**Kirkus Reviews**

**SHARING THE COMMON POOL**   
**Water Rights in the Everyday Lives of Texans**  
**Author: Charles R. Porter Jr.**  
  
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Porter (History/St. Edward’s Univ.) addresses the legal, social, economic and environmental consequences of our present water rights system, a serious disaster in the making.

Although the author focuses his investigation on the freshwater situation in Texas, his arguments are widely applicable. Simply put, there is a finite amount of freshwater on the planet, timelessly moving through the hydrologic cycle, which is too often being hogged by irrigators or befouled by one form of human use or another. Porter approaches the water issue from two angles: how to secure a sustainable water-use system and how water is going to impinge on the value of real estate. Each state has laws regarding who owns water: surface water, as in water moving through a course; diffused surface water, as in water that runs off a roof and over the ground in an undefined pattern; and aquifers and underground pools. But water is fugitive, always in motion and vexatious to lawmakers since it rarely stays still long enough to tag it with ownership rights. Porter ably describes the looming crisis. Without specific regional water plans—determining demand, supply, social and economic impacts, strategies and options to meet growing needs, and all the infrastructural requirements to maximize water use—shortages are a given. How are we going to balance common good with private right? Anyone upstream is at an advantage; anyone with a large-capacity pump can command a greater share of the aquifer. Without use laws in place, things will get nasty quickly. Porter has an easy, professorial voice, eschewing hysterics but providing a cautionary note that carries a weight of understanding and experience. He also gives advice about simple lifestyle changes to conserve water: from showering and brushing your teeth to dripping faucets and low-flow toilets, dishwashers and dishwashing detergent.

An intelligent, elegant call to action in the defense of fresh water.