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Review of *Ranching West of the 100th Meridian: Culture, Ecology, and Economics* Edited by Richard L. Knight, Wendell C. Gilgert, and Ed Marston

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Ranching West of the 100th Meridian: Culture, Ecology, and Economics. Edited by Richard L. Knight, Wendell C. Gilgert, and Ed Marston. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2002. xviii + 259 pp. Tables, photos, figures, illustrations, bibliographical references, index. \$50.00 cloth, \$25.00 paper.

Ranching West of the 100th Meridian provides a diverse array of perceptions of ranching in western states. The authors of its seventeen essays describe ranching culture, ecology, and economics, while omitting extremist approaches to western land management. Intentionally absent are the preservationists who

suggest removing ranching from western rangelands and those who would remove all land from the public domain. This selection attempts to unite concerned users of western lands and to present in a fair way less vocal western land stewards, the "radical center." What remains is a refreshing variety of authors committed to sustainable rangeland use that includes ranching. The volume should have great appeal to natural resource managers, conservationists, and anyone who has considered the changing face of wildland use. Its honesty reveals the heartfelt tie of western residents to land, animals, and the environment.

The collection opens with Paul Starrs's suggestion that the American West follow the Spanish example of treating human land use as an integral element of rangeland maintenance, arguing that ranching retains endemic knowledge of the resource. The second chapter explicitly outlines threats of rangeland conversion to residential development and details land ownership patterns in the Great Plains. "The Culture of Ranching" section portrays the harsh Great Plains environment, the staying power of its long-term residents, and small community life. A concise description of lost ranches on the Pacific Slope and of the many inconsistencies in the American public's views of ranching reintroduces realism in an otherwise nostalgic section. "The Ecology of Ranching" section actually addresses social perceptions, while the section devoted to "The Economics of Ranching" details trends in land ownership and means for diversification, providing clear explanations of alternative conservation tools such as conservation easements and controlled development. This is the most positive portion of the volume, offering clear avenues for action. Poetry and portrayals of ranching culture, rich with imagery and irony, appear throughout.

Several papers suggest that ranchers, by virtue of their ties to the land, are inherently committed to conservation and that ranching retains open space in an environment-friendly manner (more so than do small-acre subdivisions or large corporate landholders). Ed Marston's epilogue admonishes ranchers for "congratulating themselves on their quality of life and lack of responsibility for what goes on in the congested urban world," noting that ranchers must become adept at participation in the larger society, combining their intimate knowledge of resources with new management tools and value-added marketing. The authors record a gradient stretching from ranching gone bad to the best land stewardship. Consequently, they document many of the creative voices of the "radical center." Serious managers, regardless of their convictions, should read every essay, rather than selecting the few most comfortable ones. **Ann L. Hild**, *Department of Renewable Resources, University of Wyoming.*