



Loving Nature, Fearing the State: Environmentalism and Antigovernment Politics before Reagan (Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books)

Brian Drake

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A "conservative environmental tradition" in America may sound like a contradiction in terms, but as Brian Allen Drake shows in *Loving Nature, Fearing the State*, right-leaning politicians and activists have shaped American environmental consciousness since the environmental movement's beginnings. In this wide-ranging history, Drake explores the tensions inherent in balancing an ideology dedicated to limiting the power of government with a commitment to protecting treasured landscapes and ecological health.

Drake argues that "antistatist" beliefs--an individualist ethos and a mistrust of government--have colored the American passion for wilderness but also complicated environmental protection efforts. While most of the successes of the environmental movement have been enacted through the federal government, conservative and libertarian critiques of big-government environmentalism have increasingly resisted the idea that strengthening state power is the only way to protect the environment.

Loving Nature, Fearing the State traces the influence of conservative environmental thought through the stories of important actors in postwar environmental movements. The book follows small-government pioneer Barry Goldwater as he tries to establish federally protected wilderness lands in the Arizona desert and shows how Goldwater's intellectual and ideological struggles with this effort provide a framework for understanding the dilemmas of an antistatist environmentalism. It links antigovernment activism with environmental public health concerns by analyzing opposition to government fluoridation campaigns and investigates environmentalism from a libertarian economic perspective through the work of free-market environmentalists. Drake also sees in the work of Edward Abbey an argument that reverence for nature can form the basis for resistance to state power. Each chapter highlights debates and tensions that are important to understanding environmental history and the challenges that face environmental protection efforts today.

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