

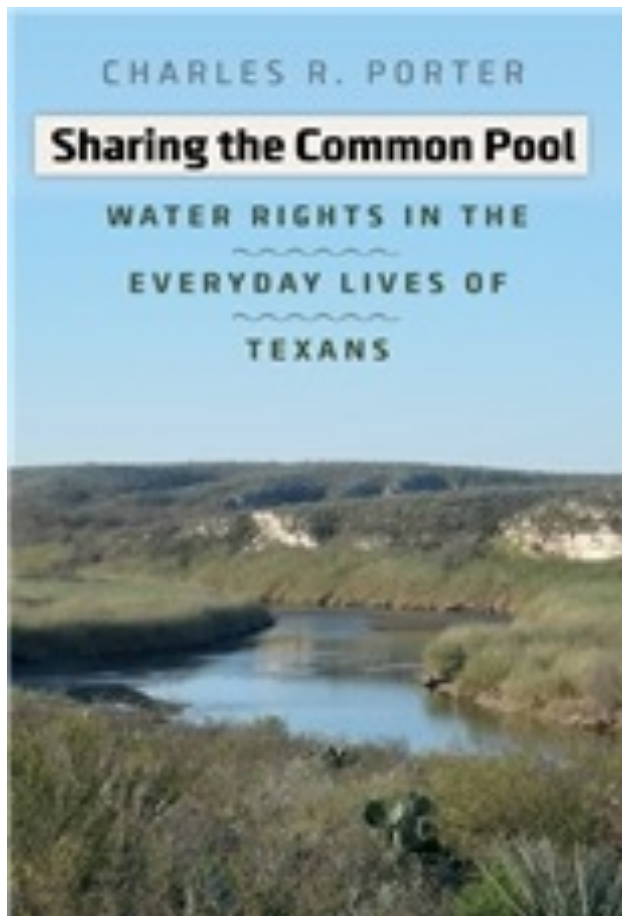
Sharing the Common Pool: Water Rights in the Everyday Lives of Texans

Charles R. Porter, Jr.

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Sharing the Common Pool

Water Rights in the Everyday Lives of Texans

Agriculture

6 x 9, 240 pp.

40 color illus. 10 maps. 5 figs. Table. 3 appendixes. Bib. Index.

Published by Texas A&M University Press, this book is part of the River Books series, sponsored by The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, Texas State University

Biography

CHARLES R. PORTER is an assistant professor of history at St. Edward's University in Austin and a licensed real estate agent and broker. He has been a presenter and panel moderator for the Texas legislature, and has presented at the Texas Groundwater Summit, and at a joint conference of the Texas Rural Water Association and Texas Water Conservation Association.

REVIEW

by Laura D. Sanders

In 2012 *Texas Monthly* created an online series titled “Life By the Drop: Between Hell and Texas.” In dramatic photos and text they documented the life and death issues caused by the then year-old drought in Texas. As the drought now moves into its fourth year a new water park opens in Central Texas. If you’re wondering how this can be under our current water shortage, read the 2014 book *Sharing the Common Pool: Water Rights in the Everyday Lives of Texans*.

In parts 1 through 3, author and native Texan Charles Porter explains, in easy to understand language, the history of water supply in Texas. He discusses not only who owns the water, but also explains the state's complicated system of granting water rights, dating back 300 years, to its status as a Spanish colony. The Spanish system was later overlaid by British common law principles as applied in the United States, often resulting in conflicts with previously awarded Spanish rights. The inherent conflicts between the two systems didn't begin to get ironed out until 1967. During the two-year period that followed, water-rights holders submitted 10,000 claims for adjudication.

In Part 4, Mr. Porter, an assistant professor of history at St. Edward's University and a licensed real estate broker, provides an easy to use reference on how water rights affect real estate transactions, property taxes, and ultimately schools and hospitals.

In Part 5, he discusses water policy and issues, and what the future holds, including information on "fracking," the feasibility of desalination plants, and lays the groundwork for understanding the latest water reclamation projects (often called "toilet to tap"), as well as how reclamation affects river and lake levels and the available water supply for cities and towns downstream.

The book includes a glossary, extensive bibliography and three helpful appendixes on Texas Supreme Court water rights cases, other significant court cases, and a list of government and other resources.

I learned more on Texas water and water rights in reading this book than I'd learned in multiple decades of living in Texas. I highly recommend purchasing this readable and illustrated book in either paperback or e-book form. I find myself referring back to my copy almost as often as I turn on the tap.

OTHER RESOURCES

For a more extensive look at the history of water rights in Texas, and the origin and development of the centuries-old *acequia* irrigation system in San Antonio, see Porter's award-winning 2009 book *Spanish Water, Anglo Water: Early Development in San Antonio*

For more on the latest wastewater treatment options, check out:

Baddour, Dylan and Henry, Terrence. "Here are 5 Challenges to Texas Water that Might Surprise You." June 27, 2014: National Public Radio
<http://stateimpact.npr.org/texas/2014/06/27/heres-5-challenges-to-texas-water-that-might-surprise-you>

"'Toilet to tap' Wastewater Recycling Begins in Texas City." July 10, 2014: Associated Press. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/toilet-to-tap-wastewater-recycling-begins-in-wichita-falls-texas>