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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

We at the *Natural Resources Journal* do not try too hard to make our publications reflect resource debates swirling around in the daily press. We are, after all, an academic journal. But there are times when events fortuitously overtake even our best laid plans and this issue contains articles that have the ring of current events.

Tony Cheng's elegant opening essay on collaboration and public land management comes at just the time when newspapers are full of stories about the proper role of states and their governors in such controversial federal public land issues as wilderness designation, roadless protection, and off-road vehicle access. Four academics from Arizona State consider Phoenix's water supply just as poet Craig Childs considers the Hohokum parallels to the overlying city in the April 2007 issue of the *High Country News*. And Sarah Jensen, a researcher from Tucson, considers the fire "crisis" on national forests just as the Forest Service finds that fire fighting makes up an inordinately large part of the multiple use budget for the forests. Reading articles like this might make you think that in picking up the *Natural Resources Journal* you had latched on to today's paper.

There are other articles in this issue, however, that will remind you of how quirky we can be. For example, the issue contains an article on shifting land uses in a rural area of western China, surely not a topic that would leap to the front of a U.S.-centered periodical. The research for this interesting article turned out to be so obscure to us that we couldn't check the sources with our usual rigor. Nevertheless, the article casts a distant light on issues confronting rural people everywhere and for that reason alone is worth publishing. So too with the excellent article on the attempt to control pollution from leather tanneries in Leon, Mexico. The lessons that emerge apply well beyond the Third World context from which they come. What do western Chinese land uses and central Mexican environmental controls have to do with natural resource regulation in the United States? Plenty.

Finally, over the last ten years, the *Journal*, a publication originating in the inter-mountain west, has run many articles on the management of ocean fisheries. This issue's article on the history of seal regulation in Maine couldn't start with a more foreign resource—seals—in a more distant locale—the treacherous North Atlantic. However, the management of limited common resources, be they resource water in the west or seals in the east, raises recurring, shared problems of scarce resource management. Ultimately, these common resource problems are the focus of all issues of the *Journal*.