Writing Westward Podcast
Episode 035
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Rough Transcript, unedited, full of errors

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Erika Allen Wolters and Brent S. Steel interviewed by Brenden W. Rensink

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Welcome to writing westward. I'm your host Brenden Rensink.

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Have we talked enough about Western environments and public lands over the past three years on this podcast. Well, we have talked about them from a variety of angles, but I'm not done yet.

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With the prevalence of public lands in the West and the simultaneous development of wildfire seasons lengthening droughts worsening ecosystems collapsing or being unbalanced and demographic pressures mounting across the west, we need to continue writing

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and thinking about the land, and our relationship to it.

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Today we talk with professors Erica Alan Walters and Brent S Steel both political scientists and public policy experts at Oregon State University, about their edited collection, the environmental politics and policy of Western public lands.

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Despite my sometimes dour outlook. They in the volumes contributors balance exhibition of real crisis with a healthy dose of optimism.

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Enjoy.

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for new listeners Let me take a quick moment to explain a bit about the podcast. Each episode features of conversation with authors journalists novelists poets, scientists, academics are others who write about the North American West.

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Our goal is not only showcase their work, but to spark curiosity among you, the listeners to think more deeply about the region. Its lands and environments and histories and experiences of the people who call it home.

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If writer intrigues you. You can find links to their work in the show notes or at writing westward.org. And if you have a moment, please do subscribe, share links with friends, leave us a review or rating on Apple podcasts or whatever platform you're

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using to listen, follow us on Facebook and Twitter, and send in some feedback.

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Writing Westwood is supported by the Charles read center for Western studies at Brigham Young University where I run Rensin serve as Associate Director, and an associate professor of history, for better or worse, this is a one man operation with me playing

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the roles of host producer sound engineer, and it just about everything else, all of which until tasks which I have very little training, but I am passionate about the North American west, and all the work is well worth the excuse to read more and to

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talk to interesting people.

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At the end of this episode I will include some more information on me and my scholarship and on the red center, our programming and projects and funding opportunities that you could apply for.

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That's right, we may want to give you money.

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With all this business out of the way, let's move on to today's conversation. First, I'd like to introduce to you, who it is, we're talking to and why.

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Erica Ellen Walters is an assistant professor of political science and Associate Director of the public policy undergraduate program in the School of Public Policy at Oregon State University.

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Her research focuses on environmental behavior adoption and policy in response to resource use and conservation in an era of rapid climate change.

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Brent steel is professor of political science and director of the public policy graduate program at Oregon State University, which offers the Master of Public Policy Executive Master public policy, and the PhD in public policy.

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He teaches courses in science policy public policy theory, rural policy, climate change politics and energy policy, their collection of essays, the environmental politics and policy of Western public lands, was published by Oregon State University Press,

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in 2020, but it is also available digitally for free, and it will be as they update it in the future, via OSU Open Educational Resources.

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This collection features writers from fields of Political Science public policy environmental science the law, and others.

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It's an excellent primer on a variety of intersecting topics about the environment, about policy about public lands in the West.

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It is powerful as a collection. Because, together they demonstrate how interconnected, our Western environmental problems and solutions are the individual chapters are also useful as standalone pieces.

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This collection should be considered by anyone interested in public lands, the general public, professors, academics or students, professors Erica Walters and Brent steel Welcome to writing last word.

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Thank you very much.

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Thank you.

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You guys are zooming in from Oregon, both of you. Yeah, and just coming off of some record hot temperatures. Yes.

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It sounds like Erica is out of town. I was chatting with it earlier but Brent you were in town for the hundred and 10 plus degree heat.

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Yes. Yeah, very very hot.

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Wow, my parents live up in the northwest you know they don't have air conditioning, and as many people don't. But you survived one way or the other.

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Yes, when we moved here.

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Back in the 90s. Hardly anyone dead air conditioning and then, you know, over the years, it's gotten hotter and hotter people than adding AC their homes and so I couldn't imagine last couple days without a see what the temperatures here.

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Let's get to business let's talk about this anthology which YouTube edited the environmental politics and policy of Western public lands, I saw the title and immediately thought, I need this book.

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I've been thinking about these kinds of things a lot, and I was particularly interested because I've approached it mostly through reading from historians, some sociologists journalists and others, and the contributors in your book and yourselves are from

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some different disciplines so I'm excited to compare kind of differences and approach. Can you tell us about how this collection came to be, what was the impetus.

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Sure well in 2001 colleague of ours. Dr. Charles Davis and Colorado State University published a book on the environmental politics and policy in the West as well.

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And we approached Chuck and asked him if he was wanting to do an updated version because a lot of us in the field use his book, and our classes that we teach and he said notebook go ahead kind of gave a blessing to Brett nine to to move forward with our

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idea to, to then to kind of do an updated version.

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So Brian and I came up with the idea that it would be great to sort of get some of the leading experts in the field and in different disciplines to come together and put together a really good anthology for our students to be able to use but that's also

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readable to people maybe not within the discipline.

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So it's a very accessible book and it's one that stands alone chapter by chapter so you don't have to read it all the way through from the beginning to the end you can kind of pick and choose if you have chapters you want to read because mostly we felt

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that the west to change significantly, and we wanted to capture that and identify what's going on within the realm of environmental policy in the

western US, and one of the unique features of this book too is that not only as a published by Oregon State

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That's great. I'm actually just now noticing on the back cover, says co-published with OSU. Open Educational Resources I didn't even realize that before.

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That's really great.

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Other big updates from Chuck's previous book to what you guys are doing now, you know, as we're, you know full 20 years into the 21st century, What are some of the big topics that you wish was in that previous volume that you wanted to have updated.

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Well one thing Eric and I did was ask everyone to try to put a climate change perspective on each chapter which really wasn't in the previous book because that really wasn't much in the public dialogue at the time and so given that we started out talking

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about the record heat.

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Here in the Pacific Northwest we had some very very important topic.

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And of course, you know with, we had unprecedented wildfire last summer also in Northern California, Oregon and Washington.

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And I, which I witnessed yesterday I did a float trip down the McKenzie river in Oregon which is a beautiful pristine river it's where Eugene Oregon gets us water supply.

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And as we went down the river, we went by Blue River, which was a small rural community that no longer exists. And then down to vida another small community with about half of it was gone and so you just see these burned out structures so obviously with

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increasing drought and climate change impacts, pretty much every single topic we have in the book that and I think that we were, we're very cognizant of the fact that the West is changing rapidly, and that there's so much more population growth coming

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to the region. There's a lot more challenges to public lands, there's challenges to indigenous rights of lands as well and we wanted to sort of

capture that in the context of his usefulness of this old west narrative and the newest narrative and sort

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of what's going to be happening for the next West.

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You know what, what are we, the grander sort of ideas with thinking about what do we want the west to look like in the ideal sense and then maybe in the reality of what what do we think will happen if we sort of continue on this trajectory.

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That's great. I'm about to publish an anthology on the 21st century West, thinking about late 20th century, Western histories and then kind of pulling them updating them for the on the first 20 years of the 21st century and this was kind of a lot of these

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bigger ideas that you guys were thinking about were in our minds as well as we workshops papers, thinking about where is where's the West been recently where is it today and what does that mean for moving forward.

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As I look through the contributor list. I see political scientists, people, people involved in public policy. There are scientists scientists kind of environmental scientists.

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I think there's a couple of lawyers, people involved in the law.

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And, and as I know, noted, at least here on the podcast most of our engagement with public lands has been more of a historical perspective.

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And I'm curious about disciplinary approach and what are questions you think that you and your contributors may have asked differently, or what are different questions that you would have asked, as opposed to a historian say, you know, looking at public

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lands issues, how do you approach this differently than than some of us.

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And in the humanities and elsewhere. Well, it has it has a title suggested distinct politics orientation and.

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And one of the things there's always been conflict in the West political conflict over public public lands and lands management and endangered species for us, water, but one of the things that we we focused on here was the different interests that had

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been involved I have different perspectives on things and and a little bit more of a and I would argue we, it's there's a couple Mark Branson, for example, who wrote the the piece on Ranger and policy is more of an environmental sociologist in there too

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so we tried to look at things kind of a horse historian would do a broad perspective.

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But I think the focus here was on conflict in in what's going on now and what might happen in the future as we have, you know, increasing drought and we have change in urbanization in the West, we have these cities are growing and becoming much different

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than what they used to be, for example salt lake has had a major change politically over the last couple decades Tucson Phoenix.

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Las Vegas and so we have different views on how management of public land should take place, increasing conflict and then we have the backlash that we talked about to and one of the things that happened this year is we had two elections where for example

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you know we had seven rural counties in Oregon, considering joining Idaho, instead of staying in Oregon and it has an indication of the conflict and then we had the, the occupation.

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The Mahler wildlife refuge and where there's potential conflict coming in, again, while there is continued conflict in the Klamath River Basin, but it could get very dicey very polarized even more so with shutting off of the irrigation water to, to save

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fisheries and the bunnies are backups and organizing and the climate based on Right, Yeah. Yeah. I know that historians, we like to think that our work has relevance to the present and sometimes we bring our work all the way to the present but often it's

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only like an epilogue or some concluding thoughts you know the more present test we get the more uncomfortable we often get. And I really, that's one reason I do like playing with some of these other disciplines where you guys are you in the present is

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know where you live, and you're very comfortable. Thinking Out Loud about it and not prognosticating about the future but but looking forward and trying to project where we might be headed or things that we might need to do differently.

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And that was one of the reasons that we wanted to go with the open source as well because we have the ability to, to change chapters to update to do anything like that.

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You know, every year if we wanted to, and I think Brian and I wanted that flexibility to be able to because as soon as you write things and as soon as administration's change or something that, you know, suddenly it's a game changer.

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And we want to make sure that that five years down the road, we're going to be able to capture where we are at that time versus where we were when we wrote the book, that's a great feature then of having this open source.

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And you mentioned that you use this in classes for students.

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And I'm curious about audience, I, I know who historians write for I know who journalists write for. And this is a podcast about people who are writing about the west or writing for the West.

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So, for political scientists, public policy people outside of this book, and then we'll pivot to the book like, what are the audiences that your disciplines generally write for this book was more publicly accessible than some of our other work and so

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we were gearing up towards kind of senior level junior senior level undergraduates or graduate students in the general public so we tried to to write it, you know, to make it accessible, and you know we.

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There are a variety different disciplines in here that write differently so we we had a little bit of editing to try to make kind of that same level of accessibility.

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But that's kind of the general orientation, you know, for this particular book, and I you know I, you know, when Eric was talking to that we you know we we had the open source so we can update it so I just an example that a couple a couple years ago was

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writing a NSF grant to look at mitigation and planning for wildfire in the West and we had we actually have the Wasatch range in there, in our project we've got a, you know, when he area in Washington and we included the southern Willamette Valley, and

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the first time we submitted our grant and got rejected by NSF because they said there isn't wildfire in the Willamette Valley because there hadn't been a history of it.

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And so we just blindly. Yeah, we just we quit so we put in a case study of Central Oregon instead around the shoots from Ben, Ben is. And so we got the grant, this is with faculty University Oregon and Portland State University and then last summer happened

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happened and so we we wrote back in and said, change your plans here you know NSF we're gonna go back and look at the valid because the winds and the drought conditions were unprecedented and so having an open source with the print version we can't go

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back and make revisions to that but with the open source we can.

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Are you often writing for policymakers, and we hope that it means that in policymakers hands and we certainly put it in that direction so that it's capturing, you know, again, sort of from from different perspectives what's going on and how we need to

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start thinking about these issues that we see as intractable but ways that we can maybe hopefully move forward on addressing some of them because new climate change is not going to improve, but we know, I mean unless there's large scale efforts to do

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so but we know that we can start thinking more about water about fire about all of these things that are happening in the West, and hopefully start at least mitigating some of the current and impending problems that are that are arising from those things,

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so that the conclusion of the book is aimed at public at large but but policymakers and we talked about lessons learned in the book but ways to try to overcome some of the polarization and conflict and so there's a theme Yellen in Oregon is kind of known

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for its watershed councils and for collaborative governance approaches to natural resource.

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What do you feel like the policymakers or the general public, are missing What is it just the background information, is it that they're missing someone who can translate science and data into something digestible.

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What, what's the missing component that makes these problems.

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Not just intractable becoming as climate change isn't going to go away. But we seem to be having the same fights that we about public lands that we were having 50 years ago 30 years ago 10 years ago.

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So what's missing from the dialogue and how might this book or the other things that you and your contributors are writing contribute to solving that well I can like take a shot at this.

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The, so I just did a plenary with a conference and international conference.

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They were focusing on wicked problems and so we, that's one of the things that that public lands management and in the West is it's a wicked problem I mean crop cuts across multiple jurisdictions, it has multiple interests involved.

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And it requires kind of a big picture approach so one of the approaches we've been using a Oregon State University is what we call k tans KTAN and its knowledge to action that works and is trying to get scientists, out of their laboratories and working

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directly with communities, and all the stakeholders in the community on problem solving and trying and getting the communities of stakeholders involved in the science process and then having the scientist try to help integrate the science in a fashion

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that's understandable to the layperson, and even in these teams are interdisciplinary too so we try to involve social sciences, so we focus on process, not just the science because there's more than sciences get that's important in these in these in these

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collaborative processes you know there's a his people have a history understand the history there what the issues been like, how resources have been managed over the past and so that's kind of one attempt.

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and that's trying to bring in a big picture kind of perspective at the local level, at a community level or watershed watershed level.

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I think if you look at public service on the west, you see, high levels of support for conservation of lands for water protection for various species protection and that kind of spans the political spectrum.

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And so I think, really it's hoping that we start moving a narrative forward where we do have some shared values around the Western and around public lands and around us and and conservation.

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And I think that that's something that needs to be communicated more clearly that we do have.

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We do have overlap and sort of how many of us would like to see the West, still be in the sense that we can go out and go hunting or fishing or we can go backpacking or whatever those things are or just knowing that it exists for species protection I

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think that those things do transcend a lot of our political differences and so I think it might be really important that we start constructing a narrative around that, where we do recognize that there are some pretty, pretty deep seated shared values,

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about the West and the western identity.

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Let's a powerful statement that there's more consensus then we perhaps realize, and it's untapped, and it just needs to be given a narrative, so that people can see, oh, we're on opposite sides of this political spectrum, and the rhetoric we used to talk

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about public lands is often so opposed but when we strip some of that away, there's actually a lot of shared values and things that we're all interested in.

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We might disagree about how to fix it but we have some shared concerns.

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We have a big wall, a big that a wildfire just in the hills right above my, my neighborhood last is October November it was like two or three days before the temperatures dropped and it started raining, it was just the worst time of it, you know, just

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could have waited, but I was standing with some of my neighbors, watching the fire, and these are neighbors that I know I do not see eye to eye with politically and but we are all lamenting the same thing.

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Right. I'm a heavy trail user I use the trails that were getting burned did they don't, but we both were concerned you know about what's going on, so I'd like that's a very optimistic hopeful idea that there's more consensus then we think as you teach

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this to students as a unique audience.

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And maybe specifically for you, Brent you've been engaged with students for a bit, little bit longer than Eric, I think, do you see a change in the new generation of how they think about public lands and these things.

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Yeah I'm. That's what makes me optimistic.

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Young people really care about communities they care about people they seem to be a lot more open minded about different issues they are very much focused and worried about the future.

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And what climate change means for our beautiful public lands and spaces in the West.

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And so, it's, it's been easier to engage them at least here where I've been at Oregon State version in previously, Washington State University, it's never been easier to engage them in to have at the one time great concern about climate change in the

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things happening in the world right now at the same time that the possibilities of of coming together and, and, and solve in problem solving.

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Well that's helpful as well maybe The Kids Are All Right.

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All right.

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I'm, I'm constantly impressed with the students I work with here and I'd say if I, if I was an undergrad today, or even a grad student I wouldn't have a chance stacked up against some of them.

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Well, maybe we should turn to the book itself, I know this is a little bit awkward. And it's one of the reasons I haven't had.

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I haven't featured a anthology before because it's weird to ask the editors to come on and talk about the contributors, or to put words in their mouths it puts you in a little bit of an odd situation situation.

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So we'll keep this may be kind of in the most general of terms.

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But you, you divide this into four parts, kind of thematic groupings. And I want to kind of talk about each of them, in turn, and I'm curious about how you landed on these groupings.

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The first part is the changing West, then you have forest wildfire and water, third part wilderness and wildlife. And then the fourth and the longest section development sovereignty and conflict in the West.

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How did you come to these divisions are these something that you started with, or you solicited lots of contributions and sat with them and move them around and to see where there is overlap and shared themes.

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How this organization come.

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Yeah, it was really the latter we, we knew what we wanted content wise in the book and it wasn't until we sort of started going through the chapters various times that we sort of identified ways that they would sort of hang together a group together well.

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and then we came up with our with our different sort of sub sections within the book that that kind of stuck a little thematically where you could see this thing that connectivity between the different chapter issues.

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And many of these you could move to other sections and they would fit, equally as well right there's so much Oh, Yes. You know, it seems more manageable to break it up into four sections versus here's the big, here's a huge list of chapters to read.

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And it sort of identifies like again weight issues that do that do kind of naturally. Hang closer together, but as you said, any of these chapters could go on any part of the book and it would be it would fit.

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Let's talk about the first section here, the changing West.

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co wrote, you can return to this.

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And Mark Brunson who you already mentioned is in this section, he is on. I brought him onto the advisory board of the Charles read center for Western studies and he's the one who tipped me off to your book.

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And I love mark.

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What are some of the big things that are changing so rapidly in the West, that political scientists and public policy people need to be thinking about in terms of public lands.

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Increasing urbanization, people moving cities growing larger, bringing in people with different kinds of value systems that are more amenable to maybe environmental concerns.

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There's also been, you know, economic change in the West as the economies have moved away from natural resource extraction to more service service sector employment which once again attracts different kind of person with a different kind of value system

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and then in a lot of the left West, there's been a decline in, there's some areas where rural areas are growing but primarily a lot of areas rural areas are declining young people are moving out and it's changing political dynamics in the States.

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Also, you know to keep coming back I think the climate change is changing how we're thinking about things with seeing Lake Mead started going to historic lows.

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I drove Erica did to I'd be interested to hear what she said but I drove down to pick up my son and last November and drove, I haven't been over Lake Shasta in a long time but I only.

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I saw you drive over several arms I didn't even see the lake.

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It was so low so we got some.

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A lot of, you know, environmental change going on and demographic and political change.

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Erica, yeah i know i mean and i think that i think that just even touch on this just visually I think people are very aware of sort of seeing things that are significantly different from 510 15 years ago.

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Yeah, I also just did the high five drive and on that drive back there was virtually no snow on Mount Shasta which is unusual for this time of year, there was a wildfire right outside that area so we sort of hit all these things and as we continued north.

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There was massive power outages from the excessive heat so you know things are sort of happening and I feel like they're, you know this is happening more frequently that we're it's hard to sort of avoid discussions around what's going on and how we're

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going to accommodate or mitigate or adapt to these changes.

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But as Brent said as well and i think i think climate change is really the big one in layered with, you know, the political issues that continued around challenges to public lands and these things like as at a time where we're trying to protect more public

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lands for a multitude of reasons for, for better water quality and to protect water resources or to protect forested areas are endangered species, there's more challenges to these areas as well.

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So we're sort of, there's these multiple things that are that are, you know, kind of creating more conflict. And there's always been conflict but I think it's more pronounced now that we have this additional layer of climate change changing, changing

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the scope in which we're, you know, what we're what we're talking about, essentially, as part of the tension also and everything is changing so rapidly but there are certain segments of the population certain public lands users who don't want to change

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as well they, they have livelihoods in ways they've been using public lands for years and they want to continue doing it as such, isn't this kind of part of the at me relate the foundation of this tension between the new rapidly changing list and then

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perhaps some old west peoples and communities that are still around. Right. Yes.

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You know, we find that you know give you an example that we had a, we are, we had a project us up from the previous NSF project in Central Oregon and we focused on the shoes county which has been which is growing like crazy and you know we have a man

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IT industry growing lots of young people moving in changing rapidly and then we have the Klamath Basin in the study too, and that kind of basin is kind of a little bit stagnant, economically, and we have a lot of people still want traditional uses and

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and we tried to do you know future scenario building with with key stakeholders, and then then we got some agreement on what you know there's disagreement how to get there but what what they wanted to see at the end I mean what they want public lands

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to look like.

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Whereas in the climb with a lot of the people were, we're talking about 20 years ago and, you know, it was timber harvest for high, and in the, the economy was different.

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So yeah, very, there's very much so that's leading to the conflict.

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Now perhaps this is where you know the work that you're doing will help bring people together, like you were saying getting stakeholders in the room together to, to talk, one of our law professors here, took part in a.

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I don't know maybe I don't know it's a political scientist, and maybe one overall purpose maybe they're both there but they took part in a group that went down to Bears Ears.

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This was maybe three or four years ago.

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But I don't remember who was it organized it but they had gotten people from all sides that debate and took them all out camping together.

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And literally sat around the campfire and talked about Bears Ears. And, you know, the protection of cultural resources and accessibility to, you know, natural resource extraction all kinds of things.

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And they said it was like it was profound that just getting people together to talk was seem to break down a lot of barriers people who have just been yelling past each other, you know online or in public forums or in politics, when they actually talk

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there's actually they actually do have something to talk about. And it turns out they actually haven't been talking to each other, they just been talking past each other.

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I think that happens a lot. I think that we we talk at one another and we don't listen, and I think that that's a big issue.

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And that's why I think you know Brent and I talked about this, we talked this notion about changing the narrative you know about having a discussion and being able to identify commonalities mean it's fine, you know, we're in a country where we can agree

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agree to disagree and that's that should happen and it does happen, but there should also be an opportunity to come together and and say we, you know, identify the things that we recognize as being important to maybe all of us are to most of us, that

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we want to work towards those those goals, and maybe the maybe the ways of getting there are different, but the idea is the same.

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At the end of the day, though there are some things that simply can't really be compromised on right. And in this.

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And the second section of the book you have some chapters on wildfire which kind of impact. Everyone, at least, it didn't used to impact Corvallis but they do now.

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Right.

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And the valley.

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But the other, there's a chapter in there about water about the Colorado River. Right, and conflict in the West, often comes down in the end to water, and at the end of the day, there, there isn't really room for compromise, it seems when his water going

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to be used for a kind of residential consumer use or for industrial or agricultural use, which is a bigger, people are people think oh I need to, you know, turn the water off and I'm brushing my teeth, which is great.

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But when you look at the graphs of who's using most of the water agriculture is actually often bigger than people realize and industry.

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And in the end, especially with declining water resources and I we've seen Lake Mead and Lake Powell.

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It is a finite resource, it is a zero sum game.

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There's only so many pieces of the pie to divvy up.

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I don't know what the answer to that is, but resources are finite and disagreements and how to use them.

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I don't know how some of those go away.

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That's not really a question.

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It's more of a grant and I just, we did a large survey project, a couple years back and we just wrote a paper on on water policy and the rest is as an example and you know what we found, you know, going through various water policy options, people had

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to, you know, sort of state their level of agreement with. We found the cross the four states that we surveyed that there was pretty strong levels of agreement with all of the water.

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Water policy support for all of it so i think i think that there is people are aware and, at least when we think about water. I think that, that there's a growing awareness that, you know, we know when we don't have water we can see it, we know when there's

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water quality that's affected because of water scarcity, or what or times of drought. And so sort of a sense of like something needs to be done to manage our water resources to protect endangered species to protect drinking water to protect industries

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use it whatever that might be, there seems to be pretty broad based support for that.

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Here, I noticed to just saw this in California with with agriculture that they they have you know, grow a lot of rice which is heavily water dependent and in the survey that we did, we asked a bunch series of trade off questions so between food, water

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and energy and.

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energy and. And there's a lot of support from moving to more drought tolerant agriculture and among all all four states as California, Oregon, Washington and Idaho, versus using water intensive planets like like rice so there, there was a quite a bit

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there's a little difference between the states to California has been subject to drought lot longer than the other, other states and so there's a little bit more support for damn building session and pipelines there then, then the other three states because

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the other three states often think they might be the target of California is pipeline So, because that plays into our politics too but but there was a lot of consensus among Publix and all four states.

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I mean I've also read the almonds take a tremendous amount of water to grow almonds but are people going to stop drinking almond milk, you know, or

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consumers have, you know, consumers can speak with what they buy and don't buy right and this often also impacts populations so unevenly, those that are are wealthy.

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If the price of almond milk it goes up, if the price of water goes up, they can afford it, they're fine, it's lower socio economic segments of society that bear the brunt of energy costs go up, and you know, they can't afford AC anymore you know they're

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There are certain populations that saw it, the suffering evenly than others. Right. Yeah.

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But I also think when you when you need to just just take on the example on and I don't think most people are terribly aware of how much water or how much energy or how much work goes into the products that they're buying.

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If you talk, you know if you, if you're sort of speaking specifically like would you stop watering your lawn to conserve water oh yeah that's that's a very tangible a very notable thing, but thinking about, even the things that we purchase or clothing

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or food whatever that requires an excessive amount of water and energy. It's not generally i would i would guess it's not generally on on sort of most people's minds, but unless you connect it to something as you're suggesting as you're saying as well

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I guess if the price goes up on something, you're going to become very aware that oh this is because we're using a scarce resource and it's much harder to produce and to have availability for.

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I think that's probably the key moment in which people do become aware it's when it hits their pocketbook. Right. We don't know where our food and clothing comes from.

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Generally speaking, I'm, I have a kind of a future book project idea to do some local history, water history here along the Wasatch Front, cuz I was thinking about locally we have, there's canals and reservoirs and stuff, but some of the canals have been

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buried. And there's this one page trail by my house called the Murdoch canal trail. And it was really great long page trail that kind of goes behind these neighborhoods, and it used to be an open canal.

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Used to be visually people saw, oh, here's my water, and now it's buried or the Aqua docks and pipelines coming down from the canyons and from the reservoirs are buried and people visually don't see it Don't think about their water in ways that they used

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to and you go look through all the records from the late 19th century that's all they're talking about is water. Right.

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And, you know, doing repairs on the pipeline and it's in the papers and it's in public discourse because they were just much more aware of its scarcity.

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And now we just turn on the tap. And it's there.

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So I think yeah becoming become raising public awareness of these issues is key. I mean, I think it's really interesting because we sort of, we have the canary in a coal mine right we have parts of Central Valley California that's that is essentially,

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you know, starting to descend each year because they're driving so much ground water up you know there's these things that are happening but sort of just not, you know, it may be in part because there's so much, there's so many environmental issues that

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maybe it sort of becomes very much like what do you what do you grab onto to think about and to try to, to, to maybe try to invest in a way and improving that situation.

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But yeah, I think the fact that we are you know that these really significant events are occurring, but we're not sort of saying, you know, strong policies to sort of address that.

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Is that sort of representing a disconnect about what's going on.

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That is a problem that when I lived in Nebraska, we were talking about the Oglala aquifer a lot, and how in the southern plains, you know, the water tables dropped hundreds of feet and you know there's wells that simply don't, and there's counties that

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have said like zero withdrawals from the aquifer we're just not gonna pull anymore because it's not there.

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And now that I live here in Utah. It's a whole different set of environmental crises that I'm thinking about. And it's interesting that you know your point Erica there's just so many crises, and it's hard to, to think about just one or dependent down.

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And I wonder if the public sometimes tunes out. Because, like, Well what can I do, there's just so much, but one interesting thing that a lot of your chapters, do internally within the chapters, but then when you read them together, is how interrelated.

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So many of these things are so you can't think about water resources without thinking about agriculture without thinking about wildfires without thinking about the wild land urban interface and growing demographics like it's all interconnected.

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Which, it's a little overwhelming to try to take it all on especially for the general public or for policymakers who want to make a discrete carefully defined policy that, you know, that they can get voters to approve or to, you know, to reelect them

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because they put forth as one policy they want something a nice little package, and that just doesn't exist. Right. I think that when it is happening and then you have policy that exists in a silo doesn't necessarily consider the other things that you

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just mentioned so you can you can develop maybe some great policy that's going to address a particular issue, but then has negative consequences for another issue or and then so without sort of that both interdisciplinary and sort of ways of thinking

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and also the ways of integrating policy together. It's going to be really challenging to to address these and overwhelming and I think Brett and I are incredibly cognizant of the fact that the field in which we work is not in one, excuse me, where, you

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know, people are gleefully picking up the book and reading through it and thinking great I have a solution I know what to do. It's really more to to continue to the conversation and how do we start thinking about at least getting to a place where we can

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start talking more comprehensively about policies in the West. Yeah, with the start these conversations and get get everything on the table, so we can even think about it.

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And we had a PhD student doing research on this the, a lot of irrigators Now are we have the Open. Open canals which I get evaporation such and so they're starting to bury their canals are the ditches now and then they're putting in low head hydro so

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that they're, they're not all using the water to, you know, to grow, to grow food but also producing their own energy, and then they're taking the residues like the stocks and stuff they're left over after their food production and changing into biofuels

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and so they're closing kind of closing the gap there between water and energy, but they're doing it because it's, you know, it has really good environmental outcomes but it's saving them a lot of money.

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And so, so it's kind of a win win win and as, as more and more irrigators are adopting this here we see other irrigation districts coming in and looking at the at the progress being made and so.

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So there's a lot of positive things going on to and in the renewable energy. It's another chapter, we have in the book so there's a lot more renewables going in wind.

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Interestingly, there's here's another one of these conflicts so they, the state you know also Oregon, Washington California been very aggressive in pursuing our portfolios for greenhouse gas reductions.

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And so there's been encouragement of adopting renewable energy. So some farmers in the Willamette Valley here which is, you know, Oregon has really stringent rules on land use for forest and for agriculture, but a lot some farmers started putting solar

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on their lands, and which didn't take some of the land out of production and so it was kind of a nun. People didn't think about you know the once again getting back to the complexities issues and so the, a couple counties have used Oregon's land use laws

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to prohibit further solar to keep the land into egg production and so, so you start looking at these things we haven't yet we talked about cascading events like when it comes to management of public lands and stuff that's just that's not publicly but

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that's just an example if you're pursuing one policy objective and ends up impacting another policy objective.

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We'd be naive to think that would be anything other than that, there's always going to be unintended consequences.

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But I think especially in the realm of politics.

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The those complexities cascading events the nuance of all this, that's not convenient and politicians, really like to acknowledge that because the public has a hard time, you know grappling with that, which again, underscores the importance and the value

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this on the table so people can think about it critically, and it can have more comprehensive ways.

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So what, another thing to that this last summer, we were, we got, we're doing research and Eric and I are doing a project on this right now to wildfire.

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A lot of, you know, urban folks in the West, where, where you're concerned about wildfire they hear about wildfire but it doesn't really affect him well as summer.

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You know we focused on welfare but we never focused on smoke and all of a sudden, the smoke came in and you're stuck in your house for a week plus and you can't go outside wildfire became very real for you so, so the so young, wildcards were horrible

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destroyed a lot of land destroyed cities at the same time, the smoke, I think impacted our legislature actually took a lot of action on wildfire which they normally wouldn't have because the Portland and the gene and in Salem the capital word were, you

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know, inundated with smoke for a week and so and I know. Same thing happened Seattle. So, yeah, we were all breathing California forests and British Columbia forest, you know, the smokers.

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You can look at those satellite. Those moving satellite images and it was astounding.

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How thick and how far the smoke spread across the west last, not just last summer but, you know, yeah. Every summer. Yeah, increasingly, it hurts me to skip over this third section on wilderness and wildlife because it's the one I've been thinking about

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the most of my work but I'm because we are running out of time I do want to push kind of towards you guys this conclusion.

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And because this is also one of the pieces that you guys wrote.

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You're talking this conclusion what you can tell the Old West the new is the next West which I like that I hadn't I've used Old West New West, a lot I've never talked with the next West.

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But you talk about the disconnect between rural communities and policymakers and how rural communities who are often the public land users, feel threatened, sometimes by those making policy.

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You have a little table where you talk about two conflicting natural resource management paradigms that you see through all of the, the chapters in this book, of all things coming down to these set of conflicting points one resource management paradigm

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being bio centric as you put it in your environment wildlife ecosystems. And the other being anthropocentric thinking about, people. Maybe we can close out with a discussion about this.

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Talk to us a little bit about these two paradigms and the conflicts they create, and then, you know, maybe where the solutions are to try to find a compromise consensus between them.

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We can start.

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I can start out with an example from my childhood.

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So my grandparents pretty much raised by myself and my two sisters and.

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And they would take us out we on hunting and fishing we're always going outdoors camping all the time. This is an Eastern Washington northern Idaho.

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And they would tell me y'all so there are a different generation. The Greatest Generation people kind of world war to World War Two, and they would always tell me that all these lands were put here specifically for humans and they were very religious

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These God gave us right to manage these lands, and they're here for humans so very very anthropocentric at the same time, they, they want to clean water to go fishing and they wanted a place where they can go hunting and you know they weren't they weren't

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rich so that was often on public lands for service lands, or BLM lands and so, and then, you know, I, I'm coming from a different generation with different experiences and so I was kind of in developed, like most young people at the time.

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Kind of a more which what you see and our last EP and stuff like that more of a bio centric perspective that we're all here and in that animals have a right to exist where the humans use them or not.

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And so we used to have when I was in college, the dinner table fights I go visit my grandparents I absolutely love that we would have, we would agree on the ends, but not the purpose or the means.

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And so I think that's kind of a.

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An example of that.

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I'm going to, if I could go Eric can give an example where you can rectify these so.

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So when during the occupation I'm out here, wildlife refuge which I like to point out the people that came in occupied were from outside or again they were not Oregonians okay.

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And so when they came in occupied at the, at that time we had, we have Masters and PhD students doing research on renewable energy, water and endangered species in that area and they were doing research before the occupation during occupation and after

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the occupation.

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And one of one of the things was studying there's proposed wind farm that they were studying there was some candy opposition to it. Now the one was just looking at, water, and climate change the other, the third student was looking at sage grouse which

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is in that particular area.

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And so what what had been happening in in that male here area is that they have a collaborative in place, and the collaborative has all the local ranchers on it, it's got the tribe, Native American tribe involved in it, it has for service BLM involved

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in it, it has county officials involved in it city officials as estate agencies, and environmental groups from Portland involved in it. And during the occupation the bunnies cut.

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They had their so they're part of the, it's to manage the water resources the water right shed and habitat for the sage grouse and so what they have done is the ranchers had fenced off critical areas of habitat for for fish and and for waterfowl because

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it's on the fly away, and.

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And so, with abundance came in and cut the wires to cut to let the Catalan to the public lands there and the ranchers who are members of this collaborative, even though they may have agreed with many of the things that the occupiers were saying and their

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policy preferences. They went right out there right away got the cattle back onto their land and put the fence backup. And so it's just an example in.

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There's also another connection one of the ranchers there who was the president of the Oregon gentleman's Association he grows a free range beef, without any biotics and then he sells it to the Portland restaurants because he went Portland went for free

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range antibiotic and so there's a connect an economic connection has been made, but that's in, they get together they have meetings, they don't have agreement on everything all the time but they want they all in the end want the same thing.

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And so, and you've got the anthropocentric in the Bible centric perspectives. Now, actually want the same management at the end they don't agree and next year and technique and stuff but that's just an example that yet we talked about.

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Erica Do you have any other other examples of, of these tensions between these two Matt kind of management systems, or the way in the way in which maybe those tensions can be overcome.

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I mean I think again and I think Brent just stated it and we talked about it earlier, like, I think that we have to get to a point where we encourage both dialogue and interaction and you mentioned it as well with your example about people going down

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to Barry's ears. Like, I think that it's critical that we actually start talking to each other, because that's where we start to identify our commonalities that's where we start to, like, when, when really great policy has been made, it has been made

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because of bipartisanship because of people talking because of things coming together, and we have the ability to do that, we just need to kind of facilitate that again, like how do we how do we start having a good conversation.

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You know, similar to Brett you know Mike and in my family you know we certainly we were outside all of the time and so I had that very strong sort of ethic and connection to land, but in my, you know my in laws are ones that grew up in a Midwest farm

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area.

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And certainly I politically identify differently, but in terms of connection to the land and in terms of conservation of that land that they occupied that's very important to them.

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So there is these like themes that just stick through this and we just need to kind of highlight those and I think that we spend a great deal of time talking about our differences and exacerbating this notion that we're all so different you know we're

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in these two different camps and we don't have things that come together but when you look at public opinion surveys when you talk to people you do these things you do see this, this common thread that does connect a lot of the West.

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And I think that's what we need to start highlighting more and that's what we need to start bringing together and I think politicians can do that to get to your point, is being able to have start having, you know greater conversations around, around the

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commonalities that we all share. I love that and maybe that's like a good optimistic.

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Kind of note to wrap things up on it also reminds me makes me think of this new Republican caucus in, I think it's just in the house that john Curtis was helping head up of GOP members, talking about climate change.

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Right.

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But it makes me hopeful that at some point hopefully in the near future and more people will come to the table and say hey we actually have a lot that we agree on and that we can work on together because we all live here on this planet we all live here

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and say you know for Westerners here in the West.

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And these public lands are a great resource and we can probably find lots of things to agree on and how to manage them use them protect them and so forth.

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Well thank you for your time. This is, I thank you for this, this great volume. I'm especially excited that it's open source, and I'll, I'll point people to to do it in print and online so they can sample from and hopefully use it for my professor friends

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use in their classes but also the general public, I think will find a lot in here that bill, they could benefit from. Thank you so much.

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Yeah, thank you so much.

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It's been a pleasure. Take care guys YouTube for.

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Well that's it for this month, thank you so much for listening and I hope you'll subscribe. Please leave us a review on whatever app or platform you're listening through or follow us on Facebook at writing westward podcast or twitter at writing west where

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you can get updates leave comments and communicate with me writing my story is the production of the Charles read center for Western studies at Brigham Young University.

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We are interdisciplinary research center that supports academic research and the promotion of public understanding of the North American West. We host regular public lectures, which we live stream.

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We have an annual funding cycle with awards grants fellowships in categories that nearly anyone researching and working on the region from nearly any disciplinary approach or towards nearly any kind of final product can apply.

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Learn more at read to center.byu.edu, that's REDD center, wlu.edu, or theme music was provided by local Utah composer, Micah doll Anderson find him at Micah Dahl Anderson.

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That's Anderson was a no.com. I'll put a link in the episode and description.

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My name is Brennan renting I serve as the podcast host producer sound engineer publicist just about everything else. So you can direct praise or critique my way.

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I'm the author and editor of a number of books and other studies on the west Borderlands native peoples genocide studies religion and the environment to contact me about the podcast my own research, or just about anything else had to be w rents inc.org.