



Shaping the Sierra: Nature, Culture, and Conflict in the Changing West

Timothy P. Duane

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The rural west is at a crossroads, and the Sierra Nevada is at the center of this social and economic change. The Sierra Nevada landscape has always been valued for its bounty of natural resource commodities, but new residents and an ever-growing flood of tourists to the area have transformed the relationship between the region's nature and its culture. In an engaging narrative that melds the personal with the professional, Timothy P. Duane—who grew up in the area—documents the impact of rapid population growth on the culture, economy, and ecology of the Sierra Nevada since the late 1960s. He also recommends innovative policies for mitigating the negative effects of future population growth in this spectacular but threatened region, as well as throughout the rural west.

Today, the primary social and economic values of the Sierra Nevada landscape are in the amenities and ecological services provided by its wildlands and functioning ecosystems. Duane shows how further unfettered population growth threatens the very values which have made the Sierra Nevada a desirable place to live and work. A new approach to land use planning, resource management, and local economic development—one that recognizes the emerging values of the landscape—is necessary in order to achieve sustainable development, Duane claims. Weaving personal experience with outstanding scholarship, he shows how such an approach must explicitly recognize the importance of values and the application of an environmental land ethic to future development in the area.

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