

Nature, Culture and Fly Fishing in the New West

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Cultural theorists define the New West as the region including most portions of the states of Washington, Oregon, California, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, and the entire portions of Idaho, Utah, Nevada, and Arizona. Their term assumes, as does anything new, that there was an Old West as well, possessing distinct characteristics from the New. What analyses of historical, cultural, and theoretical texts reveal is the seamlessness of terms such as New and Old; that throughout this region, the complications and conflict involved around limited resources like water, wildlife, and timber have always existed. No particular date signifies when the Old began, nor when the New commenced. However, to illustrate these complications, many define the New West with stuff- -private jet ports, jet skis, ski resorts, espresso bars, and micro brew pubs are all characteristics of a New West rife with competition and commodities. One crucial concept to acknowledge is the wider perception that the environment of the West offers a regenerative therapy unlike any other region in the U.S. Herein I utilize the activity of fly fishing and its corresponding literature in the last half of the twentieth century as a microcosm of the larger New West cultural (political, economic, recreational, environmental) condition to illustrate many of the same occurrences in other activities of the region. What surfaces throughout the analysis of the aforementioned texts is the notion of the paradoxical retreat-that nothing specifically in the Nature of the New West offers a retreat from Cultural pressures. When one escapes something, that thing is waiting upon arrival. Even the terms Nature and Culture do not work in a twenty first century discussion of the West; neither term stands alone, distinct and identifiable from its traditional opposite. Culture cannot impose itself on Nature anymore than Nature can redeem the ills of Culture, although throughout fly fishing texts we see a perpetuation of this myth of the West as a panacea. Seeing the cure-all as a myth will offer all readers the opportunity to rethink their actions within this region.

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Fly Fishing New Mexico Guides. Photos & Videos. NM Fishing Photos. The Chama is probably one of the West's most undiscovered and diverse trout rivers. Starting in the mountains on the Colorado border, it flows as a freestone stream for many miles through high mountain forests and meadows. Below El Vado reservoir, it runs for over thirty miles through rugged, multi-colored sandstone canyons and rough terrain with limited access. Few would consider it a fly fishing destination; and instead dream of standing in the storied rivers of Montana, Colorado or Idaho. However the collective dreams of thousands of anglers have made for big crowds on the rivers to the north. These days, if you're planning on a fishing trip to Colorado, it's a good idea to bring your own rock to stand on! Here in the mountains of New Mexico, trout abound in our streams and rivers. And since the droves of anglers have gone north for their vacations, it's still possible to find yourself surrounded by wildlife and big trout—but not other fisherman. J