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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

They don't come any broader and deeper than do the articles in this classic issue of the *Natural Resources Journal*. Here we go from time limitations on inter-state compact damages in the United States to water reform in Scotland; from the problems associated with the development of coal bed methane in the inter-mountain west to the future of collaborative decision making in managing the area's mineral resources; and from the fractured treatment of paleontological resources on federal public lands to an assessment of proposals for comprehensive treatment. This is a wide array, held together by the even-handed, uniform intelligence of the authors and by a deep common concern for the resources of nature, broadly defined.

The issue opens with law professor Douglas Grant's elegant consideration of an important issue that has not even yet emerged. Relatively recent Supreme Court decrees in two inter-state water battles, one between Texas and New Mexico, the other Kansas and Colorado, have created the specter of astronomical damages against states found to have breached compacts. Grant considers whether and how time might limit damage claims for long-term breaches. This essay is fundamentally important and legally fundamental because it addresses how to bring an important aspect of water's past—damages for the breach of interstate compacts created in the 1950s and before—into the future.

Two articles from Scotland, one comparing Scottish and South African water law changes, the other analyzing a different aspect of Scottish water reform, deal with the effort to bring present water institutions into the future. Critics of our western doctrine of prior appropriation will appreciate the analysis of these far-off eastern efforts at reform.

Finally, the last three articles in this issue discuss very different aspects of very different resources often buried deep in the ground. Richardson (mining) and Malmshemer/Hilfinger (fossils) and Bryner (coal methane) consider what political and legal institutions would best govern these resources. All three start with a critique of current regimes. They consider recent reforms; they recommend further change. Like their authors, the articles invite comparison to the water reforms in the first three articles.

Add recent law school graduate Jeff Dennis's analysis of the constitutional problems inherent in recent restructuring of the electric industry, mix in John Thorson's opening plea for sustainable interstate water compacts and Jason Shogren's review of books dealing with local control of resources and you end up with a very rich brew for this issue. Enjoy.