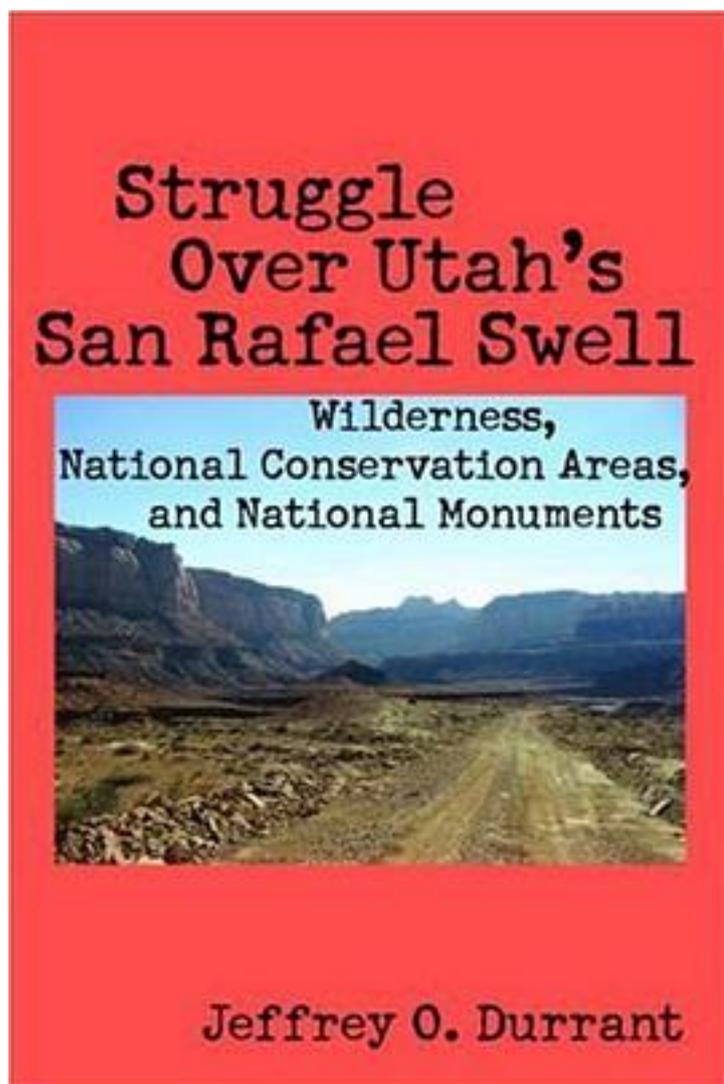


Struggle over Utah's San Rafael Swell



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The vast public lands of the American West are being transformed today, not geologically but conceptually. A century ago, visitors to western public lands were likely to be ranchers or miners. Today, the lands are popular destinations for campers, hikers, rock climbers, river runners, artists, and off-road-vehicle enthusiasts. These new visitors have proved to be a challenge for managers of public lands, in particular the federal Bureau of Land Management. Perhaps no area has been more affected by changing users and shifting policies than the San Rafael Swell, a million-acre expanse in southeastern Utah. In this insightful and useful book, Jeffrey Durrant follows the trail of decisions and events that have had and continue to have a transformative impact on this ancient land. In detailing political and environmental squabbles over the San Rafael Swell, Durrant illuminates issues that confront land managers, bureaucrats, and elected officials throughout the country. He describes struggles between county commissioners and environmental activists, conflicts over water rights, proposals that repeatedly fail to gain government approval, and political posturings. Caught in the crossfire, and often overwhelmed, the Bureau of Land Management has seen its long-time mission once centered on grazing and mining rights transform into a new and, to some, unsettling responsibility for recreation and preservation. The sandstone crags and twisting valleys of the San Rafael Swell present a formidable landscape, but as this book clearly shows, the political landscape may be even more daunting, strewn with bureaucratic boulders and embedded with fixed positions on the functions and values of public land.

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