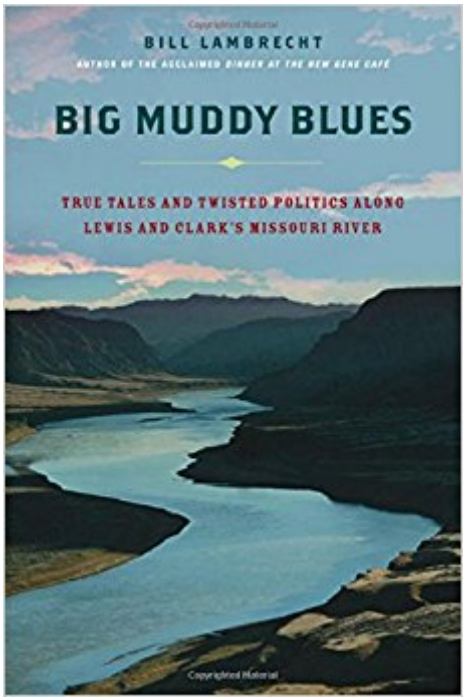
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Big Muddy Blues: True Tales And Twisted Politics Along Lewis And Clark's Missouri River



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Synopsis

America’s Missouri River may be the nation’s longest and most historically significant river, encompassing many of America’s natural wonders between Missouri and Montana, draining almost 600,000 square miles in ten states and part of Canada, and, after Lewis and Clark’s expedition 200 years ago, opening the West to a frenzied rush of expansion.But the Missouri is also the site of a vast, politically driven drama. It tops a list of emerging big-stakes river wars around the country that pit conservation, development, farm, barge, American Indian, and government interests against one another in clashes made even more complicated by the scarcity of water in many river basin states.In Big Muddy Blues, veteran journalist Bill Lambrecht uses the bicentennial of Lewis and Clark’s epic adventure west as a lens to show the other side of the story: what’s been lost over 200 years. And the losses, on top of the 120 miles cut off the river by Army Corps stabilization efforts, aren’t slight. Dependent on every word uttered in courtrooms and legislatures for their futures are more than 80 rare and endangered species, the family farms that require a stabilized river, the barges of shippers that require a heavier flow, and dozens if not hundreds of sacred Native American burial grounds.Running through it all is the water-more than 2,300 miles of it-that slakes the thirst of people in one-sixth of the nation and has, in the last few hundred years, been home to Native Americans, explorers, and settlers; river pirates, shipwrecks, and steamboats; and farmers, conservationists, and the Army. This is the story of "Big Muddy," of its influence on the formation and stability of our nation and of its place in the center of an escalating river war that will set the stage for water wars in the decades to come.k

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

While the Missouri is not as muddy as it was before it was dammed, straightened, channelized and turned into what environmentalists call the world's biggest barge ditch, the political wranglings surrounding it are murky indeed. Journalist Lambrecht (Dinner at the New Gene Cafe) deftly untangles the confrontation between an alliance of farmers, barge operators and real estate developers who want the river managed for industrial convenience, and environmentalists and recreation and tourist interests who want to restore some of its meanderings and seasonal flows and revive floodplain ecosystems. The controversy also pits the Army Corps of Engineers, custodian of dams and canals, against the Fish and Wildlife Service, guardian of endangered species. Meanwhile, the upriver Dakotans and downriver Missourians squabble over divvying up the river's waters. Lambrecht tells the story through vivid, evenhanded profiles of the individualsÃ¢â ¬â •farmers, resort owners, biologists, tribal leaders, politiciansÃ¢â ¬â •caught up in it, while chronicling the battle over the river's fate from the flood-control projects of the 1930s to the congressional and court battles of recent years. Along the way, he sprinkles in engaging sidebars on Missouri river lore and legend. The result is a probing, highly readable account of "an enslaved river impatient to be free." Photos. (Apr.) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Intrepid journalist Lambrecht marks the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition along the Missouri River, America's longest, by conducting his own exploratory river journey. Once the lifeblood for countless species of wildlife, and sacred to numerous American Indian tribes, the meandering Big Muddy was viewed as "malevolent" and "marauding" by the settlers who followed Lewis and Clark, and was consequently sentenced to "dam-nation." Over the course of a century, the Army Corps of Engineers met the demand for barge navigation, flood control, and jobs with humongous, often ill-advised projects that channeled the Missouri, flooding Indian lands and endangering bird and fish species. Over the years, farmers, bargers, recreationists, environmentalists, and Indian tribes have all argued, often in court, for and against restoring the Missouri's natural flow as invasive species flourish and conflicts over water, burial grounds, and wildlife preservation escalate. The author of Dinner at the New Gene Cafe (2001), Lambrecht skillfully, even wittily, profiles various river champions, elucidates complicated biological, social, and political matters, and illuminates tragic and ludicrous failures of judgment and compassion in a

balanced, often shocking, always compelling inquiry. Donna SeamanCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved

I read this book after returning from a week-long Road Scholar adventure to the Missouri River Basin. It is very well written and my travel experiences were enriched greatly. I highly recommend it.

It'll be more interesting if Bill writes about The Flood of 2011. Now that would be a great book dealing with both all of the states that had to deal with flooding (Nebraska & Iowa especially) vs. the Army of Engineering Corps.

When I picked up this book on Missouri River politics I hardly expected it to be so engrossing! The author is a reporter for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and he recounts here some of the stories he collected that were too in depth for that publication. He writes in a journalistic style; focusing on interviews he lets the voices of people affected by river management carry the book. In sidebars after almost every chapter he presents well-chosen histories not directly related to the politics that add a great deal to the main text.I learned a great deal about the Missouri River from this book, from its recreational opportunities to its commercial usage. I did not know the government was still taking so much land from the natives so far into the twentieth century; it is hard to imagine that so many people could lose their way of life at the signing of a pen. If the book has any weakness, it is that the interviews necessarily focus on people whose needs are not being met by the politics, so it is something of a downer. Still, it well communicates a love of the river and the history of man's intervention to change it.

This book has it all: exquisite text, well-researched material, interesting format, a "plot" with as many twists and turns as the river itself, and an ability to haunt the reader long after the book is done. Lambrecht's book reveals the history of 20th century activities along the Missouri that is seldom (if ever) taught in our schools. From industrious ambitions, the battles over water, and an account of the indigenous tribes who have lost their culture to Western ways of industry, Big Muddy Blues also presents a hope of reclaiming the wild nature of the Missouri River. The author guides the reader along a closer examination into ways public policy, administration and private interests prioritize the work of government agencies. Lambrecht--the Washington DC Bureau Chief for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch-- travelled the River and talked with people affected by it, now and in the past. Anyone interested in the interplay among government bodies, grassroots efforts, concerned

individual action and politics in general will love this book. Readers of nonfiction will appreciate the engaging manner the material is presented. People living in states that border the Missouri River or have water supplies and wildlife affected by it should add this to their reading list... sooner rather than later. One of the best books I've read in a long time. Big Muddy Blues is a gift to citizens, government agency administrators and law-makers everywhere.

In "Big Muddy Blues", Bill Lambrecht has woven intriguing, though somewhat unsettling, tales of one of our most precious resources - water. Specifically he speaks of the Missouri River, but I found myself drawing correlations to other bodies of water dotting our country. If man's need for control has so skewed the patterns of the Missouri, how many other rivers, streams, lakes and bays have suffered the same fate - and with what result? Asking questions of various individuals and groups whose livelihoods are intertwined with the Missouri, Lambrecht presents their answers, but allows the reader to draw conclusions.Disjointed though the writing style appears from time to time, there is a pattern. Lambrecht's tales, of politics and special interest groups, take the reader back and forth through the life of the Missouri - from the days of Lewis and Clark to the present.I praise Lambrecht for raising awareness, of the great Missouri River itself as well as of the politics and factions that are affecting our water resources and environments that rely upon them.

Bill Lambrecht's BIG MUDDY BLUES takes a timely look at the history and the future of the longest river in the United States. It is full of intriguing detail about the river's geography and its inhabitants (notably the pallid sturgeon), the characters who depend on it for their livelihoods, and the woeful land grabs, degradation, and politics that have altered the course of one of the U.S.'s greatest natural resources. But Lambrecht's admiration for and belief in his river (he comes from St. Louis) leave us with glimmers of hope for the future health of the river. His engaging style and neatly-organized chapters contribute to an excellent read.

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