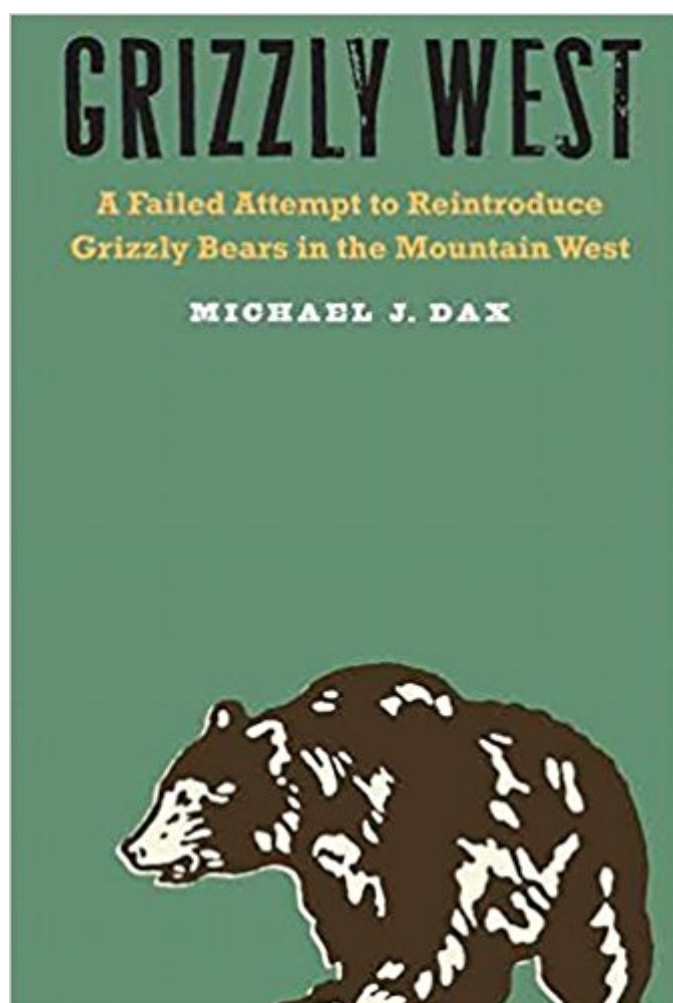


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# Grizzly West: A Failed Attempt To Reintroduce Grizzly Bears In The Mountain West



## Synopsis

Environmentalists and the timber industry do not often collaborate, but in the years immediately following gray wolf reintroduction in the interior American West, a plan to reintroduce grizzly bears to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness of Idaho and Montana brought these odd bedfellows together. The partnership won praise from diverse interests across the country and in 2000 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved a plan for reintroduction. When the Bush Administration took office, however, it promptly shelved the project. In *Grizzly West* Michael J. Dax explores the political, cultural, and social forces at work in the West and around the country that gave rise to this innovative plan but also contributed to its downfall. Observers at the time blamed the project's collapse on simple partisan politics, but Dax reveals how the American West's changing culture and economy over the second half of the twentieth century dramatically affected this bold vision. He examines the growth of the New West's political potency, while at the same time revealing the ways in which the Old West still holds a significant grip over the region's politics. *Grizzly West* explores the great divide between the Old and the New West, one that has lasting consequences for the modern West and for our country's relationship with its wildlife.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Grizzly West is an excellent environmental history that puts the story of grizzlies in the West in their biological, human and politic context." —Erin H. Turner, Big Sky Journal (Erin H. Turner Big Sky Journal) "A fascinating look at just how complicated issues of wildlife and conservation are out

here, as well as the grip in which the West is held by its own mythology, Grizzly West<sup>1</sup> makes clear that it's very hard for a bear, or a wolf, or a river to just be what they are when politics, history and human nature are involved."<sup>2</sup> •Lit/Rant (Lit/Rant 2015-09-09)"Grizzly West is a timely retrospective of biopolitics surrounding conservation of large carnivores in the western US."<sup>3</sup> •J. Organ, CHOICE (J. Organ CHOICE)"Grizzly West is a good book. . . . Dax resurrects a missing and important story and uses it to illustrate critical trends in modern western history."<sup>4</sup> •Adam Sowards, Annals of Wyoming (Adam Sowards Annals of Wyoming)"Incredibly informative."<sup>5</sup> •Douglas M. Richardson, Mountain Research and Development (Douglas M. Richardson Mountain Research and Development)"A timely read."<sup>6</sup> •Scott Parker, Bozeman Daily Chronicle (Scott Parker Bozeman Daily Chronicle 2016-06-10)"Of primary interest to environmental historians and historians of western politics, Dax's detailed description of a decade's worth of political maneuvering is greatly augmented by his access to previously unknown personal documents and interviews with the principals involved."<sup>7</sup> •Mark Madison, Western Historical Quarterly (Mark Madison Western Historical Quarterly 2016-07-13)"Grizzly West should be recommended reading for anyone interested in the environmental and political history of the American West."<sup>8</sup> •Peter S. Alagona, Environmental History (Peter S. Alagona Environmental History)"Grizzly West is a wellspring of insight regarding the political dimensions of species restoration in the 1990s and will be of value to both academic and general readers with an interest in recent issues in western environmentalism."<sup>9</sup> •Kelsey Matson, Pacific Northwest Quarterly (Kelsey Matson Pacific Northwest Quarterly)"Idaho's Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness together with the Frank Church Wilderness constitute the largest roadless area in the Lower 48. All this land is prime and historical grizzly bear habitat. Yet, despite nearby grizzly populations in Montana, this vast region is tragically and bafflingly devoid of grizzly bears. How could this be? Michael Dax's unusually thorough book documents our public failure to reintroduce the great bear to its natural home."<sup>10</sup> •Doug Peacock, author of Grizzly Years and In the Shadow of the Sabertooth<sup>11</sup> (Doug Peacock 2014-09-16)"Michael Dax expertly probes the economic, cultural, and political divides spawned by recent efforts to reintroduce grizzly bears into the Bitterroot Range. . . . This is a first-rate environmental history that will enlighten environmentalists, legislators, natural resource users, and others engaged in deciding the fate of public lands in the modern American West."<sup>12</sup> •Mark Harvey, author of Wilderness Forever: Howard Zahniser and the Path to the Wilderness Act (Mark Harvey 2014-09-16)"Michael Dax delivers a nuanced and compelling study of the interconnectedness of politics and the environment

in the West. He ably tells a story that far too few know, and he does so with grace and clarity and skillfully avoids green-washing this topic. —Sara Dant, professor of history at Weber State University and coauthor of the Encyclopedia of American National Parks (Sara Dant 2014-09-16)

Michael J. Dax lives and writes in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

In "Grizzly West" Michael Dax not only crafts a captivating historical narrative but also tells one hell of a good story. I was fascinated to learn about the dichotomy between the Old and the New West, an element of Western culture that I've been surrounded by my whole life but have never considered in the context of major environmental policy. For anyone interested in both the past and future of public lands and wildlife conservation, this is a must-read!

**Grizzly West: A failed Attempt to Reintroduce Grizzly Bears in the Mountain West** By Michael J. Dax is a must read by anyone with an interest in environmental, legal or scientific matters. In this book, Michael J. Dax tells the interesting story of the attempted reintroduction of Grizzly Bears (as the title suggests) in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. As an environmental studies graduate student, I feel that this book would be relevant in many of my classes and should be used by Universities and Colleges. Dax does an amazing job describing the environmental, legal, social, moral, scientific and historical sides of this issue while at the same time, keeps the story interesting throughout. A major theme discussed in this book is the rift between the Old West and the New West. Dax skillfully describes how both sides actions have impacted environmental policy in the West. If you are a fan of Samuel P. Hays or Jared Diamond, you will enjoy this book. I know I did!

Grizzly West is an engaging, thought-provoking story of conflicts. Michael Dax reports these conflicts objectively and with careful attention to the motivation of the players; he has not written a morality play about "good versus evil." Readers will, no doubt, superimpose their own values upon these conflicts and might perceive slowly-evolving, malleable policy versus expedient, always-malleable, politics; the self-defeating zealotry of "true believers" versus what appeared to be perfectly reasonable compromises; and stumbling Federal government versus state governments versus local governments versus organized business and environmental groups versus citizens. Mr. Dax is a remarkably skillful and insightful storyteller. It seems both unfortunate and difficult to believe that the

innocent ÃfÂçÃ â ¬Ã Å“victimÃfÂçÃ â ¬Ã Å• in this well-told story is a creature as powerful as  
ÃfÂçÃ â ¬Ã Å“ursus horribilisÃfÂçÃ â ¬Ã Å•; the grizzly bear. It is, of course, easier to feel pity  
for these fearsome beasts at a safe distanceÃfÂçÃ â ¬Ã Å|

Michael J. Dax thoroughly tells the story of the failed attempt to reintroduce the grizzly bear to the  
Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. He explains very clearly what led up to the attempt, the well thought  
out plan and why it failed. Ultimately, the failure was due to people not being able to compromise.  
Many other environmental controversies large and small can be related to what happened to  
prevent the grizzly from being allowed to live once again in their historical territory. From trying to  
get approval for a small wetland restoration on public school property to banning drift nets off the  
coast of California, getting enough support to make changes to help make it possible for  
endangered species to survive is always a battle. The message in this book is one that we all must  
learn from. I am so proud of my cousin for bringing this tragic story to light.Laura Dax Honda

Fast-paced. A careful analysis of an interesting story of politics and policy that in other hands might  
have been a dry, slow read.

A good story, well told.

Mr. Dax has written a readable, well-informed, balanced, and immensely important book-- it is a  
must-read for anyone interested in gaining an understanding of the intricacies of the cultural and  
generational clashes that underpin many developments in the western states. This volume should  
serve as a cautionary guide to all of us who might consider attempting any efforts at  
coalition-building. Bravo.

Michael Dax translated an impressive amount of research into this fascinating, well written book. If  
you are interested in wildlife policy, the divide between America's Old and New West, are  
environmentally conscience, or just looking for a great read, I highly recommend this book!

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