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Miller, Ryder W.

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Review: From Conquest to Conservation: Our Public Land Legacy

By Michael P. Combeck, Christopher A. Wood and Jack E. Williams

Reviewed by Ryder W. Miller
San Francisco, USA

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Michael P. Combeck, Christopher A. Wood and Jack E. Williams. Foreword by Charles Wilkinson. *From Conquest to Conservation: Our Public Land Legacy*. Island Press (2003).

Printed on recycled, acid-free paper. 220pp.

From Conquest to Conservation presents good intentions and concern for the land. It tells the American story of our relationship with public lands, and the growth of the conservation movement and the resource management field. It also details the historical struggle to protect and manage the land. However, missing is any allusion to the larger tale of such struggles. There is no exploration of the views of the founding Puritans or Native Americans. This work makes it clear that there are resource managers who wish to remain at the forefront of environmentalism and land management, but they have had their run ins with mainstream environmentalists in the past. As the authors lament: "The days of the government biologist or forester spending a quiet career in the woods are over. Nearly every facet of their work is publicly scrutinized" (p. 164).

The work is inspiring, but, in the reviewer's opinion, insiders rather than critics of government wrote it. The authors have regulatory and resource management experience and are from different regions of the country. Mike Combeck, now a professor of Global Environmental Management at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point, was a former Chief of the Forest Service, and Director of the Bureau of Land Management. Chris Wood is vice president of conservation for Trout Unlimited in Virginia, and served as a senior policy and communications advisor to the chief of the Forest Service. Jack Williams is senior fellow at the AuCoin Institute for Ecological, Economic, and Civic Studies at Southern Oregon University and has been the supervisor of two national forests in Oregon.

From Conquest to Conservation also contains focus essays (by writers like Rick Bass, Patricia Nelson Limerick, and Nina Leopold Bradley). The accompanying illustrations by William Monig also evoke appreciation of the land.

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Ryder W. Miller <dolphin1965@hotmail.com> is a freelance environmental and science reporter who has been published in *Sierra Magazine*, California

Coast & Ocean, California Wild, and Hydrosphere.