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**Review: Gateways to the Southwest: The Story of Arizona State Parks**

By Jay M. Price

Reviewed by [William T. Johnson](#)

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Jay M. Price. *Gateways to the Southwest: The Story of Arizona State Parks*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004. 242 pp. ISBN 0-8165-2287-1 (cloth). US\$45.00

Arizona includes more parks and monuments than most western states. Therefore, this book fills a very large gap in understanding the different roles, reasons, and relationships that have existed between the state of Arizona and the many other land management agencies in the Southwest. This understanding begins with knowing the historical context within which the state park system was born in Arizona. Price clearly presents the key concept in the successful formation of Arizona's state parks partnerships. The politics of going it alone was not a viable long-term strategy for the fledgling Arizona State Parks Board when it was born in 1957. Price also makes insightful comparisons between the formation of Arizona's state parks and similar units in several other western states during the same period.

State Park System formation involved a significant shift in interest and influence among citizens, corporate entities, and the state legislature. Attracting local urban residents rather than more distant "customers" was an important strategy in the development of Arizona's early state parks and has remained a consistent philosophy of the State Parks Department.

Organizationally, Price presents the parks one by one as historical entities, water-based recreational sites, or natural areas, plus sites added during and after the Babbitt years. He offers sufficient detail to help the reader become familiar with the key dates, people, and places involved with each unit of the Arizona State Park system. Many subtle and surprising circumstances characterize each park, including the important role of women in park development. As important as the stories about successful park acquisitions are, the stories of failed efforts to acquire specific sites are equally instructive. Aravaipa Canyon, a wilderness area managed by the Bureau of Land Management in southeast Arizona, exemplifies the conflicts that existed between federal wilderness management and the State philosophy of increasing public access. Additionally, time frequently worked against the State Parks Board as negotiations often wore on beyond the window of

opportunity among the various entities involved.

Each era in the evolution of Arizona's State Park System presented unique challenges, opportunities, political strategies, financial hardships, and accomplishments. Price does an admirable job of sorting out the players involved with each potential park unit along with the conflicting missions between intrastate agencies such as the Arizona State Land Department and the Arizona State Parks Department. Looking ahead, Price paints a picture of future struggles much like that of the past for the Arizona State Parks Department.

Outdoor recreation students and practitioners, historians, and those interested in the Southwest should read this book. Regional public, academic, and special libraries should add Price's work to their collections.

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