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Saving the Planet: The American Response to the Environment in the Twentieth Century (American Ways Series)

Hal K. Rothman

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Since 1900 Americans' attitudes toward the world they inhabit have changed as greatly as their own way of life. As their pace quickened, as they left the rural world of their pre-industrial ancestors and moved to urban areas, Americans became enamored of the natural world, if only as a myth. In *Saving the Planet*, Hal Rothman explains why Americans now see in the environment a salvation of themselves and their society, and a respite from the pressures of modern life. Mr. Rothman traces the origins of environmentalism to the diverse reform currents of the 1890s and the conservation movement of the Progressive era. Focusing on the roles of advocacy groups, prominent activists, business, legislation, and the federal bureaucracy, he shows how the idea of conservation management was transformed after World War II into a program for “quality of life.” Driven largely by affluence, this revolution in American attitudes is, Mr. Rothman argues, one of many by-products of the decline in outright faith in technology. His cogent narrative history is punctuated throughout with accounts of crucial episodes in the growth of environmentalism?Hetch-Hetchy, the Echo Park Dam, the oil spill at Santa Barbara, Love Canal, and others.

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