

The Land We Share: Private Property and the Common Good

Eric T. Freyfogle



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Is private ownership an inviolate right that individuals can wield as they see fit? Or is it better understood in more collective terms, as an institution that communities reshape over time to promote evolving goals? What should it mean to be a private landowner in an age of sprawling growth and declining biological diversity?

These provocative questions lie at the heart of this perceptive and wide-ranging new book by legal scholar and conservationist Eric Freyfogle. Bringing together insights from history, law, philosophy, and ecology, Freyfogle undertakes a fascinating inquiry into the ownership of nature, leading us behind publicized and contentious disputes over open-space regulation, wetlands protection, and wildlife habitat to reveal the foundations of and changing ideas about private ownership in America.

Drawing upon ideas from Thomas Jefferson, Henry George, and Aldo Leopold and interweaving engaging accounts of actual disputes over land-use issues, Freyfogle develops a powerful vision of what private ownership in America could mean—an ownership system, fair to owners and taxpayers alike, that fosters healthy land and healthy economies.



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