Review: Rocky Mountain Futures: An Ecological Perspective
By Jill S. Baron (Ed.)

Reviewed by Tania Aguero
North Miami Beach, Florida, USA

.....

Jill S. Baron (Ed.). *Rocky Mountain Futures: An Ecological Perspective.* Washington DC: Island Press, 2002. 325 pp. ISBN 1-55963-954-7. Acid free paper.

Human activity has pervasively altered the natural dynamics and landscape in the Rocky Mountains (p. 21). The combination of past and present physical and biological forces has changed, in different aspects, the environment, and now the region is very different than it would have been had there been no human activity.

The template on which it sets defines the physical structure of the Rocky Mountains. Glacial history, lithology, and topographic structures add fine scale characteristics for specific mountain ranges, and, at the finest level, for a specific hill slope. Disturbance processes have added the final impacts on the Rocky Mountain environment. The indirect effects of human activities, especially those involving climate changes, are present through all the Rocky Mountain ecosystems, such as the alpine zone, alpine lake, and the tree line. Direct human influences on the alpine zone include both past and current mining activities, over grazing by livestock, recreation, and the introduction of non-native species.

The climate and atmospheric changes in the Rocky Mountains are more significant to the composition of plant species than are changes in temperature and moisture; for example, the addition of nitrogen to grassland to increase the presence and densities of exotic plants (p. 231).

Many human activities directly affecting the alpine and tree line ecosystems have been curtailed since the mid-twentieth century as a result of environmental regulation, economics, and shifting societal values (p. 196), and the alpine areas will continue to be important sites for monitoring the direct influence of human activities on the environment. Evidence suggests that alpine ecosystems will continue to respond to nitrogen deposition with changes in biodiversity, lake eutrophication, and ultimately lake acidification. It is to be hoped that clean air legislation will slow and perhaps halt these changes (p. 197).

Finally the book does reference some case studies: human societies and land use history of Rio Arriba (p. 239), anthropogenic alteration of upland forests

and grasslands (p. 242), development and degradation of water resources (p. 244), current trends and causes for hope (p. 249) and, in the first part of the book's cover, introduction of exotic species, paleoecologic studies of the human-driven changes in the Rocky Mountains, global warming, and several aspects of the different changes happening to the environment.

This book is composed of fifteen chapters organized into four parts with a conclusion. It is appropriate for the public, college students, and resource managers and planners.

.....

Tania Aguero <juanquinto138@aol.com>, Designer Interior, 1471 NE 170 Street, Apt # 213A, North Miami Beach, Florida 33162, USA. TEL: 1-305-945-4835.