



# Pacific Southwest Book Club

## Where the Water Goes by David Owen

6:30-7:30 PM PT on October 20, 2022

### Meeting Schedule

Date	Chapters	Number of Pages
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

Use these questions as a starting point or come up with your own questions. Join us on October 20, no matter where you are in the book. We want to hear your perspective!

#### **Chapter 4: Go West**

1. One of the greatest threats to the safety of the Colorado River's water is mine runoff, which is laden with heavy metals. What can be done regarding these mines?
2. Part of Chapter 4 addresses groundwater contamination from nuclear explosives used to extract natural gas at Project Rulison. [Project Rulison video on YouTube](#)

**Did you find this section of the book about Project Rulison, Rio Blanco, and Wagon Wheel a little out of place? Were these projects solutions to larger problems, or more potential problems packaged as solutions?**

#### **Chapter 5: Grand Valley**

1. Brooke Web states that "...the water we use comes from the Colorado River, and it would just be a desert here without it" (page 55). This was the "edge of survivability for vineyards." Look at this image of the [landscape behind the vineyard and barns](#).

**Should water be allocated for farming/growing crops that are simply NOT suited to an area? Who gets to choose what water is used where?**

2. The vineyard may use less than 10% of their water allotment but how much total energy is used for the wine they sell?
3. What are some of the "costs" of improved efficiency in water use?

## **Chapter 6: Salt, Dry Lots, and Houseboats**

1. "...the Bureau of Reclamation has estimated that every ton of salt it [the Dolores River salt-removal facility] removes presents \$173 worth of damage downstream. But it also has caused roughly six thousand earthquakes, the largest of which, in 2013, had a magnitude of 4.0" (page 68). Owen reports that "the facility's engineers...have decreased the pressure at which they inject brine into the formation, and the bureau is exploring alternatives, and at some point, they will have to make further changes."

**What alternatives to desalination of the Delores River should be considered? What are the environmental tradeoffs for each of the [alternatives now being considered](#)?**

2. "The Colorado River Compact mentions Indians only once, in Article VII, which reads, in its entirety: 'Nothing in this compact shall be construed as affecting the obligations of the United States of American to Indian tribes.'...The tribes, collectively, could conceivably make priority claims to all the freshwater in America since Indians were using streams long before the invention of the sluice box."

Further, *Winters v. United States* (1908), the Supreme Court "held that the tribes had 'federally reserved rights' to sufficient water, and they that retained their rights whether they diverted that water or not: the use-it-or-lose-it requirement of the prior-appropriation system didn't apply to them" (page 71).

Tribal leverage hinges on quantification—and although "the full force of existing and pending Indian quantification cases has yet to be felt," Owen suggests that "it's likely...that essentially all of the agricultural irrigation water in Arizona will end up under tribal control, since tribal rights are senior even to California's" (page 72).

**What would the full force of honoring the priority of Native American rights look like? How can we incorporate the Native American perspective in our use of natural resources?**

3. "The main stated purpose of the Colorado River Storage Project is to hold water for use by the upper-basin states, but its biggest beneficiary is really California, because one of the most significant functions of the project's reservoirs is to enable the upper-basin states to meet their lower-basin water-delivery requirements" (pages 73-74).

**Now that the water level at Lake Mead has reached the dead zone, what are the implications for California, the biggest beneficiary of the Colorado River Storage Project?**

**Etcetera**

1. How does the Colorado River or the water theme fit into the music you listen to? We've compiled a great playlist of your songs on [Spotify](#) and [Tidal](#).
2. If you haven't sent a song yet, or have more to share, send your favorite river song title to me at [dharrington@marinesanctuary.org](mailto:dharrington@marinesanctuary.org) and I'll add it to the list.
3. For your listening pleasure, here's a good recent podcast about the Colorado River on [NPR](#).
4. All of the resources shared, including books, articles, and the playlists can be found in our book club [Wakelet](#).