

**Bradbury, Bill. *Oregon Blue Book 2003-2004*. Office of the Secretary of State, Salem, OR.**

(Reviewed by Michael O'Leary)

Updated and published every two years so as to correspond with the regular session of the Oregon Legislature, the *Blue Book* serves as a general almanac of the physical and cultural geography of the state and in particular as a useful synopsis of the structure and function of government throughout the state. Replete with contact information and a brief overview of the scope of public authority, the *Blue Book* also records a great deal of political history including for example the listing of the titles and outcomes for all statewide ballot measures. In its very condensed format it also lists a number of features to do with the state's natural history ranging from key native plant and animal species, Native American history, as well as hydropower developments along the state's waterways. The online version of this book available at [www.bluebook.state.or.us](http://www.bluebook.state.or.us) also contains links to more information resources.

## Critique

As the state's official record, while this resource does in many cases present a great deal of eminently factual and fairly inarguable information, it is important to note that this book is a product of the authorship and influence of elected officials and so it is in some way reflective of the current political dynamics within the state both explicitly and implicitly in terms of what type of information is selected to be included as well as the framework that the information is presented in. For example, in reference to the use of pesticides in agriculture, the *Blue Book* claims that "These products are safe when used appropriately - and necessary for growing produce to serve an expanding world population..." which is a claim that would provoke leading food security policy experts and public health experts to contest.

Another problem with the format of the *Blue Book*, generally, is its atomistic organizational descriptions that typically fail to convey the dynamics between overlapping and sometimes conflicting lines of interest and authority among public institutions. Even so, the *Blue Book* is a very accessible compendium of a great deal of information for anyone interested in understanding the governments role in the history of Oregon.

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