

Rapp, Valerie. *What the River Reveals: Understanding and Restoring Healthy Watersheds.* The Mountaineers. Seattle, WA. 1997. (Reviewed by Michael O'Leary)

In *What the River Reveals*, author Valerie Rapp, a former technical writer for the U.S. Forest Service and a twenty-year resident of the McKenzie River valley, writes about the ecology relating to the rivers of the northwest with a personalized and impassioned approach. In her explanation of what makes a river healthy, she explores the fundamental interconnectedness between our human impacts and the natural science over our history, and she draws clear conclusions about what needs to be done to begin to protect and restore river ecology here in the northwest. Written to be readable with only a modest scientific background, the book incorporates a number of scientific concepts without inundating the reader in raw data. In addition to the text, the book also includes dozens of illustrative photographs, a number of useful maps and tables as well as a helpful annotated bibliography, almost all of which is focused on the Willamette River Basin.

Critique

Rapp's intimate writing style reads as if it were a story shared among old friends over a cup of coffee and a slice of pie, yet it conveys a broad range of detailed information that's related together with great care. As it is more generally a summary of other scientific work than a direct and complete report of particular scientific experiments, it in some ways evokes some of the qualities of a PBS television nature special, rich with images and information. That said, Rapp does not lack the ability to draw conclusions from her analysis and does not shy away from calling for action to bring about more ecological restoration of our rivers. Rapp does not, however, address what altruistic, political or economic forces would have to be in effect to facilitate such an ecological restoration. *What the River Reveals* is an engaging primer for the further study of river ecology and should inspire its readers to begin to ask what the river reveals about us.

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