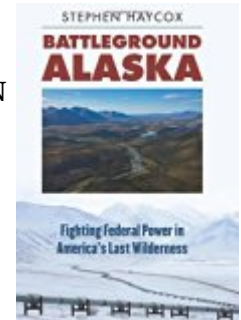


Stephen W. Haycox. *Battleground Alaska: Fighting Federal Power in America's Last Wilderness*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016. x + 262 pp. \$27.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7006-2215-3.



Reviewed by James Skillen

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Commissioned by David T. Benac (Western Michigan University)

Antistatism is endemic in US culture, as evidenced by the Tea Party's ascendancy and by regular conflicts over federal lands in the American West. But nowhere, Stephen Haycox writes, is it more pronounced and more virulent than in Alaska, where state political leaders "maintain a persistent plaint of persecution by an overweening, abusive use of federal power" (p. 16). As with other public land states, this is linked closely to land and resource politics, but Haycox insists that no other state has shown such a uniform commitment to resource development or such uniform opposition to federal environmental protection. These distinctive features, he explains, have grown out of Alaska's geographic isolation and consequent economic dependence on natural resource development as well as out of the environmental and civil rights politics that influenced Congress in the decades immediately following Alaska statehood.

In chapter 1, Haycox traces the roots of antistatism to statehood in 1959. Leaders promised that it would usher in a new era of prosperity, but

they glossed over the complex Native and federal land claims that statehood itself could not resolve and therefore could not deliver immediately on their promises. The federal government has served as a scapegoat ever since.

In chapters 2 through 7, Haycox outlines four seminal environmental battles, the sometimes overlapping issue of Native land claims, and a number of other specific land and resource conflicts. He shows how creation of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in 1960 served as a harbinger of battles to come, pitting environmentalists and the federal government against the state's demand for resource development. He explains the complex and unique history of Native land claims following statehood. Congress resolved these claims legally in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, which granted 44 million acres and almost \$1 billion to newly formed Native corporations. Haycox demonstrates that the Trans-Alaska Pipeline conflict of the 1970s galvanized the national environmental movement against resource development in Alaska, tested powerful

new federal environmental statutes, and further played into the state's sense of victimization. He tells the story of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980, which ended more than two decades of congressional delays in resolving federal land claims and cleared the path for the state to finish its land selection. And Haycox explores controversies over Native subsistence hunting and fishing along with old-growth logging in the Tongass National Forest, which Congress addressed in the Tongass Timber Reform Act of 1990. In all of these battles, state leaders blamed environmentalists, the federal government, and sometimes Alaska Natives for thwarting economic growth and undermining the state's sovereignty.

Battleground Alaska is a timely and valuable contribution, particularly amidst the antistatist vitriol of the 2016 presidential election. While Haycox does not adequately substantiate his comparative claim that Alaska is "the most antistatist of the American states" (p. 183), this well-researched and -written study certainly clarifies the distinctive sources of antistatism in Alaska's geography and history.

One of the greatest strengths of *Battleground Alaska* is Haycox's seamless integration of various historical dimensions: environmental, legal, political, and economic. For this reason, it will be a valuable addition to a wide range of undergraduate classes, providing an accessible springboard into various subfields of history as well as geography, political ecology, and law. Throughout the narrative history, Haycox nods to a variety of critical debates in these fields. For example, he briefly engages critical scholarship on wilderness and the conceptual problem of nature/culture dualism in the United States. Had William Cronon and other scholars focused more on Alaska, he argues, "they would have witnessed, and been informed by, the intricacies and nuances of just such a marriage [between nature and culture], for Alaska's land managers were of necessity quite

ahead of the curve in recognizing the falsity of the Wilderness Act" (p. 138). He also engages legal debate over the constitutionality of large-scale federal land ownership in the West. State leaders in Alaska make a familiar argument that the scale of federal land ownership violates the constitutional doctrine of equal footing, which the courts have consistently rejected, but they also argue that the federal government has violated a legal compact with the state to prioritize economic development, and certain aspects of this argument are still unresolved. And throughout, *Battleground Alaska* challenges simplistic arguments about land and resource economics and environmental regulation. Haycox is particularly critical of the victimization plaint offered by state leaders, but he challenges simplistic arguments by industrial and environmental interests as well. For this reason, *Battleground Alaska* deserves a broad readership beyond the classroom, where it will facilitate more thoughtful and informed public debate.

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