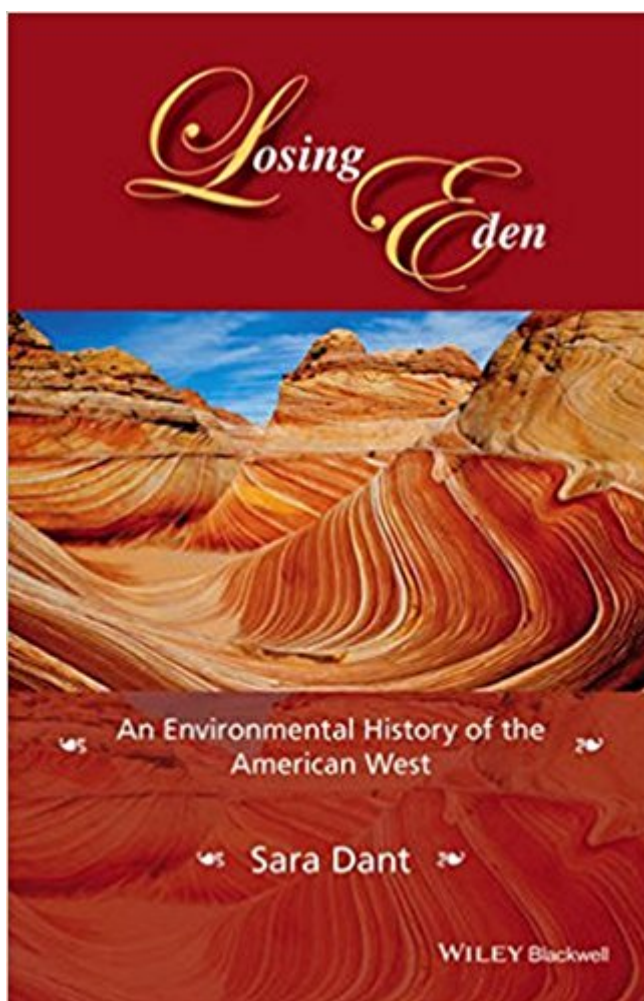


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# Losing Eden: An Environmental History Of The American West (Western History Series)



## Synopsis

Losing Eden traces the environmental history and development of the American West and explains how the land has shaped and been shaped by the people who live there. Discusses key events and topics from the Beringia migration, Columbian Exchange, and federal territorial acquisition to post-war expansion, resource exploitation, and climate change Structures the coverage around three important themes: balancing economic success and ecological protection; avoiding "the tragedy of the commons"; and achieving sustainability Contains an accessible, up-to-date narrative written by an expert scholar and professor that supplements a variety of college-level survey or seminar courses on US, American West, or environmental history Incorporates student-friendly features, including definitions of key terms, suggested reading sections, and over 30 illustrations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Taking the long view, Dant illustrates how the West and its natural resources have always been central to national debates about the relationship between innovation, extraction, economics, politics, and the environment. Her lucid prose and evidentiary approach to these discussions make this book, if not a handbook for behavior, a treatise on how to better understand it. Filled with maps, graphs, and useful illustrations, this excellent book reveals much about our evolution over time and offers new perspectives on how we got to where we are today." — Big Sky Journal — Sara Dant covers a lot of ground...[in her] reasonable assertion that humans have shaped and altered the

landscape of the American West, have been molded in turn by its extremes and limitations, and now need to take a more mindful, sustainable approach to using and inhabiting the region. •

-Pasatiempo/ The Santa Fe New Mexican "Professor Dant's book should prove every worthwhile indeed to all those interested in seeing what has made this remarkable part of the world what it is in a fresh, new light." -The Well-Read Naturalist "The Western landscape is in flux. In her latest book, Sara Dant brings perspective to these changes by examining the factors that precipitated them. That her book should arrive now, at a 180-degree pivot in presidential administrations and political philosophy, in many ways raises the importance of the book. Though barely 200 pages, and so only a scraping of the surface of the West's evolution, Ms. Dant does much justice...[and] ends each chapter with a robust list of suggested readings through which you can further bolster your understanding of the issues in play. • The author leaves us without an illuminating panacea for how we can sustainably consume the West. Rather, she urges us to talk and compromise for what's best for this landscape we love." -National Parks Traveler

Historical narratives often concentrate on wars and politics while leaving out the central role and influence of the physical stage on which history is carried out. In *Losing Eden*, expert scholar and professor Sara Dant traces the environmental history and development of the American West and explains how the land has shaped and been shaped by the people who live there. In a lively and accessible narrative, the text discusses the key events and topics in the environmental history of the American West, from the Beringia migration, Columbian Exchange, and federal territorial acquisition to post-WWII expansion, resource exploitation, and current climate change issues. It is structured around three important themes: balancing economic success and ecological destruction; avoiding "the tragedy of the commons;" and achieving sustainability. The text is the ideal supplement for a variety of college-level courses on US or environmental history and incorporates many student-friendly features, including definitions of key terms, suggested reading sections, and over 30 illustrations. Cohesive and compelling, *Losing Eden* recognizes the historical role of the natural world in the American West and provides important analysis on the continually evolving relationship between the land and its inhabitants.

In this path-breaking text Dr. Dant covers several million years of environmental history of the North American continent, especially the Western US in concise and elegant prose. Many of the most important environmental events impacting North America instigated by humans, (Native Peoples and European) illustrate the catastrophic changes precipitated by human alteration of natural

spaces. This is an excellent classroom text and wonderful read for scholars, professionals and students who care about the natural world and human alteration of the land, water, soil, air, and flora and fauna. Dr. Dant clearly loves her subject and has spent a lifetime travelling and exploring North America's wild spaces. She writes with passion and conviction about the history, and environmental future, of the West. She places heavy emphasis on the Progressive era's western lands policies, the Colorado River Basin, the ancient ones, Native American horse culture, the National Park system, extinction events and the age of the anthropocene all through the lens of her vast expertise and knowledge of western environmental history. This is an excellent text for those interested in a holistic and long range historical context for human habitation and migration in North America. But it is also a surprisingly detailed, accurate, and insightful policy analysis and placement of the critical environmental issues in the 21st century into a broader and more complete historical perspective. If you care about the environment: and especially if you have children for whom clean air, water, and access to wilderness areas is a priority, this is a must read.

People interested in the American West and its environmental story have waited a long time for a narrative history that's as clear-eyed and enjoyable to read as this book. It's going to be widely used in college classes, sure, but it's the kind of book ordinary readers are going to relish as well because in a quick read of barely 200 pages it relates 15,000 years of the history of the West all the way down to the present. If you know what the "Fermi Paradox" is, you will love the author's epilogue speculations, too. Excellent book for people everywhere who love the West!

This book is a pleasure to read and is chock full of historical information that elegantly explains the American West. It shows how we got to where we are and how much is at stake in our shifting political landscape. You could not find a better introduction to this critically important region.

Indifferent. Only got this for "mandatory" class.

Having read some history of the American West lately, including the Columbian Exchange, I wanted to fill in some blanks with this environmental history. But I expected it to be a bit dry, as I prefer social history, history that emphasizes people. Well, I was wrong about the book being dry. It was one of the best histories of any kind I've read in recent months. Rather than going all geological on the reader, Sara Dant did concentrate on people and how their (our) actions have affected the environment and continue to do so. But it isn't a lecture or a downer, it's a colorful and engaging

story of the relationships between the land and the people and how they support and undermine each other. Great stuff!

Environmental history offers a useful lens for understanding any place on Earth but especially so the American West, where the pageant of people through time has been explicitly a dialog between populations and the land. Sara Dant has done a superb job of compressing a long and many-layered saga into 200 highly readable pages. Anyone who wants a crash course in how the modern West came about, with all its mythology, misery, and magnificence, will do very well to start here.

*Losing Eden*™ is a detailed account of the expansion of the west and an environmental account of that area too. The author has traveled throughout the west and is passionate about saving its environment. The book gives a huge amount of information, but is still easy and interesting to read.

My ranking is actually a low 4. That doesn't reflect my estimation of the quality of the book so much as its readability and usefulness. This is not a book that many people are likely simply to sit down and read, since it really is a textbook (or, at least, students in environmental studies classes are likely to be the bulk of the book's natural audience). In my opinion, single-author texts in environmental studies are seldom as readable and as effective as multiple-author texts. There are exceptions, of course. But in this case, there is an excellent multi-authored text that covers a lot of the same ground--*The American West at Risk*, co-authored by Wilshire, Neilson, and Hazlitt. I don't see Dant's book as an improvement on TAWAR, which is both very readable (for students) and very teachable. TAWAR was published in 2008, and thus needs some supplementation.....not so much because the events or the thinking of the past eight years contradict claims made in TAWAR, but because they reinforce them. But it's easy enough to find articles, papers, and discussions that provide that supplementation. All things considered, then, I'm disinclined to favor replacing the TAWAR text with Dant's book.

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