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Fiftieth Anniversary Note: A Devoted Reader's Appreciation of the Natural Resources Journal

A. Dan Tarlock

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A. DAN TARLOCK*

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY NOTE: A Devoted Reader's Appreciation of the *Natural Resources Journal*

In 1958, I left San Francisco by train to start college in the East. On the Chicago-Buffalo leg, a group of students boarded at Gary, Indiana. Among them was a most attractive young woman—and she was returning for her sophomore year at the same college I was headed to. To my amazement, she took the seat next to mine. With trepidation, I began a conversation with her about college. Early in the discussion, she asked me if I read the *New York Times*, because “everybody on campus reads the *Times*.” Truth be told, I had never heard of the *New York Times*, but I tried to be cool and assured her that I did. When I got to college, I subscribed—and have continued that subscription up to the present. I can almost say the same thing about the *Natural Resources Journal* (NRJ), since its tenure roughly corresponds to my professional career. However, unlike the *Times*, the NRJ continues to improve with age.

Several years after that train trip, as a second-year law student at Stanford in 1963, I was assigned a law review comment on a Colorado groundwater case, which, in turn, led to a research position with the late Charles J. Meyers, an oil, gas, and water law scholar. At one of our first meetings about my comment, he casually remarked, “You should take a look at a new specialty journal coming out of the University of New Mexico. They are publishing some really useful, good stuff.”

As usual, Charlie was right. In academia, stealing from one source is plagiarism, whereas stealing from many sources is scholarship. The NRJ, more than any other single source of scholarship in the natural resources and environmental field, has enabled me to pass myself off as an interdisciplinary scholar for 45 years. Whenever I am about to finish a piece of scholarship, I always try and make sure that I have not missed a crucial recent or older (but still relevant) article in the NRJ.

When the journal first appeared in 1961, it was the only game in town for natural resources law. Thanks to the environmental movement, we are now blessed (or cursed) with an astonishing range of publications. However, the NRJ has adhered to the original vision of its founders, including its longtime editor, the late Al Utton—a devoted native son of New Mexico and a sophisticated international lawyer¹—who im-

* A.B., LL.B. Stanford University. Distinguished Professor of Law, Chicago-Kent College of Law and Honorary Professor, University of Dundee UNESCO Centre for Water Law, Science, and Policy, University of Dundee, Scotland.

1. See generally, *In Memoriam: Albert E. Utton*, 39 NAT. RESOURCES J. 1 (1999).

plemented and expanded the journal's mission to become a forum for both high-quality, technical legal scholarship and policy analysis.²

From its first issue, some 50 years ago, the NRJ has published major articles by lawyers and social scientists on energy, public lands, and water law and policy. Even today, the NRJ continues to bear Utton's stamp. While the journal initially served as both a specialty journal and a general state law journal, in 1971 the New Mexico section broke away to become the *New Mexico Law Review*. Yet, thanks to the editors who have followed in Utton's footsteps, the NRJ remains a primary source of the best thinking in natural resources, even as the field becomes more and more broadly defined. Each current issue arrives on my work table shortly after it arrives in the library. I do not always read it from cover to cover, but I always feel guilty when I do not.

Interdisciplinary scholarship has remained the core of the journal's mission, yet the NRJ quickly evolved to become a leading forum for environmental scholarship as these core areas were fundamentally changed by the rise of environmentalism. Under Utton's leadership, the NRJ also began to publish articles on international issues by both American and foreign scholars—a tradition that subsequent editors have continued. Through the NRJ, I have taken many wonderful mental trips and learned about the problems in river basins, forests, and nature reserves throughout the world.

For better or worse, natural resources problems keep getting more complex, fascinating, and central to the planet's survival. The first 50 years of the NRJ have created a devoted community of readers around the world and set a high standard for the current editors, the future editors, and the university to meet. The NRJ's strong legacy of excellence and intellectual breadth enable it to continue to make important scholarly contributions, helping us understand the challenges we face in deciding how to use our natural resources heritage.

2. From its first issue in March, 1961, the *Natural Resources Journal* had an advisory board of distinguished scholars, practicing lawyers, and major figures—such as Joseph L. Fisher and Fairfield Osborn—in the natural resources and conservation communities.