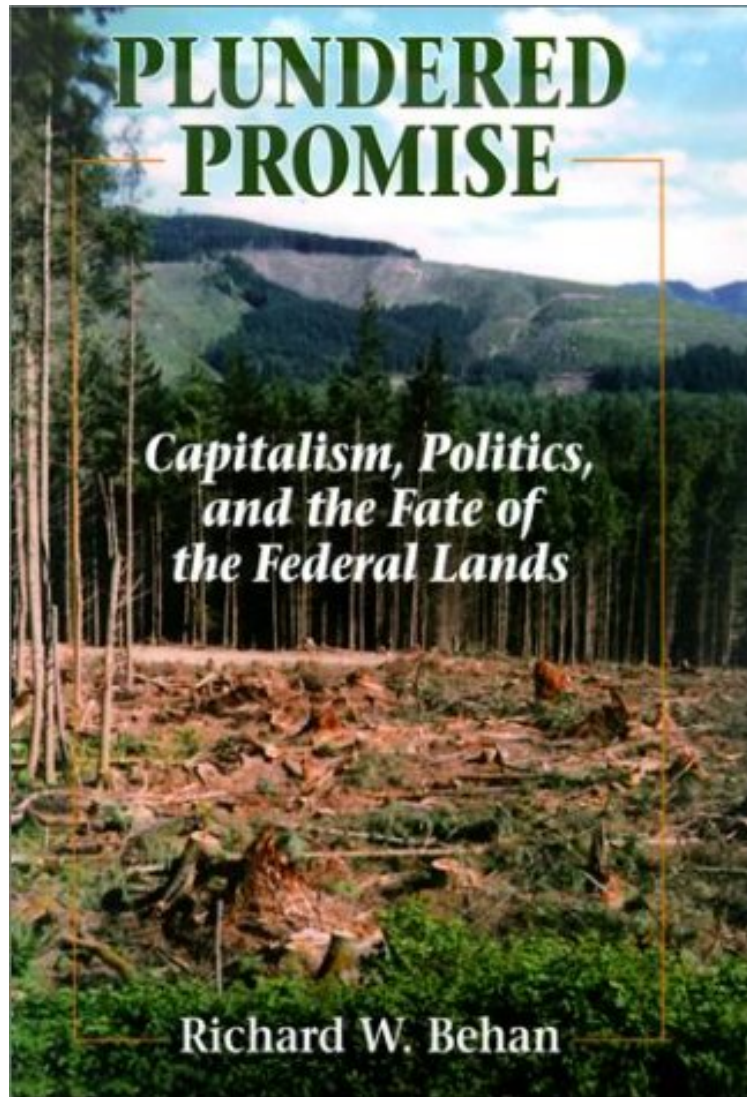


[DOWNLOAD] Plundered Promise: Capitalism, Politics, and the Fate of the Federal Lands

Plundered Promise: Capitalism, Politics, and the Fate of the Federal Lands

Richard W. Behan

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Richard W. Behan : Plundered Promise: Capitalism, Politics, and the Fate of the Federal Lands before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Plundered Promise: Capitalism, Politics, and the Fate of the Federal Lands:

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Plundered Promise: A 21st Century Forest Policy Primer By Merton T. Richards This book is worthwhile reading for anyone who proclaims a political opinion, or perhaps simply draws a breath. It is not an unbiased book, and you are unlikely to agree with every argument. I don't, but, after teaching forest

policy and economics to university students for 25 years, I regret not having had the advantage of this book as a text. It would ideally complement a standard text in an undergraduate policy course, and it would serve well as core reading in a graduate seminar, supplemented by books on related topics. Several good choices, in fact, are cited in "Plundered Promise." Behan is an engaging, provocative writer so his description of the evolution of land use policy in the United States is entertaining as well as instructive. He makes clear the process by which we have moved from the capitalistic ideal of individual private property ownership of all lands to one of reserving some lands to be held in common, and provides a logical defense for why we did it. The rationale, he notes, for maintaining such a "public good" has grown stronger with time. These public lands are a collective national treasure like no other in the world. Behan then makes the case that we are hell-bent to squander this "promise" of the book's title. The great evil in this story is our unwitting, and presumably unwilling collaboration with modern (huge) corporations in a senseless, wasteful social party of conspicuous consumption. Modern corporations, many with global reach and stunning political and financial command, attempt to create demand for their massive and efficient production by devising market strategies to convince us to over consume; to acquire material goods as a measure of our social success and prosperity. The below-cost, ready access these giants have to our public lands treasure in order to supply their raw material needs, and for air, land and water sinks, requires consumers (all of us) to bear costs disproportionate to gains from such enterprise. How have we been duped into this distorted market? Behan provides a fascinating and fresh perspective on the way America's founders contrived a unique constitutional government that precludes majoritarian democracy. Political, legal and economic power has been concentrated among elites in Washington, D.C. Along the way, he notes, corporations were legally granted unique constitutional privileges. This argument deserves careful consideration. It is not the stuff of high school civics courses, or an uncritical recitation of the wisdom of free enterprise. It ties together the facts and the thesis of the book, and because it challenges the standard assumptions most Americans hold about their individual rights, prerogatives and powers, this argument alone makes the book required reading. The way out of the jam, according to Behan, is for citizens to moderate their consumptive behavior, to resist the importuning of corporate advertisers, to pursue legal redress of corporate license, and to seize control of the political process at the local level. He offers specific examples of local or community level politics in practice, with attendant successes in resolving land use issues while protecting public land values. This resolution, while appropriate for many issues, and promising as an idealistic framework, seems less reassuring when one considers the complexities of international politics and global environmental issues. What can we do for a national energy policy, for example, wherein the real costs of our consumptive behavior, at whatever level, must be assessed globally and then allocated equitably among all of us? What can we do locally about issues that transcend national boundaries? One optimistic notion that Behan suggests as a partial solution seems practical, and likely to work, and that is the power of Internet communication. This could facilitate the formation of "communities of interest" to address problems in ways that transcend normal geographical limits. Much needs to be done, and too much has been done badly, but the necessary dialogue has begun. Richard Behan's book, "Plundered Promise," is an essential component of that dialogue.

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. A book for many
By Seahurst Publishing
A lot of people might find Behan's book illuminating. Among them: anyone whose job moved overseas to a cheaper labor force; anyone who has looked from the window of a commercial airplane flying from Seattle to Los Angeles and marveled at the size of clearcuts on public forestland. Anyone who has wondered why the treasury doesn't receive fair value for the minerals extracted from publicly owned land, for the grazing rights, for the timber and for the water resource. Beyond the public land issues Behan addresses, the book is an informative read for anyone who has wondered why there is no public agenda in the United States -- and, instead, a plethora of interest groups and PACs that shape the direction of legislation. As an aside, the book is a civics lesson for all of us who wonder why we find ourselves voting against the least-unappealing candidate in a two-way race instead of choosing enthusiastically from among outstanding candidates. Forestry professionals should read it in hopes of renewing the passion, optimism and zeal with which they began their careers. Behan is a scholar, and the work is carefully written and the cases he makes are well-documented. Yet there's sparkle in the prose. Even so the book isn't an easy read. The facts he presents are depressing, and the hopeful recommendations Behan makes at the end seem ever so far from being adopted. Or even considered in my lifetime.

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Corporations and corrupt government degrade Federal Lands
By Bill Henderson
Mr. Behan's main theme in **PLUNDERED PROMISE** is how political and economic overshoot has led to the increasing plunder of public lands for private profit. His deeper look at how the growth of corporations, hyperconsumerism, and centralized oligarchical government has led to the plundering and degradation of US Federal lands frames our present Bush administration problems and he directs the reader to authors such as Cobb-Daly, Kemmis, Prugh, Yaffee, etc. for workable, practical solutions. After a synoptic opening chapter, there are chapters on the first century of public land management, the rise of corporate capitalism at the start of the 20th century, the rise of professional management and 'sustained yield' at mid-century and finally, "The Economics and Politics of License: Corruption and Predation, 1976 to the Present. Behan's development of the concept of economic and political overshoot and how it effected public lands is of key importance to environmentalists. The history of the development of governmental subsidization of private use of public lands and the momentum of the growth economy in degrading forests, overgrazing grasslands, overfishing the commons, etc. is

crucial. Revoking corporate charters and devolving government out of Washington to local 'neighbourhoods' are revolutionary tactics advocated to get the philistines out of the temple. Good as Korten, Greider and Klein. Well worth your while.

What has been done to our public lands? Irreplaceable forests harvested for lumber. Vast expanses of rangeland leased at rates far below market value. Mineral resources extracted with little or no royalties paid. These and other actions have brought unparalleled benefit to private interests -- and massive costs to society at large. They are but the most visible signs of the fundamental flaws in the current system of federal lands management. In "Plundered Promise," leading resource management scholar Richard W. Behan presents an engrossing history and analysis of public lands management in the United States, as he describes how we arrived at the current situation and examines what we can do to rectify it. Behan begins by outlining his provocative thesis that American political and economic institutions have overshot their historic roles, and, rather than responding to public needs, have drawn society into their service. He then offers a detailed analysis of the development of the federal resource management agencies from the nation's founding through successive legislative eras, highlighting the human actors responsible for their growth and change, and showing their relationship to the evolving institutions of American politics and capitalism. The author's analysis ultimately focuses on the power of federal "iron triangles," and in particular the influence of the one nonpublic institution -- "the unfettered and immortal institution of the American corporation" -- that he holds responsible for the ongoing devastation of the public lands. Behan stresses the urgent need for reform and presents a radical proposal for getting there: The devolution of authority over public lands to "localized constituencies," and the reining in of corporations. Behan's unique combination of social criticism, institutional analysis, history, and political science is guided by a strong moral compass, with a palpable sense of outrage bolstered by rigorous scholarship. The book is must reading for anyone interested in the past or future of our public lands, or in the influence of contemporary politics and capitalism.

Federally owned lands, which make up about one-third of the land area of the United States, are in constant danger of being plundered, thanks to governmental corruption and predatory economics--forces that endanger not only the public domain, but also society at large. "That is not a modest set of complaints," writes Richard Behan, whose book traces the start-and-stop development of federal land ownership and management over the last two centuries. That system, he writes, borrows from the European tradition of "crown lands," created by fiat to reserve areas from general use; benefiting more than a handful of nobles, the system also incorporates elements of Native American beliefs about the common ownership and stewardship of land. This development of a common estate, Behan argues, was not articulated to protect lands from a resource-hungry, uncontrolled economy that turns public services into private goods, which is their condition today. The resultant degradation of public lands, he continues, points to the need for new methods and models of management that emphasize conservation and preservation, not resource use. Behan's wide-ranging, sometimes even scattershot book is provocative, and it is likely to excite discussion among those on all sides of public-lands controversies. Given current efforts to develop resources on federal reserves, it is also timely, and of much interest to environmental activists and students of resource policy alike. --Gregory McNamee