Western Turf Wars
The Politics of Public Lands Ranching

By Mike Hudak
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Reviewed by Keith Akers

Cattle ranching on public lands, with its government subsidies for rampant overgrazing, is perhaps the single most harmful manifestation of livestock agriculture in the West. Protests result only in indifference, denial, or cover-up. But why? Mike Hudak's book is substantially different from previous efforts like Waste of the West and Welfare Ranching because he goes beyond the basic facts of the physical damage of overgrazing. In the tradition of "oral history," Hudak traveled the US interviewing people on both sides of the governmental fence—from Forest Service employees to Sierra Club activists. The resulting 27 interviews show why and how this is happening; it is a story of political corruption but also examines the forces of resistance. This unique book is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand what is happening to public lands in the western United States, and an important contribution to Western history.