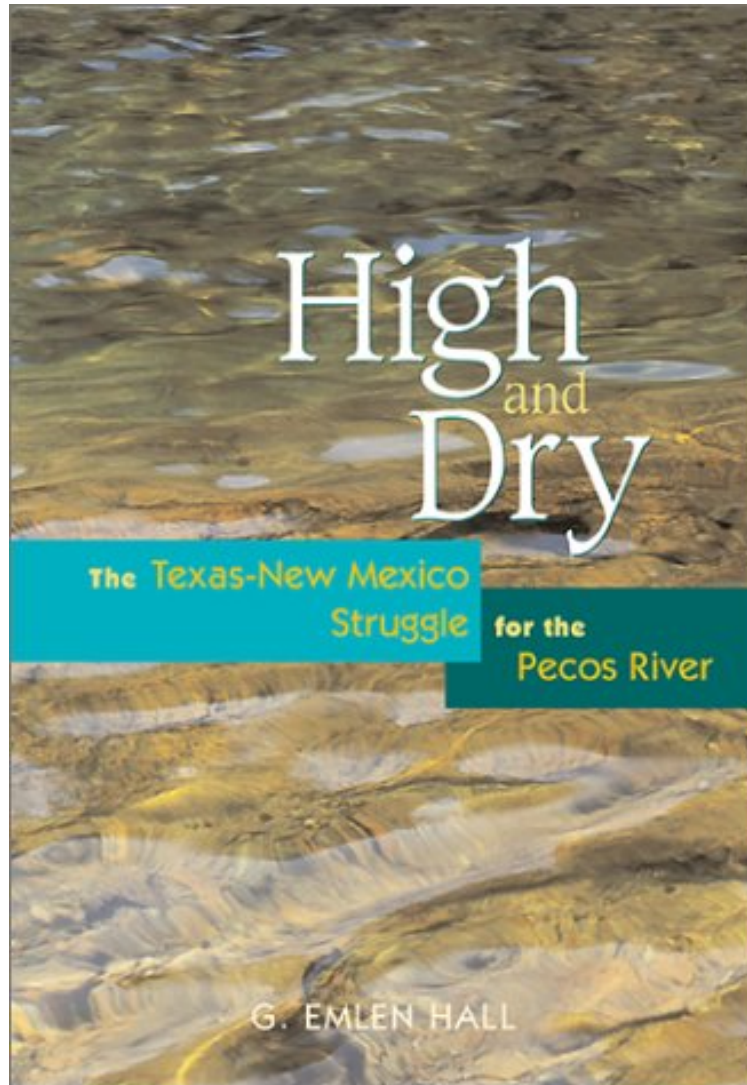


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High and Dry: The Texas-New Mexico Struggle for the Pecos River

G. Emlen Hall

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G. Emlen Hall : High and Dry: The Texas-New Mexico Struggle for the Pecos River before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised High and Dry: The Texas-New Mexico Struggle for the Pecos River:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy sherry FletcherHistory in the making of0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy George I. Chandler IINever miss a book by Em Hall.7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Absorbing (pun intended). Book is both excellent and timelyBy A CustomerIn the Southwest, water rights are a war zone; the film "Chinatown" (with Jack Nicholson), of course, showed that the fight

could even be the background for fictional excitement. This work of legal and social history is hardly a whodunit, yet the real-life battle it surveys possesses a vivid life nevertheless, in the author's highly readable prose. Hall is a law professor, so it's not surprising that he's done plenty of homework, and has mastered the facts of the story he tells. But he also writes with a humorous touch--appropriately dry (what else?)--and knows how to keep things personal too; he weaves his own experiences (as lawyer, writer, and also gardener and weekend farmer) into the story. As I write (spring, 2002), water shortages may be turning from a regional into a national phenomenon. Even if that danger abates soon, though, we can't take any environmental issues for granted any more, so a book like this has cautionary value too. Water: Gotta have it. Maybe optimists can happily relax if a glass is half-full, but we all need to apply higher standards of worry, when it's a matter of reservoirs. And the book's a wonderful read, too.

Water law, water politics, and especially water shenanigans are at the centre of this book about New Mexico and Texas dividing the Pecos River. On one level the story is about a twenty-year court case, Texas vs New Mexico, a monstrous law suit between two states sharing a common water source, a state boundary, and a long history of mutual enmity. On another level, this story is as big and far-reaching as the high plains drained by the Pecos: it is part memoir, part biography, and part environmental history, part the history of hydrology, and part a contribution to the annals of litigation in the great tradition of Anthony Lewis and Jonathan Harr. While the book focuses on clashes of principles and personalities, especially in the courtroom, it remains very much a story about a river and its world in an arid region. There are irrigators here, including the leading 'old families' of south-eastern New Mexico, and there is nature here, including 'the vampires of the West', the rapacious salt cedars relentlessly sucking up the precious Pecos stream flow. But beneath them all is the author, inviting readers to see how tiny gardens grown for the soul are as crucial to the overall story as the adjudication of water rights. Hall gives a masterful summary of the legal and scientific parts of the story, but he excels in letting us feel and care about water in the same manner as do the people who use it to grow crops.

"This is a book New Mexicans need to read. It urges quietly: Water is precious here. We have to care for it." . . . an excellent primer on the history and scope of New Mexico water law . . . "High and Dry" is an engrossing and illuminating read . . . "It could be argued that any informed citizen of New Mexico should have a basic understanding of the forces governing allocation of the state's most precious resource. "High and Dry" would be a good place to start." "The story provides insights into how water policy evolves, who the players are that influence policy, and the role of the courts in adjudicating conflict. . . . Go ahead, get your feet wet, and read how this drama unfolded." "At first glance, the issue of interstate water compacts might sound dry and arcane. But in fact, the subject is rich with significance, characters and drama. And as Hall explains so well, it's a hell of a fight and it's not over yet." "Em Hall has given us literature, a story of relationships, intrigue and passion. The Pecos River, the Pecos River Compact, Texas v. New Mexico, and Em himself are at the same time characters and setting, context and plot. It's a remarkable achievement." "The author does an excellent job of showing the tenacity of New Mexicans who depend on an unreliable river to make their living and their fierce protection of their water rights. . . a well thought out, engaging, informed account about the history of water use in 20th century New Mexico." "From the Inside Flap High and Dry tells the story of a river in an arid region and the long history of litigation between Texas and New Mexico as they battle over water rights. About the Author G. Emlen Hall is a writer and professor of law at the University of New Mexico. He combines his legal expertise with a passion for gardening.