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## Public Land and Political Meaning: Ranchers, the Government, and the Property between Them, by Karen R. Merrill

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that adequately provide for changed and unforeseen circumstances, conservation easements may not be the best choice for these ranchers. The decision to encumber one's ranch with a conservation easement has far-reaching implications. Each ranch must "[j]udge for [it]self" the benefits of conservation easements.<sup>145</sup>

## REVIEWS

*Public Land and Political Meaning: Ranchers, the Government, and the Property between Them.* By Karen R. Merrill. University of California Press, 2002. 274 pp. \$50.00 (This review copyrighted by Organization of American Historians. Reprinted with permission.)

I sometimes kid students by suggesting that a difference between them and faculty can be detected in how the word "research" is pronounced. Students tend to emphasize *search*, and faculty *re*. Karen R. Merrill's study of western grazing controversies supports my point. Given the amount of study done on the controversies surrounding the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act (TGA), one would not suspect that there is much need for yet another study. Merrill's deft analysis demonstrates that such is not the case.

The key to Merrill's approach is that it does not disrupt the existing scholarship on this period so much as suggest a way to refocus familiar events to reveal a richer texture. Working with the established theme—ranchers against bureaucrats—Merrill carefully and persuasively reminds us that neither side was as monolithic as the standard narrative tends to imply. In doing so, she presents a story of interaction and change among various voices in the ranching community, in the bureaucratic community, and in the relationship between the two, against a backdrop of changing events and situations. Indeed, though I am always a bit nervous about employing biological metaphors in matters of human history and politics, Merrill's work reads very much like a study of the evolving western public lands and political ecosystem.

Maybe it is my own bias, but one of the more important products of Merrill's approach is that it affords a very empathetic (as opposed to sympathetic) view of the western ranching community. In the current political dialogue, and heavily influenced by so much of the academic scholarship, the ranching community appears to be a self-confident and almost omnipotent force in the federal land decision process. In Merrill's study, it emerges as a community with a far more tenuous self-image, fraught with internal dissension and confronting a

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145. ANELLA & WRIGHT, *supra* note 2, at 3.

seemingly endless array of external threats posed by relations with other residents of the West, government policies, and even nature. As such, we are reminded that the statement of purpose in the TGA—to stabilize the western livestock industry—was not as ironic as it is often assumed. At the same time, Merrill portrays the bureaucrats with an equally even hand, adding much needed detail on Farrington Carpenter's efforts to implement the TGA.

Having said this, I was a bit disappointed in Merrill's use of property as a focus. I think her main point—that property is not a "thing" but a set of relationships—is both right on the mark and useful. Nevertheless, it seemed to me that property issues end up being more the wrapping on Merrill's package than part of its content. This, however, is a small flaw that does not detract from the strength of her analysis.

I recommend Merrill's book for anyone wanting a new or refocused understanding of an important period in western public land history. Merrill presents her narrative in a marvelously relaxed but confident voice. Overall, Merrill's book is a welcome addition to the literature in the field.

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*Small Wind Systems for Rural Energy Services.* By Smail Khennas, Simon Dunnett & Hugh Piggot. ITDG Publishing, 2003. Pp. 61. \$33.00 paperback.

Wind energy, a mature renewable source of energy, is in use in Holland and other windy areas of the world to provide small-scale electric power for rural areas where no other alternative exists. *Small Wind Systems* describes in its introduction why wind energy is an attractive alternative to use as well as how wind energy can be made more attractive for users. The book answers the question of why the dissemination of small wind generators is still limited. It also addresses the understanding of the technology involved with the use of permanent magnet generators, detailing the design of its components: the blades; the tail vane mechanism; the tower, which raises the system components to a height that is above all the surrounding structures and to where the wind is stronger; the requirements for batteries able to store the electricity; and electrical controls to preserve and protect the life of the system.

*Small Wind Systems* includes a discussion about wind potential, how do you measure wind speed? what is the most optimum place for the generator?, as well as safety considerations to ensure the protection of life and how much power is needed and how much will be generated