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CHARLES R. PORTER

Sharing the Common Pool

WATER RIGHTS IN THE
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EVERYDAY LIVES OF  
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TEXANS



If every individual and every entity or municipality in the state of Texas chose to exercise water rights at the same time, there would not be enough water to satisfy all claims, no matter how legitimate.

Texas water law, which contains elements of Spanish, English, and Republic heritages, originally defined water by where it sits, flows, or falls and assigned ownership accordingly. This seemingly logical line of reasoning, however, has since evolved into a tortuous amalgamation of laws, permits, and governing authorities that currently face the onslaught of population growth and competing interests—all with insatiable thirsts.

Water rights expert Charles R. Porter explains who has rights to water in Texas, who determines who has those rights, and who benefits or suffers because of it. Covering ownership, use, regulation, real estate, and policy, Porter lays out how we manage (and mismanage) water in Texas, what legal cases have guided the debate, and where the future might take us as old rivalries, new demands, and innovative technologies—such as hydraulic fracturing of oil shale formations ("fracking")—help redefine water policy.

CHARLES R. PORTER is assistant professor of history at St. Edward's University in Austin and a licensed real estate agent and broker. He has been a presenter and panel moderator for the Texas legislature, at the Texas Groundwater Summit, and at a joint conference of the Texas Rural Water Association and Texas Water Conservation Association.

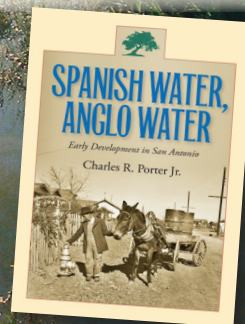
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