

Perspectives On Sustainable Resources In America

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The vast size of the United States and extensive variation of its climate, topography, and biota across different regions contribute to both the richness of the nation's natural heritage and the complexities involved in managing its resources. A follow-up to RFF's popular America's Renewable Resources (1990), Perspectives on Sustainable Resources in America updates readers about the current challenges involved in managing America's natural resources, especially in light of the increasing emphasis on sustainability and ecosystem approaches to management. Written to inform general audiences and students, as well as to engage the interest of experts, the book includes assessments by some of the nation's most renowned scholars in natural resource economics and policy. An introductory chapter critically examines the concept of sustainability as it has been developed in recent years and asks how the concept might apply to individual resource systems. It considers the interrelatedness of ecosystem, economic, and social sustainability; the paradigms of resource sufficiency and functional integrity; and the contrast between weak and strong sustainability. The chapters that follow examine America's experience with forests, water, agricultural soils, and wildlife. Highlighting the adaptability and resilience of resource systems, each chapter provides a description of the physical characteristics of the resource, a history of its use, a policy history, and a review of ongoing debates in management and policy. Perspectives on Sustainable Resources in America concludes with an innovative treatment of biodiversity as a natural resource. The chapter reviews the definitions of biodiversity, the ecological and economic meanings of biodiversity, and current efforts to preserve biodiversity, especially through regulatory approaches.

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