will view the public policy process.

ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC POLICY

One helpful way to visualize the policy-making process is to set up a specific framework of analysis. Fortunately, several good frameworks exist today. While there is a wide array of frameworks, from those grounded in historic-geographic and socioeconomic conditions (Hofferbert 1974) to those that emphasize individual actors and their preferences, interests, and

resources (Kiser and Ostrom 1982), the most common framework has been to represent the policy-making process as a sequence of linearly connected stages (Bonser, McGregor, and Oster 2000; Cochran et al. 2003).

Policy making is seen as beginning in the agenda-setting stage, where issues are recognized as both worthy of government attention and within the legitimate scope of government action. From here the issue moves to the policy formulation stage, where a plan is developed to deal with the issue. In the next stage, policy adoption, a specific alternative or solution is chosen. Execution of the policy is completed in the implementation stage, where policy makers use a variety of policy instruments to ensure that their goals are achieved. After a period of time, a judgment is made regarding the success of implementation. This takes place in the evaluation stage. Finally, a determination is made as to whether the chosen plan of attack should be terminated, continued, or changed.

An offshoot of this policy-made-in-stages approach is based on the systems approach developed by David Easton (Robertson and Judd 1989). According to this approach, society makes demands of the government, the government reacts to these demands, and the end result is a specific policy, sometimes called a policy outcome. The societal demands involve specific types of political behavior, political culture, and ideology. Moreover, these demands are passed forward through such mechanisms as public opinion, interest groups, mass media, political parties, and community elites. The government policy-making structure is set up to view and deal with these demands within an institutional structure consisting of legislatures, elected executives, courts, and bureaucracy (including administrative agencies).

Essentially, the government processes the demands to produce public policy. The end results are called policy outcomes and consist of laws, executive orders, court rulings, regulations, enforcement actions, budgets, and taxes. This type of approach focuses specifically on institutions and political behavior both inside and outside those institutions.

While this focus on institutions and political behavior has remained a very popular approach, there has been some criticism that viewing public policy making through a simple sequence of stages is insufficient to grasp the true meaning and development of public policy. In other words, the policy-making process is now viewed as much too complex to be explained in such a straightforward manner (John 2003). The conceptual frameworks of John Kingdon (1995), Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith (1993), Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones (1993), and Elinor Ostrom (1990) are currently

recognized as some of the most advanced approaches to the study of public policy, each, in its own way, addressing the complexities of public policy making (John 2003; Weschler 1991). The frameworks of Kingdon, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, and Baumgartner and Jones are grounded in the idea that policy is made through a series of complex interactions among participants, across time, and at multiple levels of government. Ostrom's framework challenges the more conventional approaches and posits that "communities rely on institutions that resemble neither the state nor the market, but are based on voluntary cooperation" (Weschler 1991, 489). Furthermore, as delineated in the next four paragraphs, these scholars portray their particular public policy constructs in a way that emphasizes a particular aspect of how policy changes over time.

Kingdon's (1995) approach conceptualizes policy making around enterprising policy entrepreneurs who make things happen within the context of three dynamic streams (problem stream, policy stream, and political stream) that merge at certain points in time (windows of opportunity) to possibly stimulate the production of a specific public policy. The problem stream consists of various mechanisms that bring problems to decision makers' attention. One such mechanism is the focusing event, which includes disasters, crises, personal experiences, and symbols. However, focusing events need to be understood within the context of preexisting perceptions, especially about past government actions. It is important to note that government officials do not address all problems. Hence, how and under what conditions problems are defined helps determine their status in the problem stream.

The Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) approach centers on advocacy coalitions as the primary determinants of public policy. Advocacy coalitions are defined as groups of actors from both private and public organizations at all levels of government who share a common set of values or beliefs. The policy process is viewed within a framework in which these advocacy coalitions attempt to manipulate the rules of government to bring about change that coincides with their beliefs. This activity takes place within the basic social structure and in accordance with the constitutional rules of the system.

The Baumgartner and Jones (1993) approach, founded within the agenda-setting process, is structured around the principle that political systems are never in a state of general equilibrium. Baumgartner and Jones depict the policy consequences of agenda setting as dramatic reversals rather than marginal revisions to the status quo. The generation of new ideas is viewed as creating an atmosphere such that policy monopolies (defined as structural

arrangements supported by powerful ideas) are unstable over time. Policy is made in fits and starts, slow, then rapid, rather than in a linear, smooth way. Existing political institutions and issue definitions are viewed as key to the policy-making process, with issue definition, because of its potential for mobilizing the disinterested, seen as the driving force in the process, affecting both stability and instability.

The Ostrom (1990, 1999) approach is founded within political economy and rational choice theory, portraying policy within a framework in which decision makers repeatedly have to make decisions constrained by a set of collective-choice rules. Decisions are made based on incomplete knowledge, with policy makers gaining a greater understanding of their situations (and adopting their strategies) by learning from their mistakes. Ostrom's approach is designed to "shatter the convictions of many policy analysts that the only way to solve [common-pool resource] problems is for external authorities to impose full property rights or centralized regulation" (1990, 182). Through her critique of three conventional approaches (privatization, central regulation, and management by interested parties), Ostrom offers a picture of policy making in which communities voluntarily develop policy rules, a commitment to collective benefits, and successful mutual monitoring (Weschler 1991).

These approaches to the study of public policy making vary from looking at public policy as a linear process that takes place in definable stages, to the notion that it is the complex interaction of policy streams or policy subsystems that determines where we are going, to the notion that viable policy solutions exist outside mainstream approaches such as privatization and centralized government. While these conceptualizations are significant to the study of public policy, it still remains helpful to understand that the core of policy making lies in behavior that takes place within our policy institutions (legislatures, the presidency, courts, interest groups, administrative agencies, local governments, and political parties) and in behavior that takes place outside these political institutions (public opinion, voting, political culture, and political socialization).

AMERICAN PUBLIC POLICY

The previous section described several ways to view public policy making in general. However, the making of public policy in America is also strongly affected by several unique features of our democratic political sys-

tem (Rushefsky 1990; Sussman, Daynes, and West 2002). American federalism—systems set up such that the national government shares power with the fifty states—has created a complex set of intergovernmental relations. Although each level's authority is set in constitutional law, the interpretation of that law has led to considerable competition among the different levels to establish and retain authority.

With three separate branches, each with primary responsibility for carrying out certain functions (e.g., legislature makes the law, executive executes the law, judicial interprets the law), it would seem that American policy is grounded in a finely defined model of government. But separation of powers means that the sharing of authority and the system of checks and balances ensures that each branch has some control over the others' powers. These shared powers include a high degree of both fragmentation and incrementalism.

Fragmentation underscores the redundancy and overlapping of authority between and among branches. For each issue there is generally no central point of control, leading to inconsistent and fractured policy making characterized by numerous points of access for interest groups to pursue their separate agendas. The incremental nature of American policy making prevents dynamic and innovative changes except on rare occasions. Most policy is based on the current or previous policy, with only small, incremental changes.

Finally, two divergent perspectives exist in the United States about who actually controls the power of governance. The pluralistic view argues that policy is made within a system based on multiple and competing interests and groups vying for control over any given issue. Participation comes from being a member of those interests or groups. In the elite theory of governance, participation is open only to the few who possess special characteristics such as wealth or institutional status.

Political stalemate appears to cause considerable disruption in American policy making. However, a careful analysis of how American public policy making works shows that the system was set up to be slow, deliberate, and often very confusing (Bosso 1987). It is a system based on an inherent faith in democratic institutions and founded on shared social, political, and cultural ideals. There is also a sharing of common problems. Urban decay, deteriorating infrastructure, increasing crime, and environmental degradation are just some of the problems common to all regions of America today. In the end, policy makers must deal with all aspects of American life, both good and bad.

OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY MAKING

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY TODAY

It has been almost two decades since the declaration that the world has entered a new era in environmental policy making—one that embraces a global conception of environmental degradation (Rosenbaum 1991) and a new generation of environmental problems (Vig and Kraft 1990). We are now functioning in an era marked by great complexity and diversity, one in which environmentalism is cast as “the most elaborate and segmented of our social issues” (Sussman, Daynes, and West 2002, 313). Emphasis has turned toward the internationalization of environmental problems and policy, as issues such as climate change, acid rain, geochemical flux, and control of toxic pollution are viewed more and more from a world, rather than a state, perspective (Bright 2003; Harrison and Bryner 2004; Rosenbaum 2002).

Yet despite these highly publicized changes in the environmental landscape, many of our nation’s “old” environmental problems remain. Implementation of the Clean Air Act, cleanup of federal nuclear waste facilities, and the question of opening up more public lands to oil exploration continue to be vital areas of public policy concern. In the United States, as elsewhere in the world, we are still coming to terms with such environmental problems as air and water pollution, hazardous materials, and the preservation of public lands.

Moreover, because these environmental problems are inherently public problems, solutions must come from within the same policy-making process described earlier. The general pattern of decision making includes the government attempting to solve society’s problems through a process of “high-stakes politics” (Scheberle 2004, 2). In this case, the problems happen to be environmental in nature.

Environmental policy making is inherently subject to the direct and indirect influence of those features that make American politics unique. In this regard, American federalism lies at the core of many environmental issues. Who should be responsible for hazardous waste siting and nuclear waste cleanup? Who should have the most say in how national forests are managed or preserved and whether Alaskan tundra should be opened for oil exploration? Who owns the rights to the precious water that flows through our western rivers? These questions can only be answered within a framework of intergovernmental cooperation and competition.

Environmental policy is fragmented in every sense of the word. Administrative agencies guard their turf with much resolve, leading more to competition than cooperation. Judges overrule executives. Executives defy regulatory directives. Redundancy and overlap abound in attempts to control our environmental heritage. Policy is anything but consistent, and innovative change occurs rarely. No environmental policy is left unscathed by the intricacies of these U.S. political characteristics. Whether the challenge comes from within the intergovernmental realm, through conflict between branches, from pressures of interest groups, or simply with the U.S. bureaucratic infrastructure, the policy outcomes reflect the values of the American system.

The words of Dean Mann remain an accurate description of the unique and complex aspects of environmental policy making in the United States:

That the politics of environmental policymaking is a process of dramatic advances, incomplete movement in the "right" direction, frequent and partial retrogression, sometimes illogical and contradictory combinations of policies, and often excessive cost should come as no surprise to students of American politics. Environmental policies reflect the dominant structures and values of the American political system. (1986, 4)

Thus, we are left with the task of evaluating our nation's environmental policy within the confines of an institutional structure that embodies a unique and often fractionalized political system. We are attempting to resolve age-old environmental problems as well as dealing with a third generation of environmental problems. In addition, solutions to environmental problems, in the absence of fundamental institutional or constitutional change, can only be resolved through the public policy-making process as it now stands.

TENSIONS IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL WORLD

Having accepted the idea that environmental policy making in the United States reflects the dominant values of the American political system and also follows the same policy-making process that guides other governmental issues, it is time to recognize that environmental policy is singularly unique in many aspects. Several tensions exist in the world of environmental policy making that set it apart from other policy areas.

First, the prominence of the environmental ethos on the American agenda is a relatively new phenomenon, essentially beginning in the late

1960s and catapulting to the forefront during the 1970s (Hoberg 2001; Kline 2000). This relatively new interest in the environment has led to several competing value systems, each attempting to preserve its way of life. The most obvious is represented by the conflict between the development of our natural resources and environmental protection.

At a philosophical level, this conflict reflects differences between American interests that place their highest value on economic growth and those that place their highest value on environmental protection (Grant 2003; Rosenbaum 2002). The dominant American values of capitalism and the market system revolve around the belief that humans are the center of the universe and are responsible for managing the world around them. This value system represents growth, development, and the use of technology to foster these ideals. Environmentalists share a much different viewpoint. In the words of Walter Rosenbaum, “[E]nvironmentalism sharply criticizes marketplace economics generally and capitalism particularly, and denigrates the growth ethic, unrestrained technological optimism, and the political structures supporting these cultural traits” (2002, 28).

At a more practical level, this friction between values is apparent when we examine the concept of environmental protection. American preoccupation with economic growth and resource management, developed early on in the American experience, has given way to a new set of concerns that includes quality-of-life issues such as the environment (Vig and Kraft 2000). Although degrees of conflict exist, people are now being asked to choose between economic development and environmental protection. Pervading this decision choice are the questions of who should control our natural resources and which value should have a higher priority, economic growth or environmental protection. Policy debates over protecting old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest, opening Alaska to oil exploration, siting a permanent nuclear waste facility in Nevada, and deciding whether dams should be removed to enhance the return of salmon to their spawning grounds are all representative of the larger argument between growth and environmental protection, between conservation/management and preservation.

A subset of the friction between economic growth and environmental protection is easily seen within the continuing and current debate between environmental groups and property rights advocates at the state and local levels (Bosso and Gruber 2006). This particular clash of values has been portrayed in the past by various wise use movements in the West and is currently reflected by the numerous court cases involving regulatory takings and land

use that are prevalent in today's western states (O'Leary 2006). Furthermore, this particular value clash will likely be part of the environmental policy debate (especially in the West) well into the future.

Another area of tension revolves around the question of which method is most appropriate for carrying out environmental policy—government regulation or a market-oriented system (Meier, Garman, and Keiser 1998). Conflicts arise over which method is most efficient and which one leads to greater environmental protection. With the seemingly endless increase in environmental problems (endangered species, hazardous waste disposal, global warming, acid deposition), some believe it is only through governmental control and regulation that we can meet the demand for increased environmental protection. However, others reject this argument on the premise that environmental regulation is ineffective, inefficient, and out of control.

A current trend related to the tension between government regulation and market forces is the growing use of collaborative ecosystems management. As William Lowry has pointed out, "Perhaps the most promising third-stage proposals for resource policies are those that attempt collaborative, science-based resolutions to achieve innovative management of natural ecosystems" (2006, 320). Examples of such collaborative processes are especially prominent in western states, characterized by efforts with respect to old-growth forest ecosystems in the Pacific Northwest, efforts to reconcile natural preservation and development interests in the San Diego area, and adaptive management efforts to control the waters of the Colorado River (Lowry 2006).

A further tension present in American environmental policy making involves the science-policy linkage. Conventional wisdom posits that environmental questions are fundamentally questions of science (Carroll, Brockelman, and Westfall 1997; Underdal 2000). At the same time, some recognize that it is not easy to translate the findings of science into reasonable public policies (Skully 2003).

Along these lines, Walter Rosenbaum has characterized the science-policy nexus as a treacherous place to be because environmental issues compel public officials to make scientific judgments and scientists to resolve policy issues, and neither group is trained to make such judgments (2002). This tension between scientists and policy makers appears emblematic of all environmental policy making. As Rosenbaum observed, "The almost inevitable need to resolve scientific questions through the political process and the problems that arise in making scientific and political judgments compatible are two of the most troublesome characteristics of environmental politics" (2002, 125).

One last point must be made with respect to the recent emergence of environmental protection as a major American value: it is here to stay. Environmental protection has not only been acknowledged as one of the oldest social issues (Sussman, Daynes, and West 2002) as well as part of a new paradigm of social values (Milbrath 1984), but it has also been institutionalized into the American policy-making process. The establishment of the National Environmental Policy Act, environmental impact statements, the Council on Environmental Quality, and the Environmental Protection Agency bear witness to this fact. There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that environmental protection is now considered one of the core values of American society along with social justice, economic prosperity, national security, and democracy (Rosenbaum 2002; Vig and Kraft 2000).

OVERVIEW OF WESTERN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Joel Garreau has characterized the American West as a region blessed with a "spirit-lifting physical endowment" and a repository for the "values, ideas, memories, and vistas that date back to the frontier" (1981, 302–303). The West continues to bask in a frontier image of mythic proportions (Hupp and Malachowsky 1993; Limerick 1987; Rudzitis 1996; Thompson 1998). It is characterized as having a wholly formed self-image defined by an idealistic and romantic western value system (Rothman 1999), a region where the "isolation, the struggle with nature, and the unpredictable opportunities fostered a resourcefulness, self-reliance, and spirit of working together" (Arrington 1994, 256).

This particular aspect of the western myth—the idea that it was the rugged, self-reliant individualist who built the West—remains strong today. More important, this myth fits in nicely with a particular aspect of the Mountain West's political culture—the long-established resentment of eastern interference in the western way of life. To this way of thinking, the role of the federal government in creating the conditions and expending the capital that allowed the West to grow and flourish is simply ignored (Barker, Freemuth, and Johnson 2002).

For years, writers have described a feeling of western alienation from national politics and discontent with the eastern establishment. References are often made to a "sense of disadvantage, exploitation, and betrayal" that permeates the West (Bartlett 1993, 111), as well as a "sense of helplessness bred of the perception that decisions in the West are made from the out-

side and that western communities have never been able to control their own destinies” (Wilkinson 1992, 301). The words of former Idaho governor Cecil Andrus, referring to national media coverage of issues such as the Endangered Species Act and forest fire prevention, reflect this sentiment: “There is a vastness west of the 100th meridian that you people don’t understand. There is a culture out here that is different from Manhattan” (Andrus Center 2002, 1).

Those from outside the West seem to have trouble understanding this point of view. For example, in the keynote address at a conference concerning the national media’s relationship to public policy and the West, former ABC World News anchor Peter Jennings summed up his view of the West’s particular brand of federalism:

I am somewhat puzzled at the tendency here in the West to be anti-government and even to only reluctantly acknowledge that the federal government and western development are incontrovertibly together. Without the government, western development would have been so different. . . . An objective person would argue that [the West] would have been a much poorer place without the federal government. (Andrus Center 2002, 51)

To understand why the West is truly unique in this regard, we need to look at only one statistic: the federal government owns nearly half of all the land area in the thirteen westernmost states, including half or more than half of the land in Nevada (83.1%), Alaska (67.9%), Idaho (62.5%), Utah (64.5%), Oregon (52.8%), and Wyoming (49.9%); more than one-third the land in Arizona (45.6%), California (44.9%), Colorado (36.4%), and New Mexico (34.2%); and nearly one-third in Washington (28.5%) and Montana (28.5%) (Rosenbaum 2002, 308–309). This federal ownership has resulted in both an undue reliance and dependence on the federal government and a resentment of federal interference.

Critical decisions concerning the West’s natural resources and lands have long been concentrated at the federal level. This control was greatly enhanced in the 1970s when Congress substantially increased its federal authority for developing and enforcing air and water quality standards, committed the federal government to retain ownership and management of public lands, and consolidated federal responsibility for energy development and planning (Francis and Ganzel 1984). This followed a long historical relationship during which the federal government had been almost singularly responsible for

the development of western natural resources through the establishment of water supplies, grazing fees, timber roads, and access to minerals.

But this heavy dependence on the federal government by the West has been defined as one of necessity, not choice (Francis and Thomas 1991). The Sagebrush Rebellion of the 1970s (a movement centered on the demand that federal lands in the West be turned over to the states in which they lay) and the County Supremacy/Wise Use Movement of the 1990s (a movement centered on the demand that counties should have joint sovereignty over federal lands within their borders) have come to symbolize the strong antigovernment feelings in the West and the perceived federal interference in western values (Alm and Witt 1997; DeVine and Soden 1997; Layzer 2002). The tensions over property rights (described earlier) represent these same antigovernment sentiments that pervade many western states today.

As described earlier, the complex and contradictory set of intergovernmental relations, coupled with the frontier ethos of rugged individualism and antigovernment sentiment, have established the setting for environmental policy making in the West. At no time can the influence and impact of the federal government be overlooked. Many policy makers in the West truly believe the national-level government has declared a war on the West and have responded with anti-tax, anti-regulation, and anti-Washington rhetoric (Switzer 2004).

CONCLUSION

The heart of American public policy falls within the realm of government attempting to solve and ameliorate social problems. Western environmental policy making is no exception. It possesses the special policy characteristics that make the U.S. system unique. Policy is dependent on institutional structures, political behavior, intergovernmental relations, and the myriad elements that symbolize the American policy-making system. Furthermore, the West feels the effects of decentralization, a dynamic and shifting population base, the increased pressure of global influences, and the increased concern for quality-of-life issues such as environmental protection. Within this policy structure, the West has witnessed a significant increase in intergovernmental and value conflicts. The concepts that embody American federalism have been severely tested in the West.

The single factor that dominates western environmental policy making remains the high degree of influence, almost dominance, of the federal

government. This is a direct result of the continued prominence of natural resources in western social, economic, and political life. Although there has been a substantial decline in dependence on a natural resource-based economy and an increased concern for quality-of-life issues, natural resources still define the texture of western environmental policy making.

The federal government owns over half of the West's land base and has historically played the major role in the development of the natural resources on those lands. While accepting the need for a federal presence in this development and enjoying the wealth that comes with royalties wrought from the extraction of resources, the West has still fostered a strong antigovernment rhetoric against federal interference. Moreover, with the federal government recently taking the lead in enforcement of environmental regulations, both the federal presence and antigovernment sentiment have expanded in scope.

A quick survey of some of the key issues at the top of the policy-making agenda in the western states verifies the increased tension among intergovernmental participants. Witness the extended controversies surrounding the designation of wilderness area, the use of snowmobiles in Yellowstone National Park, the battle over water rights in the midst of a prolonged drought, the question of opening additional Alaskan land to oil exploration, and the reintroduction of wolves to the Mountain West. A common thread running through all these issues is the West's desire to play a greater role in deciding its own fate and controlling its own destiny.

While the environmental ethos has gained a strong foothold in some western states, the vast majority of those states remain grounded in their heritage—natural resource extraction from a vast, beautiful, and bountiful landscape. This foundation makes it impossible to study environmental policy making in the West without considering both the imagery and reality of the West as a place dominated by rugged individualism and reliance on the federal government. Simply put, the West is a place where federalism meets environmental policy making head-on and where the battle for environmental supremacy remains tied to the opposing values of natural resource development and environmental protection. In the end, environmental policy making in the American West is an accurate reflection of the chaotic, dynamic value structures that mark public policy making in the United States.

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