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Peer reviewed

The Blue and the Green: A Cultural Ecological History of an Arizona Ranching Community. By Jack Stauder. (Reno and Las Vegas, Nevada, University of Nevada Press, 2016. xviii + 338 pp. \$39.95 cloth.)

Ranchers and environmentalists have feuded over the West's public rangelands since the 1940s, and from a distance—which is how most Americans see it—very little has changed: environmentalists demand fewer livestock, ranchers demand less federal regulation, and government agencies muddle along in between. Up close, however, the story is more complex, and recent decades have indeed seen major changes, at least in some places. *The Blue and the Green* documents one such case, in the remote Blue River region of east-central Arizona, where lawsuits filed by environmental groups prompted the Forest Service to impose draconian reductions of ranchers' herds in the 1990s.

Stauder “strives to be as balanced and objective as possible” (p. xi), but he admits that his sympathies lie with the ranchers, whose voice, he says, “is not frequently heard, either in the media or in academia” (p. xii). One might dispute this with regard to the media, but it is true that scholarship on today's rangeland conflict is sparse. What the media don't or can't do, moreover, is treat the topic with the historical depth it requires. The Blue (as locals call it) has been home to livestock grazing since the late nineteenth century, and any claims about its ecological conditions today—which is at least nominally what the conflict is about—are meaningless without a solid understanding of the changes that have occurred on that time scale. Much of the area is without roads and therefore eligible for wilderness designation, for example, but the road it once had was destroyed long ago by

flooding that was probably a function of logging as well as grazing. Far from “pristine,” then, the Blue was made *more* “wild” by human destructiveness. The grazing reductions were justified, in part, by the need to protect rare fish species from erosion—but a century of fire suppression created the conditions for a massive wildfire in 2011, and the erosion that followed dwarfed anything that livestock could ever have caused. Moreover, the fish may have been made rare by the intentional introduction of non-native rainbow trout by the Arizona Game and Fish Department decades ago.

These kinds of historical insights, coupled with fine-grained details about the ranching families most affected by the grazing cuts, give *The Blue and the Green* its many strengths. It is difficult to avoid Stauder’s conclusion that the cuts were a cynical outgrowth of “radical, misanthropic environmentalism” (p. 293). But his case is weakened by the relative absence of the voices of environmentalists and Forest Service personnel. Stauder does not try to explain how the opponents of grazing came to their views, nor does he bring any direct evidence to bear on the ranchers’ most serious charge: that “the sharp permit cuts were based on a political decision at the top, not on any scientific evidence; the numbers were ‘preconceived’” (p. 246). The “scientific evidence” remains something of a black box, and we never learn whether the grazing cuts have had any effect on the endangered species that served as their legal pretext.