

# [Review of the book *Wars in the Woods: The Rise of Ecological Forestry in America*]

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the value of their documentation and, perhaps, preservation, in a world where more and more people will have to adapt to the bust that comes after the boom.

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NANCY J. TANIGUCHI

*Wars in the Woods: The Rise of Ecological Forestry in America.* By Samuel P. Hays. (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007. xv + 277 pp. \$60 cloth, \$27.95 paper)

Forty-eight years have passed since Samuel P. Hays published *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890–1920*, a book still widely cited in scholarly books and articles and often listed as required reading in graduate history seminars. *Wars in the Woods: The Rise of Ecological Forestry in America* is a remarkable accomplishment for a scholar whose public and professional careers span the period from the end of World War II to the present. If *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency* offers a provocative framework for understanding natural-resource issues during the Progressive Era, the present volume is an equally significant accomplishment for tackling the contentious differences between commodity and ecosystem forestry in the United States. Because the roots to the contemporary debate reach far beyond the Pacific Northwest and its spotted-owl controversy, Hays's study proposes to chart citizen and scientific involvement "in forest planning throughout the country, most of it well beyond the Pacific Northwest" (p. xii).

Copiously and thoughtfully documented—and with a wide variety of sources available on the Internet—*Wars in the Woods* offers an encyclopedic accounting of regional and state initiatives that have emerged since 1970 to challenge the prerogatives of commodity forestry. The debate between the proponents of ecological and commodity forestry was largely rooted in the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 and its requirement that each national forest develop fifteen-year plans, with alternative courses of action. The measure also mandated that citizen input be part of the planning process and that the public had the legal right to appeal forest plans. In the next three decades, the NFMA, the National Environmental Protection Act (1969), and the Endangered Species Act (1973) provided legal grounds for citizen involvement in promoting an ecological perspective in national forest management.

The emergence of what the author calls "a Full-Scale War"

began in the late 1970s when forest industry leaders established closer relationships with the Republican Party. Beginning with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, Republican administrations regularly appointed prominent industry officials as assistant secretaries of agriculture, with oversight responsibilities for the Forest Service. With the election of George W. Bush in 2000, Hays observes that the forest industry and its political allies “were primed to make an all-out onslaught on the influence of ecological objectives in national forest management” (p. 154). Bush policymakers set out to roll back the initiatives of the Clinton administration *and* more than three decades of slow but steady progress toward adopting principles of ecosystem management. The long-standing struggles between the old and the new in Forest Service receptiveness to ecosystem science faced a powerful counterrevolution against such policies under G. W. Bush. “Whether or not the new would survive,” Hays concludes, “remained to be seen” (p. 189).

The strengths of this book are its efforts to incorporate wide-ranging and diverse issues across vastly different forested landscapes and the many accounts of citizen activists from all points of the nation who forced public land managers to acknowledge the importance of ecological principles in forest management.

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*Becoming Western: Stories of Culture and Identity in the Cowboy State.* By Liza J. Nicholas. (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2006. xviii + 214 pp. \$35)

Students of western history are familiar with the ways in which easterners, such as Owen Wister and Frederick Remington, created a mythic West to assuage their anxieties about industrial America. But how did westerners respond to these myths? Liza Nicholas's *Becoming Western* explores how Wyoming men and women have negotiated the complicated and ambiguous relationship between the “westerners” that the rest of the nation wanted them to be and the westerners that they actually were. Nicholas demonstrates that Wyomingites often committed themselves to the image of the rugged cowboy, thus securing themselves an important place in American culture. Yet this commitment exacted a price, in the partial relinquishing of local control over community identity and the occasional inability to see beyond myths to social, environmental, and political realities.