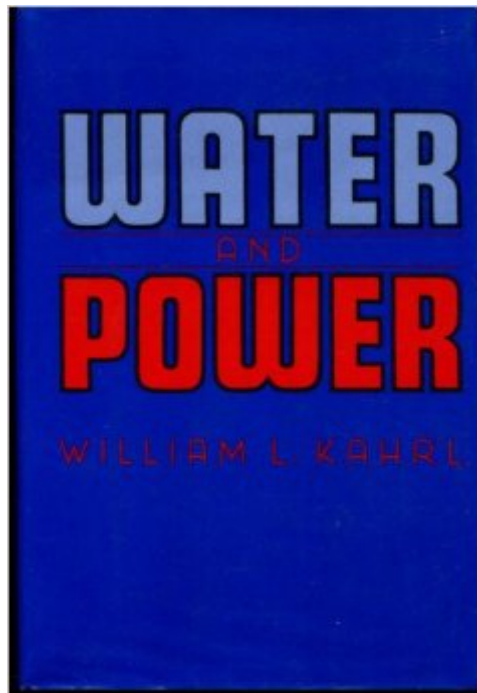


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Water And Power: The Conflict Over Los Angeles' Water Supply In The Owens Valley



Synopsis

It is not the purpose of this work to propose a specific format for the settlement of the city's current difficulties with the valley, to resolve the environmental questions associated with Los Angeles's proposed groundwater pumping program, or to promote any cause associated with the developing situation in the Owens Valley. But by performing the essential historical task of separating what happened from what did not, and by distinguishing in this way the choices which have been made from those which have yet to be decided, it is my hope that this effort will help to establish that common basis for understanding which is essential for the debate over specific issues to proceed most effectively. This book, then, is scarcely the last word on the Owens Valley conflict: the final chapter, after all, has yet to be written. The story that has emerged here is at once very different and more troubling than the conventional treatments of the conflict as a simplistic political morality play. Any attempt to deal with so controversial a subject, however, is almost certain to spark controversy itself. For that reason, with the exception of a small collection of private letters, this work is constructed entirely from the published documents and other materials available to the general public, anchoring the narrative in sources the reader can consult to trace the line of my argument on any point with which he or she may disagree. In addition, the work as a whole has been reviewed for technical accuracy by officials of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, although the department is in no way responsible for the content of this study or the conclusions drawn from it. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is my second reading of William Kahrl's epic history of bringing water to the city of Los Angeles (I say "epic" because the book offers a mix of saga, chronicle, tale, a blockbuster). The images conjured up by this story that pits the water needs of an aggressively growing city (Los Angeles) at the turn of the twentieth century against what became a hapless Owens Valley offering what appeared to be an endless supply of cheap water are as vivid as if one were reading a historical novel, a very good one. When I finished my first reading of *Water and Power* nearly thirty years ago I thought at the time it was one of the best books treating a highly sensitive and politically charged subject that I had ever read. My re-read over the past thirty days confirms my first impressions. This book provides a compelling context for understanding the water history of not just Southern California but all of California, a subject particularly germane today in light of the drought conditions the state of California is now suffering. (Heck, you don't even have to be interested in water history. Given Kahrl's rich prose and descriptive powers you will be hooked after the first couple of pages as you become absorbed by the cast of characters parading through the story, more than a few of whom are larger than life.) Given its seemingly narrow subject, water and power politics in California over a fairly short timeframe (largely the first half of the twentieth century), there have not been a lot of reviewers of Kahrl's book. But those that have written reviews have done a nice job outlining the story and given the tone of several reviews, one gets a feel for the politically charged subject that is water.

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