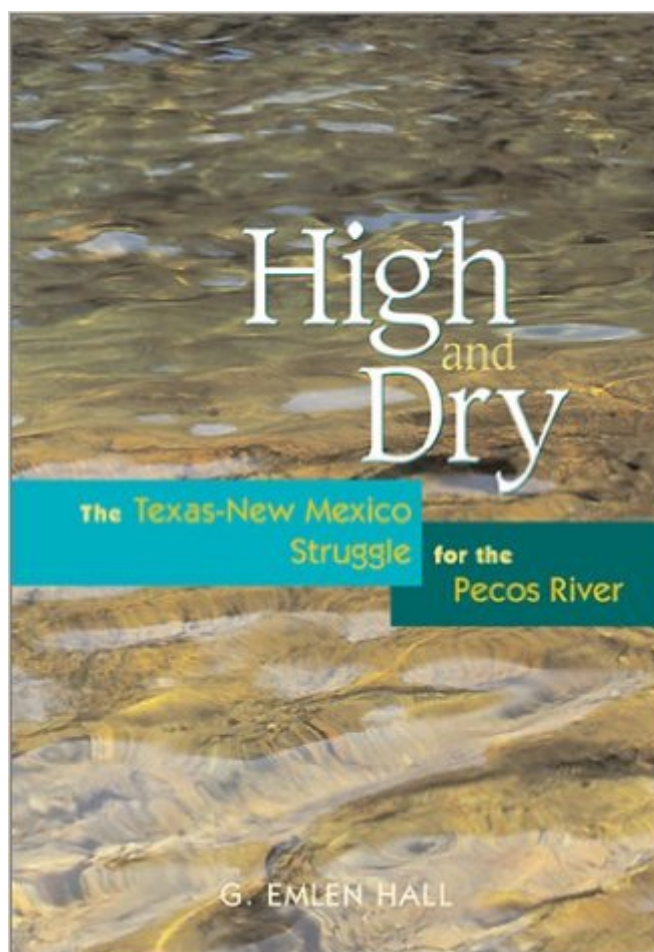


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High And Dry: The Texas-New Mexico Struggle For The Pecos River



Synopsis

Water law, water politics, and especially water shenanigans are at the centre of this book about New Mexico and Texas dividing the Pecos River. On one level the story is about a twenty-year court case, Texas vs New Mexico, a monstrous law suit between two states sharing a common water source, a state boundary, and a long history of mutual enmity. On another level, this story is as big and far-reaching as the high plains drained by the Pecos: it is part memoir, part biography, and part environmental history, part the history of hydrology, and part a contribution to the annals of litigation in the great tradition of Anthony Lewis and Jonathan Harr. While the book focuses on clashes of principles and personalities, especially in the courtroom, it remains very much a story about a river and its world in an arid region. There are irrigators here, including the leading 'old families' of south-eastern New Mexico, and there is nature here, including 'the vampires of the West', the rapacious salt cedars relentlessly sucking up the precious Pecos stream flow. But beneath them all is the author, inviting readers to see how tiny gardens grown for the soul are as crucial to the overall story as the adjudication of water rights. Hall gives a masterful summary of the legal and scientific parts of the story, but he excels in letting us feel and care about water in the same manner as do the people who use it to grow crops.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In the Southwest, water rights are a war zone; the film "Chinatown" (with Jack Nicholson), of course, showed that the fight could even be the background for fictional excitement. This work of legal and social history is hardly a whodunit, yet the real-life battle it surveys possesses a vivid life

nevertheless, in the author's highly readable prose. Hall is a law professor, so it's not surprising that he's done plenty of homework, and has mastered the facts of the story he tells. But he also writes with a humorous touch--appropriately dry (what else?)--and knows how to keep things personal too; he weaves his own experiences (as lawyer, writer, and also gardener and weekend farmer) into the story. As I write (spring, 2002), water shortages may be turning from a regional into a national phenomenon. Even if that danger abates soon, though, we can't take any environmental issues for granted any more, so a book like this has cautionary value too. Water: Gotta have it. Maybe optimists can happily relax if a glass is half-full, but we all need to apply higher standards of worry, when it's a matter of reservoirs. And the book's a wonderful read, too.

Never miss a book by Em Hall.

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