Book Review: *Colorado Water Law for Non-Lawyers* 
By P. Andrew Jones and Tom Cech

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Water touches the lives of all of us every day, and so, at least indirectly, do the rules that govern its allocation. Since the days of the Anasazi, and of the northern Mexican communities of irrigated farms, and especially since the 1859 gold rush, Colorado has been a leader in the development of water law in the arid West. For years, interested lay readers have faced an important gap when searching for information about Colorado water law. Justice Greg Hobbs’s Citizen’s Guide to Colorado Water Law, 3rd ed. (2009) is well written and helpful, but by design is brief (33 pages), necessarily omitting much information. On the other hand, Corbridge and Rice’s Vrash’s Colorado Water Law, rev. ed. (1999), designed as a treatise for legal scholars, is a little too heavy for most interested lay readers. Attorney Andrew Jones and water educator and manager Tom Cech have now filled the gap with a highly readable book that covers the subject well and does a fine job of explaining the human side of the law.

Jones and Cech include the right mix of history, geography, hydrology, and civics to provide the context for their exploration of water law, how it developed, and where it is heading. From the first sentence of the preface, it is clear that they understand the tensions and dilemmas that can hold livelihoods and whole communities in the balance in conflicts over water. The book includes interesting historical notes on topics such as the relation of Colorado’s water law to the California gold rush, and even to the Tribunal of the Water in Valencia, Spain, that dates back to Roman times. Issues related to the allocation of water among Colorado and the 18 states and one foreign country that lie downstream are explored. Clear explanations are given for abstruse terms such as “bypass call,” “rebound call,” “wet water versus paper water,” and “not-non-tributary ground water.” The book’s practical value is enhanced by a listing, in each chapter, of Key Characteristics, Legal Definitions, Governing Acts, Adjudicatory Bodies, and Systems of Administration. Well-illustrated, accessible examples are included where appropriate, as are step-by-step instructions for actions such as obtaining a water right, administering a river call, purchasing someone else’s water right, and entering into a real estate transaction that involves water.

The book makes it clear that water law in Colorado, as elsewhere, is a work in progress, and that numerous critical issues (well described in the text) remain to be settled by the legislature and the courts. It is a well-written and useful book for anyone interested in learning about or influencing the development of water law in Colorado.

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