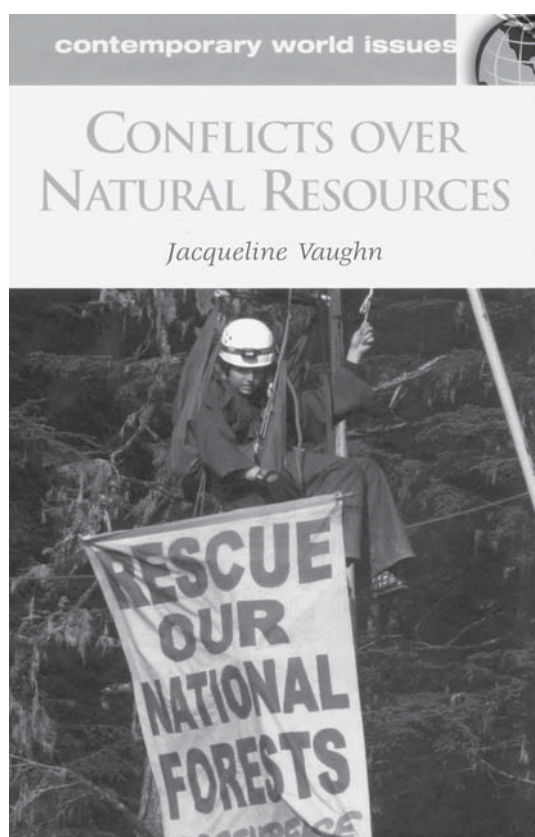


Conflicts over natural resources – a reference handbook, by Jacqueline Vaughn, 2007. Contemporary World Issues Series. ABC-CLIO, Inc., Santa Barbara, CA, USA (order through www.abc-clio.com/products/overview.aspx?productid=110259&viewid=1). Hardcover, xv + 312 pages. Price USD 55.00. ISBN: 978-59884-015-5 (printed); 978-1-59884-016-2 (ebook).



Almost all earth scientists owe their job – directly or indirectly – to the ever scarcer natural resources. The decreasing resources are the reason for political conflicts, and a synthesis of the state-of-the-art of the knowledge about such conflicts is presented in this book by Jacqueline Vaughn, a professor at the Northern Arizona University (USA).

The main text, consisting of three chapters, occupies only one third of the whole book. Vaughn starts with an examination of the history of natural-resources exploitation in the United States. The next chapter discusses the national-scale exploitation of natural resources in political and environmental contexts. Mineral and hydrocarbon exploration and production, protected areas, management of agricultural areas, and forestry are main sub-

jects. Vaughn suggests a finite state of energy resources as a basis for conflicts. However, the main underlying cause for conflicts may be a limited infrastructure of hydrocarbon production and transportation (Burri, 2008). Vaughn underlines that problems such as those related to funding and staffing must be solved for a successful management of the national parks. I think that recent claims that we should protect “ordinary nature” in addition to “special places” (Doremus, 2002) will only accelerate this kind of conflict. In other words, not only political misunderstanding of protected area management, but also the real necessity for comprehensive nature protection collides with our possibilities. The last chapter is devoted to global-scale conflicts, with a focus on diamond and precious metals, hydrocarbons, timber, and water. It is astonishing to read that up to 15% of all diamonds traded annually are illegal. Hydrocarbons initiate two different kind of conflicts: one concerning environmental pollution during their production and transportation, and one concerning political control over energy resources.

The rest of the book contains first a highly detailed chronology of events related to natural resource management. Next, Vaughn presents biographies of the key figures in the environmental movement; all are written in a vivid manner. Excerpts from the most important legal papers that regulate conflicts over natural resources are presented. This makes the book valuable, because the author's discussions are supported by direct evidence from actual environmental practice. Fact sheets are also important, although the reader should always check for updates. Vaughn composed a lengthy list of organizations that deal with natural resources, with their names, addresses, websites, and brief descriptions of targets and history. She spent much time to gather a very informative, annotated, synopsis of the present literature,

video material, etc. What could be more informative? In addition, the author prepared a glossary, where many terms and abbreviations are explained.

Undoubtedly, the book follows some political approach. However, the various geoscience subjects are neither too much simplified, nor misunderstood. Vaughn is such a talented writer that her book serves well politics and science. I found no obvious omissions. This is a book for every scholar and student in geology, geography, and ecology. The author provides a comprehensive, concise and balanced picture of what political factors play a role concerning natural resources, and vice versa. Undoubtedly, earth scientists need to understand the general political consequences of their activities, and this book shows that these consequences are much more interesting than most

of them would expect. Every reader will be fascinated by the joint adventure with Vaughn in the world of "blood" diamonds, Arctic oil, and "old-growth" forest protection. This book is very enriching and stimulating.

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