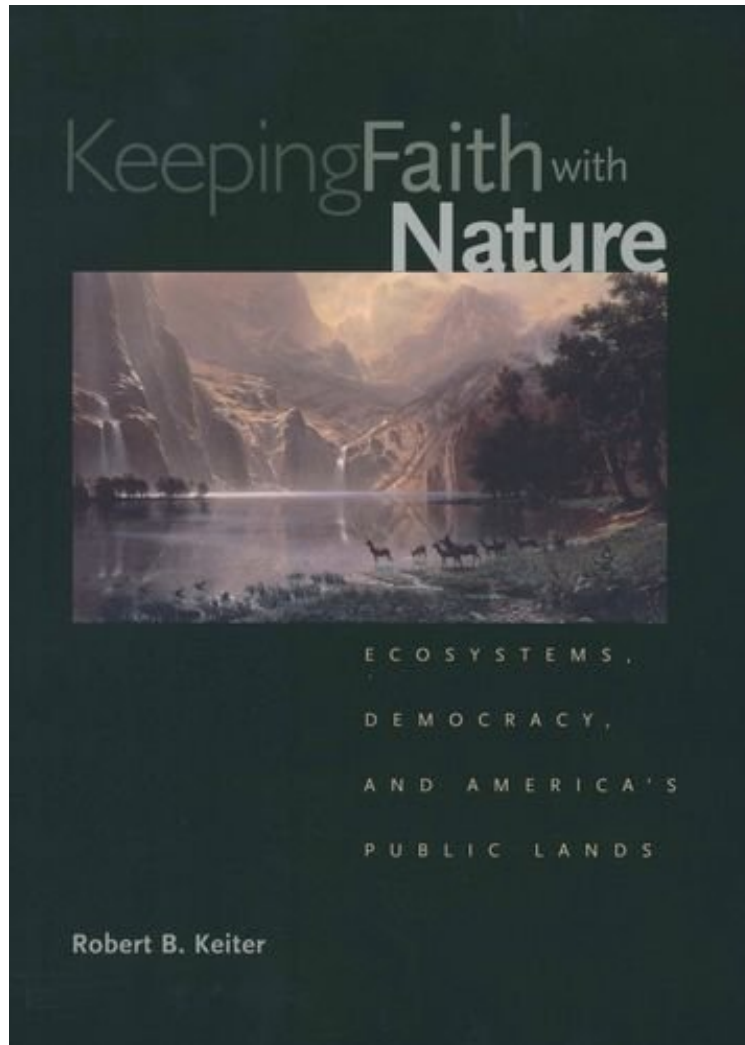


(Free pdf) Keeping Faith with Nature: Ecosystems, Democracy, and America's Public Lands

Keeping Faith with Nature: Ecosystems, Democracy, and America's Public Lands

Robert B. Keiter

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Robert B. Keiter : Keeping Faith with Nature: Ecosystems, Democracy, and America's Public Lands before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Keeping Faith with Nature: Ecosystems, Democracy, and America's Public Lands:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A case for local ecosystem collaborationBy Arthur DigbeeIn this book, Robert Keiter reviews an extensive literature on ecosystem management in the United States, especially when ecosystems cross management or political boundaries. It's not obvious from the beginning, but he wants to make the case for a new approach to these transboundary problems - - an approach that reduces the role of federal agencies and

increases the role of local citizens. Keiter makes his argument through a series of case studies, too many to list here. The more famous cases include Yellowstone wolf reintroduction, the Northern spotted owl controversy, and wilderness designation in southern Utah. As background material, these cases are very good, and fairly thorough. Keiter's desire to tell the whole story in each case does mean that he gets distracted from the main line of his argument - - he'd rather relate additional details or discuss an important issue for the understanding of the individual case than trim the story down to the essentials. This makes the book longer than it need be for the overall argument, but useful as a reference for the cases. Whether he made the right choice or not depends on what you want out of the book. The final part of the book makes an argument for local collaboration as alternative to federal regulation. Keiter gives special attention to the work of the Quincy Library Group in the Sierra Nevada. The Quincy process includes environmentalists, extractive industries, recreationists and others in the community who try to reach a consensus on how to manage local public lands. Keiter uses that case to illuminate the political and legal challenges of ecosystem management in light of the political and legal framework that he discussed in earlier chapters. Though he recognizes its limitations and legal challenges, Keiter views this local collaboration as a more authentic, participatory form of democracy and thus a better way to manage ecosystems on public lands. Clearly, these local processes can have the advantage of bringing in private land managers, though California's largest landowner (Sierra Pacific Industries) excludes its own lands from the Quincy Library Group discussions. My larger concern is that these local collaborations are only participatory for those who live locally. Those of us who visit public lands at a distance from our homes are excluded from the process. As a result, local economic interests will always receive greater weight in these collaborations than will wilderness designations, endangered species, and other national concerns. Keiter realizes this, but when the chips are down he sides with local participation over national environmental concerns. That's a defensible choice but will leave all of these collaborations open to lawsuits by national groups. Whether you agree with him or not, Keiter has made a serious case here, and much of the background material is interesting for its own sake. I think it's longer than it needs to be, but the length does make the book a good source for its many case studies.

As the 21st century dawns, public land policy is entering a new era. This timely book examines the historical, scientific, political, legal, and institutional developments that are changing management priorities and policies - developments that compel us to view the public lands as an integrated ecological entity and a key biodiversity stronghold. Once the background is set, each chapter opens with a specific natural resource controversy, ranging from the Pacific Northwest's spotted owl imbroglio to the struggle over southern Utah's Colorado Plateau country. Robert Keiter uses these case histories to analyse the ideas, forces, and institutions that are both fomenting and retarding change. Although Congress has the final say in how the public domain is managed, the public land agencies, federal courts, and western communities are each playing important roles in the transformation to an ecological management regime. At the same time, a newly emergent and homegrown collaborative process movement has given the public land constituencies a greater role in administering these lands. Arguing that we must integrate the new imperatives of ecosystem science with our devolutionary political tendencies, Keiter outlines a coherent new approach to natural resources policy.

". . . valuable, well-referenced study of public land-use policy emphasizing ecosystem restoration . . . and importance of science illuminating the path." -- Keith L. Kline, *Environment* From the Inside Flap "Well-written, broad-gauged, and fair-minded, *Keeping Faith with Nature* weaves together science, history, law, administrative behavior, and politics. Robert Keiter has made a major contribution by capturing the shift in public land policy toward the method of ecological analysis and the goal of land, water, and species restoration." - Charles Wilkinson, author of *Crossing the Next Meridian - Land, Water, and the Future of the West* "As the United States plays out decisions that determine how its public lands will be managed, this book offers an invaluable overview, insight, and perspective." - Tim Clark, coeditor of *Foundations of Natural Resources Policy and Management* "Keiter does a masterful and readable job on the conservation/resource wars in the recent American West. All those with a stake in the New West should read this book to see how 'collaborative process' does and doesn't work." - John Gordon, Yale University "Keiter draws on literature from ecology, history, law, political science, and economics to forge the thesis that the age of ecology is upon us. His examination of the whole range of public land issues ensures that anyone interested in public lands policy will enjoy his book, which offers an original synthesis of science, law, and policy debates. A work of striking originality." - Robert Glennon, University of Arizona From the Back Cover "As the United States plays out decisions that determine how its public lands will be managed, this book offers an invaluable overview, insight, and perspective." - Tim Clark, coeditor of *Foundations of Natural Resources Policy and Management*