

Saving the Ranch. Conservation Easement Design in the American West. By Anthony Anella and John B. Wright. Photographs by Edward Ranney. 2004. Island Press, Washington, D.C. 176 p. US\$60.00. ISBN 1-55963-741-2.

The picture of the American West—the open range, the sweeping domain of the solitary rancher who tends to his stock and ekes out a noble living through hard work and determination—is fading. The ranching industry is evolving on pace with the rest of the mechanized world. Large corporations are taking the place of the small-scale operator.

One loss that results from this restructuring of the industry is the consequential restructuring of the landscape. As small ranchers are unable to compete with consolidated corporations in terms of production, they must now look to other options to survive. For most ranchers, the most profitable option is to sell their land to developers who supply the demand of the public to possess their own piece of the American West. The outcome is that the landscape is slowly being transformed from open range to subdivided residential areas.

Saving the Ranch gives ranchers another economically feasible option. This book examines conservation easements as a way for individual ranchers to access the inherent value of their land rather than only the production value. *Saving the Ranch* is presented as a comprehensive, step-by-step guide for ranchers to explore and set up a conservation easement on their property. It clearly outlines the process from start to finish, addressing all issues along the way, including hiring advisors and financial analysis, including tax planning. It provides a question-and-answer chapter that tackles common questions that may arise. It also includes many case studies that detail the actual design and implementation of conservation easements on actual ranches. The last section of the book includes a real model of an actual deed of conservation easement.

The straightforward and practical manner in which this book is organized and presented is its biggest asset. Rather than extolling the social and moral responsibility issues involved with conservation, it presents the idea of easements as an economic commodity rather than as a restriction to business. In this way, the book reaches its audience effectively. The authors successfully present the concept of conservation easements through the use of real examples and by portraying the issue in concrete terms rather than as just an abstract idea.

The striking black-and-white photographs of rangeland buttress the authors' message of preserving the open landscape of the West. They also reinforce the real-world value of considering and using the land as a commodity in itself.

Saving the Ranch is a useful resource in educating ranchers in an important option that might be an alternative to subdividing their land. Its simple yet detailed approach to the issue of conservation easements should help ranchers keep the picture of the American West from vanishing.

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