



Northern Landscapes: The Struggle for Wilderness Alaska

Daniel Nelson

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Alaska in the early 1950s was one of the world's last great undeveloped areas. Yet sweeping changes were underway. In 1958 Congress awarded the new state over 100 million acres to promote economic development. In 1971, it gave Native groups more than 40 million acres to settle land claims and facilitate the building of an 800-mile oil pipeline. Spurred by the newly militant environmental movement, it also began to consider the preservation of Alaska's magnificent scenery and wildlife. Northern Landscapes is an essential guide to Alaska's recent past and to contemporary local and national debates over the future of public lands and resources. It is the first comprehensive examination of the campaign to preserve wild Alaska through the creation of a vast system of parks and wildlife refuges. Drawing on archival sources and interviews, Daniel Nelson traces disputes over resources alongside the politics of the Alaska statehood movement. He provides in-depth coverage of the growth of Alaskan environmental organizations, their partnerships with national groups, and their participation in political campaigns into the 1970s and after. Engagingly written, Northern Landscapes focuses on efforts to persuade public officials to recognize the value of Alaska's mountains, forests, and wildlife. That activity culminated in the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980, which set aside more than 100 million acres, doubling the size of the national park and wildlife refuge systems, and tripling the size of the wilderness preservation system. Arguably the single greatest triumph of environmentalism, ANILCA also set the stage for continuing battles over the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and Alaska's national forests.



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