

## **REACTION PAPER**

### Brunner - "Problems of Governance"

Over the past century, solutions to natural resources policy issues have become increasingly complex. Multiple government agencies with overlapping jurisdictions and differing mandates as well as multiple interest groups have contributed to gridlock, frequently preventing solutions in the common interest. Community-based responses to natural resource problems in the American West have demonstrated the potential of local initiatives both for finding common ground on divisive issues and for advancing the common interest.

The article diagnoses contemporary problems of governance in natural resources policy and in the United States generally, then introduces community-based initiatives as responses to those problems. It examines the range of successes and failures of initiatives in bison management in greater Yellowstone; and forest policy in northern California. It also considers how to harvest experience from these and other cases, offering practical suggestions for diverse participants in community-based initiatives and their supporters, agencies and interest groups, and researchers and educators.

A penetrating assessment of the emergence and value of community-based initiatives to address controversial natural resource policy issues, the content is both timely and important.

It *is* at once deeply balanced, eminently practical, and a brilliant state of the art work. For those with an interest in democracy, it is a profound and provocative original contribution to the central and perennial question of how best to organize a polity or community in ways that are more likely to achieve and sustain democratic practices.

Brunner highlight the important role that community-based collaboration can play in helping to resolve the natural resource management conflicts which plague federal land management agencies. Through analysis of several well-known Western case studies, the author illustrates some of the important conditions that are common to successful collaborations. Their work is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the new forms of governance emerging in the American West.