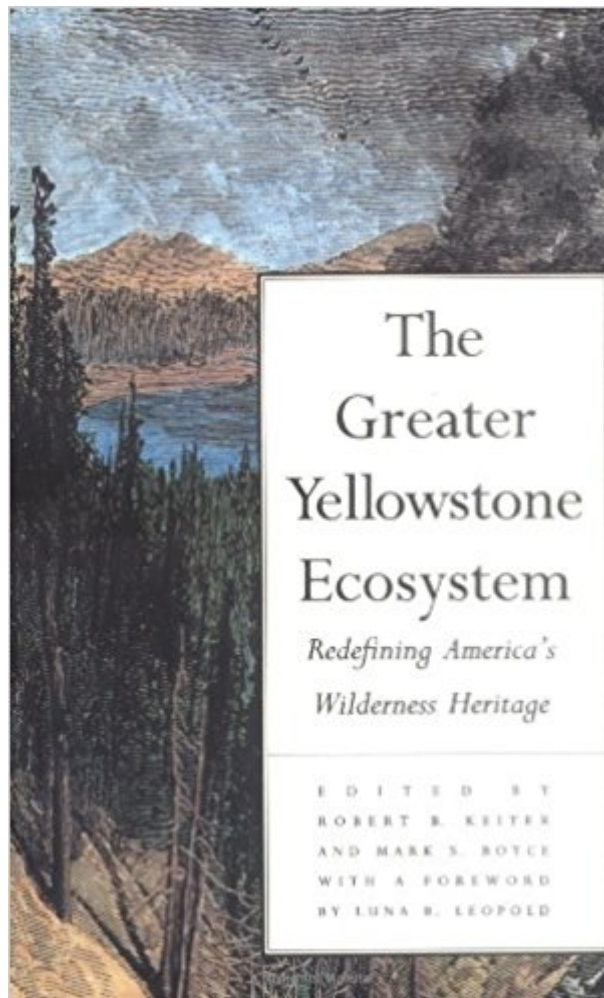


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The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem: Redefining America's Wilderness Heritage



Synopsis

In 1872 Congress designated Yellowstone National Park as the world's first national park; nineteen years later, the land adjacent to Yellowstone became America's first national forest reserve. Since that time, the entire Yellowstone region has been the scene of major battles over resource management—debates between those who would use the land for extraction of national resources (mining, lumbering, and hunting, for example) and those who believe that wildlife and recreation should dominate land use. In this book, experts in science, economics, and law discuss key resource management issues in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem, using them as a starting point to debate the manner in which humans should interact with the environment of this area. Some authors reflect upon the summer 1988 fires at Yellowstone and review the role and effect of fire in the ecosystem. Others offer opinions on appropriate management of elk and bison, key attractions to Yellowstone since its inception. Still others address the question of whether wolves—now a missing component of the Yellowstone ecosystem—should be restored to the region. A final essay by editors Robert B. Keiter and Mark S. Boyce suggests how ecosystem management principles will affect Greater Yellowstone's future and how an ecological process management philosophy might be implemented. This important book, which includes special archival photographs of the Yellowstone area, will be the major source of information on this land for years to come. It is also valuable for all who are interested in how wildlands throughout the world can be preserved in their natural state in the face of accelerating human encroachment. .

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this important book, experts in science, economics, and law discuss key resource management issues in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem--among them the management of fire, elk, wolves, and bison--using them as starting points to debate the manner in which humans should interact with the environment of this region.

Excellent background, somewhat outdated or in need of a sequel to follow up on what has happened since.

Like many others,, this book examines ecosystem management in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. (Sidenote: why doesn't anyone seem to study the Greater Yosemite or Smoky Mountain Ecosystems?) The concept of "ecosystem management" has plenty of wrinkles to it - - hence the need for this book - - but the basic idea is to management both processes and outcomes at the level of an entire ecosystem instead of managing individual species. The book focuses on three controversial issues, fire, elk and wolves. However, many other ecosystem issues appear through the book as well. This book is explicitly multidisciplinary, with contributions from lawyers, economists, biologists, and land managers. The contributors address the kinds of topics that you'd want them to address, such as the role of top-level carnivores (wolves and bears), the consequences of elk (over)grazing, forest fire, and the like. The chapters fall into three rough groups - - the first, one the history and policy of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) concept, varying approaches to ecosystem management, and then particular processes (especially forest fire). The book is intended for the specialist rather than the layman - - but specialists in one discipline won't have any trouble understanding contributions from other disciplines, and advanced-level undergraduates in many fields would be able to read the book. Like any edited volume, the contributions vary significantly in quality. Some authors have a clear view of the "big picture," while others are more limited to their own specialty. The biologists tend to have the greatest tunnel vision, but John Craighead's chapter does a great job seeing biological issues in a larger historical and political context. It's also dated in significant ways, reflecting debates over the northern range of Yellowstone in the 1980s and 1990s. Since the introduction of wolves in 1995, top-down regulation of elk by predators has supplanted the policy of "natural regulation" of elk by food supply that motivated many of these changes. Nonetheless, if you're interested in ecosystem management, or in the management of Yellowstone National Park, you'll want to read this book. It doesn't really address topics outside of these, so the general reader will probably find it frustratingly specialized.

The essays compiled in this book are an excellent resource for someone who is trying to understand the complex issues surrounding the protection of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. However, a number of the essays, in providing evidence to support the arguments are geared more toward the policy maker or toward the scientist who is gathering background information on the issues. Not all of the essays are written in such a fashion that they are beyond the comprehension of the average reader. Some essays are written clearly and do provide an effective starting point for someone coming into the field to understand the issues surrounding issues such as fire policy or wolf management. Both of which are still hot topics in the region today. Finally, many of the essays are better for understanding a historical perspective to the issues. Wolf reintroduction has occurred and now Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho are looking to have wolves delisted. The essays on wolf management are dated enough that they are a starting point to understand the underpinnings of the issues of today, rather than where we are going in the near future. All in all, if the reader can move past some of the more technical aspects of the book, they will have a better grasp of how and why various management issues are occurring in this wonder of nature.

The DOE plans to build a nuclear/hazardous waste incinerator directly upwind of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. What do the authors think about this recent development?

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