

Walth, Brent. *Fire at Eden's Gate: Tom McCall & the Oregon Story*. Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1994. (reviewed by Michael O'Leary)

This biography chronicles the life of Tom McCall, the Governor of Oregon from 1967-1975. Throughout his two terms as Governor as well as in his earlier career as a journalist, McCall advocated for the clean-up of the pollution on the Willamette River. As a journalist McCall reported on the sources and impacts of the pollution in the Willamette, most famously in his one-hour documentary special from 1962 titled "Pollution in Paradise." As Governor he tightened state restrictions on allowable discharges into the river and also stepped-up the state's enforcement of its water quality standards. In addition, Governor McCall championed the idea of increasing the public access along the riverfront's entire length as a protected greenway. McCall's success in helping to restore the Willamette won national acclaim, including coverage in both Newsweek and National Geographic magazines.

Critique

Prior to writing *Fire at Eden's Gate* author Brent Walth worked as an investigative political reporter for The Register Guard, Oregon's second largest circulating daily newspaper. His journalistic skills are evident in the book's combination of readability as well as its thorough citation of numerous background sources. Nearly 40 pages of the book concentrates on McCall's work to help clean up the river, thereby contributing an important narrative in the river's history by explaining why, how and to what degree that McCall's efforts were successful in mobilizing popular support and political action in the protection of the Willamette.

[return to info sources page](#)

[return to home page](#)