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**Sinopsis**

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Controversy over drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has dominated the recent political debate over energy development and public land management. Too often lost in that debate are the more fundamental questions: What are the laws that govern our wildlife refuges? How do refuge managers decide which uses to allow where? What basic principles underlie refuge administration? How can we maintain biodiversity while opening refuges to economic and recreational activities? The National Wildlife Refuges addresses these and other critical questions concerning the relationship between law and public land conservation.

For the centennial of the National Wildlife Refuge System, legal scholar Robert Fischman offers an insightful and readable account of the refuges, examining their history and current trends that will shape their future. The Refuge System is America's largest collection of lands dedicated to nature protection. Yet, it is rife with secondary uses, many of which cause ecological damage. The story of the Refuge System traces the broader ambitions and conflicts that forge conservation law and practice.

The National Wildlife Refuges provides a comprehensive examination of the laws and policies governing management of the national wildlife refuges, offering for the first time a practical description and analysis of the management regime outlined in the 1997 National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. The 1997 act is the first new statute governing a system of federal public lands enacted since the 1970s. The evolution of law governing the refuge system parallels broader trends in public land management and environmental protection, making the refuge system a valuable case study for those interested in environmental management, policy, and law. The book:

describes the National Wildlife Refuge System and its legal history  
offers a detailed breakdown of the 1997 act, including its purpose, designated uses, comprehensive planning provisions, substantive management criteria, and public participation aspects

Teléfonos: 55 44 73 40 y 55 44 72 91

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considers individual refuges and specific issues that apply to only certain refuges

discusses oil and gas development in refuges

offers observations about how well the refuge system law resolves historic tensions and achieves modern conservation goals

A separate chapter examines the special rules governing refuges in Alaska and considers the contentious debate over the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Appendixes offer a reference of acronyms and abbreviations, a chronology of the refuge system's development, key statutory provisions (including the full text of the 1997 act), and basic information about each national wildlife refuge.

With an approach to conservation that is increasingly prevalent around the world, the National Wildlife Refuge System is an important model for sustainable resource management, and the book's analyses of the refuge system's ecological management criteria, conflicts between primary and subsidiary uses, and tension between site-specific standards and uniform national goals all offer important lessons for environmental governance generally.

#### **Biographies**

Robert L. Fischman is professor of law and Louis F. Niezer Faculty Fellow at Indiana University School of Law, Bloomington. He has published widely on issues related to public land management, endangered species recovery, biological diversity protection, environmental impact analysis, and sustainable forestry. Before entering teaching, he served as director of the Natural Resources Program at the Environmental Law Institute.