



# Pacific Southwest Book Club

## Where the Water Goes by David Owen

6:30-7:30 PM PT on October 6, 2022

### Meeting Schedule

Date	Chapters	Number of Pages
10/06/22	Chapter 1: The Headwaters Chapter 2: The Law of the River Chapter 3: Tributaries	36
10/20/22	Chapter 4: Go West Chapter 5: Grand Valley Chapter 6: Salt, Dry Lots, and Houseboats	43
11/03/22	Chapter 7: Lees Ferry Chapter 8: Boulder Canyon Project Chapter 9: Las Vegas Chapter 10: Colorado River Aqueduct	55
11/17/22	Chapter 11: Central Arizona Project Chapter 12: The Rule of Capture Chapter 13: Boondocking Chapter 14: Imperial Valley	51
12/1/22	Chapter 15: The Salton Sea Chapter 16: Reclamation Chapter 17: The Delta Chapter 18: What Is to Be Done	75

### Discussion Questions

We will start the book club with questions that arise for you as you read each chapter. Please *float* these questions to the group at our meeting.

#### **Chapter 1: The Headwaters**

Map Link: [https://water.usgs.gov/wsc/map\\_index.html](https://water.usgs.gov/wsc/map_index.html)

1. While flying high over the large-scale water diversions that were constructed back before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the author is struck by the sheer amount of meltwater diverted before it even has a chance to enter the Colorado River. This water is diverted entirely out of the watershed in which it was deposited. If we all think about large scale water diversion projects where we live, are they truly “complete solutions” or does diversion seem to just shift problems to new locations?

2. What's your watershed neighborhood or "[waterhood](#)" (Elizabeth Dougherty)? What do you know about your local waterhood?
3. How does the Colorado River or water theme fit into the music you listen to? Suggest a tune for Jeff to add to our [River Tunes playlist](#)!

### Chapter 2: The Law of the River

1. The guiding principle of "first in time" rather than [riparian law](#) when it comes to water rights in Colorado/the West was driven by the needs (or greed) of the Gold Rush. That initial driving force has long since passed as the dominant demand for the water of the Colorado River. Does it make sense to keep using such a system in a time with entirely different needs, population density numbers and . . . just an entirely different life reality?
2. How should/can governments equitably replace/alter/revise structured rights based on historical claim and tradition?

### Chapter 3: Tributaries

1. *"If you want to get people who live west of the Continental Divide worked up about people who live east of the Continental Divide, Lake Dillon is a good topic to start with"* (page 27).

#### **Why is Lake Dillon so divisive, and why is its significance not straightforward?**

2. *"Instream-flow water right is like a water right that belongs to the river itself...The idea is to treat fish, other stream-dependent animals, and functioning wetlands as 'beneficial uses' by assigning to some of the water they depend on its own place in a river's priority list."*

*"Because the idea of preserving the environment hasn't been around for as long as mining and farming and ranching have, instream flows usually have very junior priority dates"* (page 33).

#### **Does the notion of "priority" water rights inevitably privilege the status quo? Is there a way strengthen nature's position in the equation?**

3. According to Delia Malone, "The beaver is the best thing from the West ever had" (page 34). What ecological services do beavers provide that make them so praiseworthy?
4. Which of the first three chapters did you connect with or find most compelling and why?