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Kieko Matteson, *Forests in Revolutionary France: Conservation, Community, and Conflict, 1669–1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). ISBN: 9781107338197

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Introduction by Christopher F. Jones, Arizona State University

For peasants of the Franche-Comté region, France's revolutionary period from 1789-1848 marked an exciting and tumultuous period where ideas of liberty and equality reshaped social and political life. Yet unlike their urban brethren that stormed the Bastille or witnessed parades of executions, political sovereignty meant something much different in this mountainous and forested region at the nation's eastern border. **Kieko Matteson** argues that environmental considerations—in particular maintaining customary access to forests for subsistence practices against the increasing role of private industry and the state—represented the foremost priority for Franch-Comtois. *Forests in Revolutionary France* explores the bitterly contested struggles over woodland control as locals fought tooth and nail to assert their customary rights to forests in the face of a state increasingly committed to controlling the nation's natural resources for economic and military purposes.

Residents of Franche-Comté had a testy relationship with the French state that predated the revolutionary age. Beginning in 1674 when Louis XIV's forcefully annexed the region from the Hapsburgs, Franche-Comté came under centrally managed forest policies pioneered by the 1669 *Ordinance des eaux et forêts*. In the minds of state officials, France's forests represented a necessary resource for the public good, and its peasants seemed inefficient and wasteful consumers of wood. In response, the state passed a host of measures that gave manufacturing enterprises such as ironworks exclusive access to forests and preserved other areas for military needs, in the process denying local residents forest privileges they had long held. For the vast majority of Franch-Comtois, these measures threatened their very survival. Subsistence in the region's uneven territory required regular access to forests for wood, forage, and pasturage to supplement agricultural pursuits. As a result, peasants fought for access to forests—sometimes violently—and reframed their protests over time as the nation's revolutionary upheavals supplied new rhetorical tools and institutional structures.

By paying close attention to Franch-Comtois and their relationship to forests and the state, *Forests in Revolutionary France* wonderfully complicates many received narratives in environmental history. France's forestry policies have often been hailed as forward-thinking measures that set the state for ecological management across the globe; Matteson shows us that they were also coercive measures that disciplined local populations. At the same time, Matteson demonstrates that top-down power did not achieve its ends seamlessly. While peasants never managed to get all their demands met, they succeeded in wresting an impressive set of concessions from the state on numerous occasions. Moreover, while official rhetoric emphasized the wasteful habits of peasants, she reveals that their practices had many benefits for local ecosystems and are now being considered a model of sustainability. Little surprise, then, that the dissertation this book was based on won the Rachel Carson Prize from the American Society for Environmental History.

I asked **Caroline Ford** to participate in this roundtable because of her deep expertise as an environmental historian of France. She has published numerous books including *Creating the Nation in Provincial France* (Princeton, 1993), *Divided Houses* (Cornell, 2005), and most recently, *Natural Interests* (Harvard, 2016), a book that explores ideas of nature among French thinkers before World War II. Ford's comments help situate Matteson's work within French forestry history and ask questions about scientific ideas about nature and woodlands during this period.

Catherine Dunlop is a historian of modern Europe with expertise in French-German borderlands. Author of *Cartophilia* (Chicago, 2015), she is interested in intersections between geography, images, and environmental history. Her review probes the role of tourism in the forests of Franche-Comté and how environmental history might be better integrated into the history of revolution.

Richard Keyser completes our roundtable, lending his expertise in the history of law and woodlands management. Winner of the American Society for Environmental History's 2009 Alice Hamilton article prize, his research focuses on medieval and early modern France. His review tackles, among other topics, the challenging question of how we interpret claims of environmental decline made by historical actors when they may not be accurate guides.

Before turning to the first set of comments, I would like to pause here and thank all the roundtable participants for taking part. In addition, I would like to remind readers that as an open-access forum, *H-Environment Roundtable Reviews* is available to scholars and non-scholars alike, around the world, free of charge. Please circulate.

Comments by Catherine Ford, UCLA

The field of French “forest history” is well populated, especially by historians of the early modern period. The field has been fostered in France by the Groupe d’Histoire des Forêts Françaises over which Andrée Corvol-Dessert has presided and which consists of over two hundred researchers from all disciplines who have participated in a number of important conferences over the years. Forest historians, however, have generally not tended to bridge the early modern and modern periods in a single sweep, as Matteson does in *Forests in Revolutionary France: Conservation, Community and Conflict, 1669-1848*, where she considers the economic, strategic, and political importance of forests for France from the passage of Colbert’s 1669 forest ordinance to 1848. She explores this subject with a fresh eye by examining policy shifts from the perspective of Paris, while simultaneously grounding her study in a very specific geographical context, the Franche-Comté, a former Habsburg territory in eastern France. In doing so, she is able to assess both the process of policy-making at the center and the response of local populations on the ground during a period in which laments concerning widespread deforestation were legion and severe shortages in firewood and timber were decried, which generated environmental anxieties at all levels of society.

The book is divided into six chapters, which range from a careful analysis of the physical geography and socioeconomy of the Franche-Comté, the intellectual foundation of ideas concerning forest conservation in the eighteenth century; the “forest crisis” preceding and following the Revolution of 1789; to the establishment of a new Forest Code in 1827 and a school in which to train professionalized foresters. The book is based on a wealth of archival material and primary documents that Matteson found in both national and provincial archives in France. She sorts through and illuminates very technical modes of forest management, while setting the scene for conflicts between local communities and the French state in masterful ways. She seeks to explore reform efforts on the part of the state as well as the ideological agenda of lawmakers, landowners and commentators in order to explore both the successes and failures of natural resource allocation and environmental conservation in the context of sweeping revolutionary change and the expansion of state power. She examines a number of important questions in this regard including why conservation policies prompted resistance; and how customary rights were supplanted by those of private property. To this extent she resuscitates a debate, which has recently again become the focus of some attention among environmental historians in France on the “tragedy of the commons,” which was sparked by Garrett Hardin’s 1968 article in *Science* and Elinor Ostrom’s rebuttal (among others).¹

¹Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science* 162 (1968): 1244-1245 and Elinor Ostrom et al. “Revisiting the Commons: Local Lessons and Global Challenges,” *Science* 284, no. 5412 (1999). See Fabien Locher’s recent consideration of this question in “Pâturages de la guerre froide: Garrett Hardin et la ‘tragedie des communs,’” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 60 (2013) 7-36. An international conference, “The Environmental Commons: Communities, Practices and Institutions.

Matteson advances three important arguments in her book: First, peasant communities were more successful in pressing their claims and demands during the French Revolution, 1830, and 1848 than has previously been acknowledged, at least in the Franche-Comté. Second, “conservation” policies were clearly an extension of state power and cannot simply be viewed as benign and far-sighted ecological initiatives, and the state’s attempt to suppress customary rights had a significant and negative impact on the French peasantry. Third, she gives ample indication that rural communities were, and still are, unfairly maligned for the practices that they employed in managing woodland areas. In taking the story up to the present in the epilogue she shows how the state’s woodland policies have in some ways come full circle, with the once condemned silvo-pastoralism now hailed as “ecological.”

Her primary focus on forest policy, the creation of the forest service, the issue of conservation, and local resistance perhaps leads her to shy away from other significant voices and important connections that might be made in understanding the importance of forests in early modern and modern France. First, branches of the state administration, such as the Ponts et Chaussées, whose engineers made key contributions to shaping debates about forest policy and practice in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, are not fully considered.² These would include figures such as Alexandre Surell, an engineer employed by the Ponts et Chaussées and who speculated on the effect of deforestation on rainfall and climate change, as did Jean-Antoine Fabre, another Ponts et Chaussées engineer even earlier in the eighteenth century, both of whom Matteson mentions only in passing.³ But it would also include a host of lesser known commentators and the French public who commented on these issues in letters to the state and in pamphlets of various kinds from the Napoleonic period onwards. While Fabre and Surell worked in regions where “torrents” and flooding were far more prevalent than in the Franche-Comté, they nonetheless spawned a century-long debate on the subject among lesser known figures. Indeed the environmental crises presented by frequent and widespread flooding in France from the 18th century to the 20th century reignited debates about forest policy in an administration devoted to both the management of forests, but also rivers, as the title *Eaux et Forêts* suggests. While Matteson mentions the link that commentators and officials made between floods and deforestation and begins her epilogue by referencing the 1856 flood which inundated three-fourths of France and affected virtually all of its major rivers, it is striking that she does not reflect on the voluminous literature on the relationship between forests and flooding that was produced in the period and how this came to shape debates about

Historical Approaches: France and the French Colonial Empire, 17th-20th Centuries” will be held in Paris on 14-15 November 2016, which has been organized by Locher and sponsored by GOVENPRO.

² Paul Allard, “Le rôle des ingénieurs des Ponts et Chaussées au XIX^e siècle dans la gestion des crises environnementales,” in *Temps et espaces des crises de l’environnement*, ed. Corinne Beck, Yves Luginbühl, and Tatiana Muxart (Versailles, 2006), 249-261.

³ Alexandre Surell, *Etudes sur les torrents des Hautes Alpes* (Paris 1841) and Jean-Antoine Fabre, *Essai sur la théorie des torrents et des rivières, contenant les moyens les plus simple d’en arrêter les ravages* (Paris, 1797)

climate change as early as the Napoleonic period. Perhaps this elision might be explained in terms of her placing a central emphasis on forests as a natural resource and not on their role in a larger “economy of nature.” Yet, forests were also thought to play an important role in regulating a delicate balance in nature as famous figures such as the Comte de Buffon argued as early as the eighteenth century. This might lead one to ask about how the perspectives of naturalists, scientists, pseudo-scientists and lay observers, on forests might alter her overall appraisal of the forces at work in shaping forest policy, particularly in the decades following the French Revolution.

The great strength of Matteson’s close study of the Franche-Comté lies in grounding her work in a micro context, in a specific time and place. She shows the very real impact of policies enacted in the capital on a rural region of France, but one wonders how and whether imperial conquest that began during the period which she explores and French encounters with other forested landscapes shaped (or did not shape) policy in the metropole, a subject explored in Richard Grove’s path-breaking *Green Imperialism*.⁴ Matteson mentions, for example, that the French forest code was exported wholesale to Algeria at the time of conquest, where conditions were far different from those in metropolitan France. Many foresters served in both France and in her colonial possessions. This code was finally revised in 1903, and one wonders about the extent to which foresters considered and compared colonial and metropolitan forests and landscapes. After visiting the French Alps George Perkins Marsh noted, for example, in *The Earth as Modified by Human Action* that he had not seen more devastated landscapes in Kabyle villages in Algeria, “for there you can travel by horseback, and you find grass in the spring, whereas in more than fifty communes in the Alps, there is nothing.”⁵ Similarly one wonders about the divisions that arose among foresters themselves regarding forest management, and more particularly between followers of Frédéric Le Play, who valorized pastoral populations, and foresters who did not.⁶

Finally, calls for saving forests came from other quarters and were articulated less in terms of conservation than in terms of heritage preservation and patrimoine. These calls came not from engineers, scientists, or foresters but from a middle class urban public. It was the Barbizon school of painters who were behind Napoleon III’s 13 August 1861 decree that created the first protected natural landscape in the forest of Fontainebleau as a réserve artistique, and the painters fought pitched battles with foresters, who defended their own conservationist initiatives, such as planting pines. Both made claims about protecting the forest, but in very different ways. While this decree and its history is beyond the chronological scope of Matteson’s study, the beginnings of this movement can be traced to the 1830s and

⁴ Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1900* (Cambridge, 1995).

⁵ Quoted in John Croumbie Brown, *Reboisement in France; or Records of the Replanting of the Alps, the Cevennes, and the Pyrenees* (London, 1876), 70-71.

⁶ Bernard Kalaora and Antoine Savoye, *Forêt et sociologie: Les forestiers de l’Ecole de Le Play défenseurs des populations des montagnes (1860-1913)* (Paris, 1984).

1840s, and we even find Gustave Flaubert's anti-hero Frédéric Moreau in his novel *L'éducation sentimentale* celebrating Fontainebleau as an aesthetic spectacle when he flees to the forest during the revolution of 1848.⁷ This all leads one to wonder how Matteson might consider the intervention of a new kind of public in the debate about forests during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Matteson has read very widely and attempts to connect her own painstaking research with that of historians in other parts of the world in citing, for example, Oliver Wapulumuka's *Conservation Song: A History of Peasant-State Relations and the Environment of Malawi*, Thaddeus Sunseri's *Wielding the Ax: State Forestry and Social Conflict in Tanzania*, and Andrew Walker's *Forest Guardians, Forest Destroyers: The Politics of Environmental Knowledge in Northern Thailand*. Her reflections on the French context are illuminating and will be of interests to historians of early modern and modern France but to environmental historians working on other parts of the world more generally.

⁷ "The different trees afforded a fascinating spectacle." Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York, 1964) 323. See also, Nicholas Green, *The Spectacle of Nature: Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Manchester, 1990) and Greg M. Thomas, *Art and Ecology in Nineteenth-Century France: The landscapes of Theodore Rousseau* (Princeton, 2000)

Comments by Catherine T. Dunlop, Montana State University

When we visualize the drama of the French Revolution, which events and places come to mind? A few images are likely to appear: the storming of the Bastille prison fortress, the gruesome beheading of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, and the picture of sans-culottes marching through the streets of Paris with tricolor cockades proudly affixed to their clothing. This canon of revolutionary images has become embedded in our popular understanding of the French Revolution through mass-produced films and literature. It has become further entrenched in the minds of our undergraduates through Western Civilization and French history textbooks that attempt to distill France's fraught revolutionary history from 1789-1848 into a concise timeline of key events. But something is clearly lost in this narrow Parisian rendition of the French revolutionary story. The French Kingdom and its overseas empire encompassed many diverse places, communities, and environments. What did the French Revolution look like miles away from the Paris, where the Bastille was far from sight? Which issues were at stake for France's rural revolutionaries whose lives were deeply intertwined with nature?

In her beautifully written study, *Forests in Revolutionary France*, Kieko Matteson demonstrates that the spaces that mattered in revolutionary France were not necessarily located in the nation's political center, but were rather situated in its wild periphery. The revolutionary setting that she asks us to visualize is unfamiliar—instead of palaces, cathedrals, and city squares, she describes in loving detail the root systems, leaves, and branches of dozens of tree varieties located deep within the thickly forested mountains of Franche-Comté, a border region that the French Crown acquired in the seventeenth century. In exploring the dynamics of the French Revolutions of 1789, 1830, and 1848 from the vantage point of ordinary people dependent on forests for food and fuel, she challenges our very understanding of a “revolutionary cause.” Comtois revolutionaries, she demonstrates, did not rebel against oppressive governments due to abstract Enlightenment notions of liberty, equality, and fraternity, but rather because of their tangible material needs connected to their physical environment. For most Comtois, she argues, revolutions were worth fighting because they presented an opportunity to claim free access to wood, a natural resource that was “a necessity as vital as bread” (4).

In order to make the case that ownership of woodland resources lay at the heart of French revolutionary struggles, Matteson begins her book with a detailed description of Franche-Comté's remote forested setting. Her geographically oriented approach to history draws from a longstanding tradition among French historians of France to emphasize the physical territory in which past events unfolded. In 1929, French historians Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre came together to found the Annales School, an intellectual movement that advocated for a cross-disciplinary exploration of the past. Many historians in the United States are familiar with the work of the

Annales School's most famous student, Fernand Braudel, whose deep history of the Mediterranean world is widely considered a precursor to what we now call environmental history.⁸ In Braudelian fashion, Matteson opens her book with a chapter entitled "The Lay of the Land," in which we learn that Franche-Comté is a cold and often foggy mountainous region covered with trees including fir, beech, spruce, oak, ash, maple, pine birch willow and alder. Depending on where they were situated in the region's thickly forested vertical geography, Comtois citizens developed different lifeways. "Franche-Comté's diverse topography fostered distinct social, cultural and organizational patterns," Matteson explains. "Upland communities tended to enjoy greater privileges, including freedom from mortmain [a type of forced labor], than lowland villages, perhaps in recognition of the increased challenges of surviving at higher elevation. Spatially, mountain homes and outbuildings tended to be bunched atop outcroppings as a wedge against avalanche, or clustered at the base of ravines to shelter from winter winds" (22). Like Braudel, therefore, Matteson considers physical geography to be of vital importance for understanding the particular types of social networks, economic patterns, and revolutionary strategies that developed in her area of study.

In addition to highlighting the opportunities and constraints presented by Franche-Comté's spatial form, Matteson makes several other methodological choices in her book that struck me as powerful and important. First, Matteson clearly believes in the value of getting to know the territory of Franche-Comté firsthand. Some of the liveliest passages in her book describe her own travels through the border region, where she observes the interactions between the shape of the topography, the condition of the forests, and the evolution of mountain communities. "Burrowed in the depths of a valley, wedged into a river gorge, or huddled atop a rocky plateau," she observes, "these communities had to make the most of the soil and woods around them" (6). Matteson's local expertise is perhaps most clearly evidenced in her impressive encyclopedic knowledge of tree species and the historic tree harvesting techniques that were once practiced in Franche-Comté. Thanks to her painstaking research, we learn about antiquated tree managing practices such as the annual *glandée* (nut mast grazing) and the long-lost woodland partition system known as *triage* (29-31).

Besides her detailed research into Comtois ecosystems, Matteson makes another important methodological choice in choosing to root her study in locally based archives. In the French system for managing historical patrimony, the archives that are closest to the ground are the *Archives départementales*, the repositories of historical documents run by over ninety units of French administration spread across the nation and its overseas territories. While working in French departmental archives can present the danger of falling into myopic local history, Matteson demonstrates the many upsides of building a French environmental history from the bottom-up. Colorful stories told from the scale of local history can

⁸ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

illustrate the crux of national and global debates over woodland resource management far better than elite discourses originating from the state capital. As someone who relishes the experience of working in archives outside of Paris, I consider Matteson's book a promising model for how environmental history can reinvigorate our study of provincial France by bringing new attention to the role of non-humans, climate, and natural resources in shaping the French past.⁹

Together, Matteson's innovative research methods lead to her bold new interpretation of French revolutionary politics. The untold story of revolutionary activism, she argues, was a struggle over natural resources, and specifically wood. Ordinary Comtois, she demonstrates, were willing to challenge their central government and face death because they desperately wanted to maintain control of woodlands that were essential for their livelihoods. The revolutionary political culture that emerged in Franche-Comté was one that pitted advocates for local land use against "conservationists"—political and military leaders based in Versailles and Paris who wanted to claim all of France's woodlands for central state needs such as naval timber. "Conservation," a term that many of today's environmentalists view positively, became a dirty word for Comtois citizens who associated the policy (embodied in legislation such as the Forest Ordinance of 1669 and the Forest Code of 1827) as akin to a land grab by hated and untrustworthy outsiders.

When viewed from the peripheral territory of Franche-Comté, Matteson argues, the Revolutions of 1789, 1830, and 1848 were much more about a defense of local autonomy, and a defense of local environmental resources, than previously thought. Even though some beneficial political rights were secured as the result of revolutionary upheaval, Matteson points out that in many ways, every French revolution ended in tragic disappointment for Comtois because they failed to halt the advancement of a state-centered conservation regime that ultimately destroyed the fabric of the region's ecosystem and economy. As it would happen across the globe, the French state's top-down seizure of natural resources and technocratic style of wilderness management supplanted communitarian systems that were in fact much better for long-term environmental sustainability.¹⁰

In highlighting the conflict between Paris and French provinces over environmental resources, Matteson reinforces a finding that we have known for quite some time, which is that the myth of France as Europe's most strongly unified state belies a long history of violent center-periphery struggles. In borderland regions such as Alsace,

⁹ In one of the few other environmental histories of Revolutionary France, Peter McPhee fleshes out a different—though related—struggle for communal land ownership of the *garrigues*, a scrub-covered hill country in the southern French region of the Aude. See Peter McPhee, *Revolution and Environment in Southern France, 1780-1830: Peasants, Lords, and Murder in the Corbières* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹⁰ James C. Scott makes a similar argument about state power and the technocratic management of German forests. See James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 11-53.

Flanders, the Cerdanya, and Savoie, the central French state has faced serious resistance to its economic, political, and religious policies.¹¹ But as someone who has written quite extensively on the history of French borderlands, I would argue that Matteson is perhaps too eager to label most Comtois as “resisters” to the central state’s conversation regimes. The center-periphery dynamic that Matteson tends to emphasize is one of state-imposed conservation versus peasant resistance. “Having been dispossessed of their traditional rights,” she writes, “inhabitants were left with the choice of acceptance and submission or disobedience and delinquency” (44). But I would note that in modern borderlands, a third group of people typically emerges: middlemen and women eager to broker deals between powerful outsiders and local communities. Who among the people in Franche-Comté benefitted from the state’s conservation policies? Which Comtois chose to manipulate conservation laws and use them to their advantage? The romantic image of a rebellious forest *démoiselle* making a last stand in the woods is a compelling one—but does it really represent the majority of the Comtois population?

One possible arena that Matteson could have used to explore the middle ground between authoritarian power and local resistance is Franche-Comté’s early tourist industry. It was during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that French citizens began to travel to European forests for the purpose of pleasure. Locally based civil associations interested in preserving historical and environmental patrimony played a key role in developing early marketing strategies for tourism in provincial France.¹² Are there indications that Comtois citizens used the popular image of Franche-Comté as an untamed natural landscape for economic gain? Did the rise of wilderness tourism fundamentally change how ordinary Comtois saw their forests as an economic resource? The popular Paris-based outdoor retail store *Au Vieux Campeur*, for example, comes to mind as the latest incarnation of a longstanding trend toward marketing a brand of popular conservation to the French public and profiting from the sale of walking sticks and hiking shoes.

But these are minor points, and the contribution that Matteson has made to revolutionary historiography is impressive. In arguing that the struggle over natural resources—particularly wood—underpinned the dramatic events of 1789, 1830, and 1848, Matteson does more than simply “green” a familiar revolutionary narrative; she invites scholars to fundamentally rethink what was at stake in revolutionary France. In emphasizing the importance of material conditions to understanding political behavior, her book weighs in on a longstanding debate over the causes of the Revolution of 1789 in particular. During the 1960s and 1970s,

¹¹ See, for example, Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Timothy Baycroft, *Culture, Identity and Nationalism: French Flanders in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Suffolk: Royal Historical Society, Boydell Press, 2004); Catherine Tatiana Dunlop, *Cartophilia: Maps and the Search for Identity in the French-German Borderland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

¹² See Stéphane Gerson, *The Pride of Place: Local Memories and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

Marxist-leaning social historians such as Albert Soboul framed the Revolution as a form of class conflict rooted in an unequal distribution of material resources and wealth.¹³ During the 1980s and 1990s, revisionist historians such as François Furet and Lynn Hunt de-emphasized the revolutionaries' demands for material equality and focused instead on how revolutionaries communicated their message through a complex political culture of symbols, language, and representations.¹⁴ After decades in which cultural approaches to the French Revolution have dominated, Matteson's *Forests in Revolutionary France* offers a welcome return to the material motives behind revolutionary political activity with a refreshing and updated twist that ties revolutionary history to environmental history. I am curious to hear more from Matteson on how she thinks that a new focus on the environment will transform the kind of Revolutionary histories that the next generation of students and scholars will create.

I close in noting that Matteson's brilliant genealogy of environmental conservation in France has far-reaching applications that transcend the geographic and temporal focus of her study. When I finished her book, I couldn't help but think of the politics surrounding public access to natural resources in my state of Montana. One of the most contested statewide issues in recent years has revolved around a growing number of out-of-state landowners who buy up large tracts of former ranch land and attempt to cut off public access to the rivers and streams that traverse their private properties. Political organizations on both the Left and the Right have reacted angrily to the privatization of state water resources, and both have relied on the concept of a wilderness "commons" as an argument for keeping Montana's natural resources accessible to the public. The questions are thus similar to those raised in Matteson's book: To whom do our forests, rivers, and streams belong? How can we establish conservation policies that benefit the greatest number of people? Historians of the environment have much to learn from the successes and failures of conservation policies in societies across the globe. Kieko Matteson, for her part, has reminded us that struggles for liberty and progress do not always take place in the halls of government—whether in Paris or in Washington, DC—but they can also take place in the midst of a leafy forest far from the center of political power.

¹³ Albert Soboul, *The Parisian Sans-Culottes and the French Revolution, 1793-4*, trans. Gwynne Lewis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964).

¹⁴ François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

Comments by Richard Keyser, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Written in a clear, engaging style, this book makes a compelling argument about an important topic that has rarely received book-length attention, and never in English. Matteson presents a detailed, fascinating history of social, intellectual, and political struggles over rights to French woodlands and their resources, which were a key part of traditional agro-ecosystems.

The book's breadth is impressive. Going beyond the dates of the title, Matteson traces the history of conflicts over and debates about forests across more than two centuries, from the seventeenth to the late nineteenth; an epilogue brings the story into the twenty-first century. Yet she keeps the arguments clear by zeroing in on the key moments of crisis, administrative reform, and revolution that convulsed France across this period. Secondly, *Forests in Revolutionary France* adroitly balances a dual focus, on the one hand grounding its analysis on a regional case study of the Franche-Comté in eastern France, and on the other keeping in view the larger arena of national politics and the state's persistent, often frustrated efforts to build an effective forest administration.

Matteson persuasively argues that local communities doggedly resisted the inexorable rise of centralized state control over woodlands. Peasants, especially in the Franche-Comté's many mountainous zones, often used treed spaces more for pasture for sheep and cattle than for the timber and fuelwood prioritized by state administrators and owners of ironworks and other manufacturers. The story is in many ways a tragic one: villagers often seem to have been fighting a losing battle. Matteson contends, however, that this struggle continued into the early twentieth century in part because "peasant opposition...produced greater gains than previously appreciated" (p. 10). She shows how rural people affected forest policy and resisted privatization by making their voices heard, continuing to use the woodland resources they needed, and sometimes violently rebelling against lords, foresters, and state officials.

This book will be of great interest to modern historians of Europe, especially of France, as well as to rural and environmental historians more broadly. It builds on the research of a number of Anglophone scholars who have explored the environmental dimensions of the social conflicts and cultural changes that attended the modernization of French rural society.¹⁵ Matteson emphasizes, confirming Peter Sahlins's and Tamara Whitehead's findings for the Pyrenees and the Alps, that the relative independence of upland pastoralists empowered their resistance to growing state and capitalist control. *Forests in Revolutionary France* complements

¹⁵ Peter Sahlins, *Forest Rites: The War of the Demoiselles in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Peter McPhee, *Revolution and Environment in Southern France, 1780-1830: Peasants, Lords, and Murder in the Corbières* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Tamara Whitehead, *Forests and Peasant Politics in Modern France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

these earlier works nicely by shifting the inquiry to the northern half of the country, by covering two centuries (ca. 1650-1850) passed over quickly by them, and by lavishing much more attention on the Parisian centers of French intellectual and political debate about forests.

This last topic will interest the broader scholarly community, given the significant role that French thinkers and administrators played in the development of modern Western conservation, and of forest conservation in particular. Matteson's book now provides the best history in English of the emergence of modern French forestry within France (especially chapters 1-2 and 5).¹⁶ Her story clarifies not only the administrative advances represented by the Forest Ordonnance of 1669, the Forest Code of 1827, and the beginnings of the late-nineteenth century campaign to reforest upland regions, but also the breakdowns of state control in the Revolutions of 1789-99, 1830, and 1848. As Matteson wryly notes in her epilogue, gesturing towards the global significance of her study, ecological understandings and cultural values have both recently shifted in ways that now positively appraise the practices that early French conservation fought for so long, including the mixed usage of woodlands with goals other than maximizing commercial profits (pp. 262-64). The importance of the book's topic, the clarity of its historical narrative, and Matteson's ability to vividly recreate and analyze both intellectual debates and concrete social conflicts will make this book not only a reference point for scholars, but also one that would provoke stimulating discussion in advanced undergraduate classes and graduate seminars.

Certain limitations in Matteson's approach, however, mean that some of her specific arguments, especially those concerning forests themselves, need to be treated cautiously. These limitations stem from what may also be seen as one of the book's strongest features: its detailed analysis of and copious quotation from a large body of discursive primary sources, including political debates, administrative letters and reports, legal disputes, arguments advanced in learned treatises, and, most of all, the petitions known as the *cahiers de doléances*, which were prepared by local communities and addressed to the upcoming meeting of the Estates General in 1789, on the eve of the Revolution. The problem, for this reader, is that Matteson often seems to rely on such evocative evidence to the exclusion both of careful discussions of the historiography of French or European woodlands—though Matteson's footnotes show that she is familiar with this literature—and of other methodologies that are vital for forest history.

These interrelated problems arise, for example, when Matteson seems to accept without sufficient critical evaluation the many statements made in the primary

¹⁶ Matteson's attention to the domestic scene also nicely complements the work of Richard H. Grove, who has shown that French intellectuals and colonial administrators of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries played a pivotal role in the emergence of European 'environmentalist' ideas and policies; see his *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9-10, 168-263, 476-79.

sources that attribute the destruction or degradation of woodlands to ironworks and other fuel-using industries. While before about 1980 historians tended to take such complaints, which are found across Europe, more or less at face value, since then many scholars have shown that they must be treated with skepticism.¹⁷ This reappraisal grew in part from a greater appreciation for a traditional silvicultural technique, one that Matteson explains very well: in preindustrial Europe most fuelwood was supplied not by cutting down large timber trees, but rather by coppicing, the recurrent harvesting of small wood from resprouted stumps of broad-leaf, deciduous trees (pp. 27-28). Yet Matteson does not discuss the related, widespread finding that strong demand from wood-burning industries raised wood prices, thereby tending not to destroy woodlands, but rather to preserve them as profitable investments—albeit in the altered form of coppice woods.¹⁸ The impact of industry varied, however, and could be problematic in ecologically fragile uplands, where the combination of thin soils, short growing seasons, and populations of coniferous trees (most of which cannot be coppiced) might render heavy demand for woodfuel unsustainable. This leads me to ask Matteson, to what extent would she consider the Franche-Comté as being *exceptional* in its vulnerability to the growth of industry in the eighteenth century? This is not to suggest that it was uniquely vulnerable: Emmanuel Garnier has recently reached similar conclusions regarding industry's deleterious effects in the mountains of the Vosges region, just to the north of the Franche-Comté.¹⁹ Looking at these issues more broadly, I would like to hear what Matteson thinks about the potential limitations of the descriptive sources, and what might be gained from a greater recourse to local ecological and economic evidence.

Beyond the specific question of industry, I also worry about Matteson's frequent invocation of the overall decline of the forest, a decline that is said to have affected both the surface area and the quality of woodlands, both in the Franche-Comté and throughout France, and one that continued across the period of her study. Matteson recognizes that in some cases that the discourse of crisis might involve exaggeration (pp. 158, 177), and throughout the book she finely dissects the diverse agendas that complaints about forests might serve. But as in the case of industry, I felt that her analysis might have been even stronger had she problematized more clearly and consistently the discourse of decline itself—a discourse after all that she shows to

¹⁷ The late Oliver Rackham was one of most influential proponents of the newer view in English; see his *Ancient Woodland: Its History, Vegetation and Uses in England* (1980, rev. ed. Colvend: Castlepoint Press, 2003), 153-4, 161-72. For France, see: Denis Woronoff, "Forges prédatrices, forges protectrices," *Revue géographique des Pyrénées et du Sud-Ouest* 55.2 (1984): 213-18; and Andrée Corvol, *L'homme aux bois: histoire des relations de l'homme et de la forêt, XVIIe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1987), 71-83. Matteson's notes and bibliography show she is familiar with these scholars' work. She overlooks, however, some important recent works on this topic, such as Jérôme Buridant, *Espaces forestières et industrie verrière, XVIIe-XIXe siècle* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), e.g. at 218-19.

¹⁸ Matteson discusses fuelwood industries on pp. 23-29, 52, 55, 70-74, 83-86, 161-62. She refers to a statement of 1804 that claimed, "wood-burning industry actually helped perpetuate forests that otherwise would have been cleared" (162), but she does not explore this idea.

¹⁹ Emmanuel Garnier, *Terre de conquêtes: la forêt vosgienne sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 525-48 (a work not cited by Matteson).

have been astonishingly enduring.²⁰ For France as a whole, she reprises a series of traditional estimates that put the country's proportion of wooded land at about 26% (or 13 million hectares total) at the time of Colbert's reforms in the mid-seventeenth century, a proportion that fell over the next century to about 15 or 16% (or 8 million hectares), and then to 13% (6.5 million hectares) by the eve of the Revolution, before finally reaching a nadir of about 12% (6.3 million hectares) in the 1820s.²¹ Even if one accepts such estimates, which as Matteson knows are based more on guesswork than we would like, this trend suggests, given the rapid growth of both population and industry over the long eighteenth century, that claims of a generalized forest crisis before the last several decades of this period are implausible—and the same applies to western Europe as a whole, as Paul Warde has argued.²² Similarly, notwithstanding the traditional emphasis on the “devastations” inflicted on the forest during the Revolution and its aftermath in the early nineteenth century, these figures indicate that woodlands shrank only modestly in this period. Moreover, as Matteson notes, in the first few decades of the nineteenth century both France's population and its wood-burning industries actually continued to expand (pp. 161, 227)—thus further increasing the overall consumption of wood.²³

Of course, forests can be destroyed or degraded in ways that measures of surface area do not capture, as Matteson recognizes. But how can we determine the quality of woodlands so long ago, which of course depends on a combination of local ecological factors, species composition, age of the trees, and type of human management? I would like to hear more about what Matteson thinks such sources as financial accounts, estate and cadastral maps, and other fine-grained data concerning specific woodlands might be able to add. Perhaps most of all I am curious about her thoughts about the potential of landscape archeology and the paleo-sciences,²⁴ to which many scholars over the last generation or so have turned to address such challenges.

In raising these questions about other approaches, however, I want to avoid unfairly asking Matteson to embark on what would be yet another book project. Instead, my questions are meant to elicit discussion of how her excellent book fits into woodland

²⁰ Matteson might have engaged, for example, with the ideas of Andrée Corvol, who argued throughout her career that complaints about the forest, even at the time of the Revolution, were exaggerated to serve various social and political agendas. See: Andrée Corvol, “La décadence des forêts: leitmotiv,” in *La forêt malade: débats anciens et phénomènes nouveaux, XVIIe-XXe siècles*, ed. A. Corvol (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994), 3-17; and Arlette Brosselin, Andrée Corvol, and François Vion-Delphin, “Les doléances contre l'industrie,” in *Forges et forêts: recherches sur la consommation proto-industrielle de bois*, ed. Denis Woronoff (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1990), 11-28.

²¹ Figures slightly adapted from those provided on pp. 69-70, 152, and 159.

²² “Fear of Wood Shortage and the Reality of Woodland in Europe, c. 1450-1850,” *History Workshop Journal* 62 (2006): 29-57, cited by Matteson (p. 11).

²³ See also the works by Woronoff and Corvol cited above.

²⁴ Matteson discusses landscape archeology only in reference to Franche-Comté's prehistorical period (pp. 18-19).

history considered more broadly. My own impression, for what it's worth, is that in fact *Forests in Revolutionary France* is less interested in the precise character of woodlands and their changes over time than in the social, cultural, and political debates *about* forests; the book shows us that in its period of study forests were "good to think with" for a wide range of people. Matteson is to be congratulated for making such a stimulating contribution to the multiple historical fields that this book addresses.

Response by Kieko Matteson, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Research and writing are generally solitary activities, at least for historians. For all the liveliness of our primary sources, the work of interpretation is largely a one-way conversation. What a pleasure, then, to have this opportunity for dialogue with fellow scholars about my book, *Forests in Revolutionary France*. My sincere thanks to Chris Jones, editor of the *H-Environment* series, for proposing my book for a roundtable, and to the reviewers Caroline Ford, Richard Keyser, and Catherine Dunlop, whose close readings and insightful remarks offered valuable perspective on the arguments I sought to convey and underscored the rich subjectivity that individual readers bring to a text.

In my response below, I tackle the reviewers' impressively detailed and generous remarks in two parts: I discuss the book's arguments and main objectives, which—much to my relief—align reasonably closely with the reviewers' interpretations; and I address several of their questions, suggestions, and concepts, lingering on the ones that seemed to warrant the most attention (or were the most enjoyable to answer). Most of all, I thank them for spending time with the book and hearing me out again in this venue. May the conversation call attention to their own, excellent work and continue in the coming years.

Aims and assessments

Forests in Revolutionary France is above all about the relationship between environmental concerns and political movements. As Catherine Dunlop notes, in focusing on forests, the most important natural resource of the period, I encourage readers to “fundamentally rethink what was at stake in revolutionary France.” Shifting back and forth between the halls of power in Versailles and Paris, where forest reform efforts ebbed and flowed from the seventeenth century onward, and Franche-Comté, an eastern province where clashes over woodland resources were especially fierce and enduring, the book places forests at the fore of France's transformative political upheavals from 1789 to 1848. My aim was twofold: to illuminate the evolution of natural resource conservation as ideology and policy and to understand the factors that motivate political engagement across the socioeconomic spectrum. Revolution is shaped and propelled as much by material anxieties as by lofty assertions of universal ideals. For rural communities who had seen their woodland access suppressed over the course of the eighteenth century, the revolutionary assertion of the rights of liberty, equality, and property in 1789 was no mere abstraction, but instead signaled their entitlement to self-determination and survival, starting with a reclamation of control over their local environment. Adapting revolutionary ideals to local exigencies, woodland inhabitants of Franche-Comté repeatedly rejected state and elites' efforts at expropriation and insisted instead on their right to manage, allocate, and exploit their forests for their own needs. The struggle was not without casualties: forest guards were often attacked and some were even assassinated. Likewise, the

hardship resulting from insufficient resources led many Comtois communities to be depleted by urban migration in the nineteenth century. Over the long term, however, Franche-Comtois proved remarkably resilient at retaining collective control over the forests that still dominate their landscape and economy today.

Situating my work in the sweep of earlier studies, Caroline Ford notes the expansive literature on France's forest history, which for most of the past three decades has been spearheaded by French scholar Andrée Corvol-Dessert. It was precisely this work, under the umbrella of the Groupe d'Histoire des Forêts Françaises, that first attracted my interest in this topic long ago. Corvol-Dessert is indisputably the master of the field—she has authored more books, edited more collections and been the driving force behind more colloquia on the social, cultural, and administrative history of France's forests than perhaps any other person in any comparable field. Nonetheless, two aspects of this voluminous literature puzzled and frustrated me: its stark periodization, which cleaved the early modern and modern periods in two and treated the Revolution as an anomalous rupture, and its comparatively separate treatment of forest ecology, geography, rural politics, and material culture, as if silviculture and management functioned in a vacuum. Far more effective in this regard has been the work of François Vion-Delphin, whose innumerable studies of individual facets of early modern Franche-Comté forests have been critical to my work.

In my research, therefore, I sought to overcome the traditional bifurcating periodization of France's forest history by taking a *longue durée* approach, linking the commodifying logic of state control that was launched in the seventeenth century to the mounting pressures and increasing conflicts over forest resources seen in the eighteenth century, and highlighting the culmination of these trends in the Revolution and later forest reforms of the 1820s. At the same time, I grounded my analysis in the historical and geographic particularities of one region, the Franche-Comté, so as to better understand the interplay between popular expectations and political ideals, environment and administration, extractive demands and ecological change. Most of all, I tried to see beyond the trees to gain a wider appreciation of the diverse organisms and interests that comprise political landscapes and call attention to the outsized yet comparatively underappreciated role of environmental conflicts in revolutionary upheavals. Zooming in and out on multiple scales and deploying as interdisciplinary an investigation as I could muster, I worked to incorporate the best methodologies of American environmental history, the critical insights of political anthropology, the intensely cultivated fruits of French Revolutionary studies, and the applied wisdom of contemporary silvicultural science—in short, to produce an *histoire totale* worthy of Lucien Febvre and the later Annalistes. Whether or not I met this aim is open to debate, but I am gratified by Ford, Keyser, and Dunlop's suggestions that the book, at minimum, makes a significant intervention in the historiography. Ford notes that I “bridge the early modern and modern periods in a single sweep”; Keyser observes that the book “adroitly balances a dual focus” between a regional case study and national politics;

and Dunlop asserts that my “innovative research methods lead to [a] bold new interpretation of French revolutionary politics.” I couldn't ask for anything better.

Concepts, questions, and suggestions

Absent voices: science and ecology?

In her review, Ford notes my efforts to consider peasant practices from a rural and communal point of view as opposed to a silvicultural or extractive outlook. Understanding the claims and concerns of diverse forest stakeholders and taking them seriously was certainly one of my goals. This approach, however, led me to emphasize forests' significance as a natural resource and shy away from other perspectives on forests. Ford suggests in particular the voices of “naturalists, scientists, pseudo-scientists and lay observers” whose views also played a role in shaping forest policy. This is a valid criticism. The original manuscript actually contained a much longer treatment of scientific and intellectual discourses about the “forest problem,” including discussions of Buffon, Fabre, Surrell, and debates in provincial academies, but I ultimately eliminated it in the interest of length. That this excised section might be of interest raises the possibility of a future article, perhaps in combination with Ford's idea that I look to LePlay for arguments against the usual blame of rural populations for woodland deterioration.

To be sure, Revolutionary and Restoration-era legislative debates concerning forest reforms treated France's forests mostly as a large woodpile in need of wary allocation. They discussed forest ecosystems remarkably little, much less acknowledged their complexity. This may help explain how I came to emphasize the natural resource aspect of France's forests rather than the views of naturalists and hydrologists.

In addition to considering the concerns of nascent scientists, I also would have liked to transcend the predominantly consumer concerns of forest debates and spend more time thinking about how everyday people related to the forests that were so critical to their lives—how they regarded birds, insects, and other wild organisms; to what extent they viewed their environment with a sense of wonder. However, getting at these sorts of ideas, most of them probably quite fleeting, is very hard. For the eighteenth century we have Rousseau's *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (1782)—mostly an urban stroll, with mentions of plants thrown in—and across the Channel we have Gilbert White's delightful *Selborne Year* (1784), but as always the views of the illiterate and overworked are mostly inaccessible. In the absence of such insights, I turned to the *cahiers de doléances* of 1789—grievance petitions whose authors seized with gusto the opportunity to complain about the high price of firewood, the poisoning of streams by industrial effluent, and the outrageous infringement of forest rights by the state and seigneur. The environmental consciousness and nature appreciation for nature's sake that Ford traces so compellingly in her new book *Natural Interests* (2016) was very slow to emerge in

Franche-Comté, and even when it did appear in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was confined mostly to fiction and folk tales.

Tourism as a factor?

For her part, Catherine Dunlop raises a related point concerning the question of alternative outlooks on forests in Franche-Comté. Was there, she wonders, a tourist industry in the region, and to what extent did it shape debates concerning forest benefits? The short answer is scarcely any, and not at all.

Franche-Comté's forests were and are a far cry from Fontainebleau, the woods beloved of Barbizon painters Jean-François Millet and Théodore Rousseau, and its mountains lack the scenic vertigo of the Alps. Not only was the region distantly removed from Paris—the only French city capable of producing large numbers of fresh air-seekers in the nineteenth century—its appeal was distinctly modest. The reason goes back to the emphasis on resource extraction that I discussed in the book. Managed above all for timber, the region's forests were in the process of being transformed into monocultural plantations in the nineteenth century. In addition to having all the charm of, say, an Iowa cornfield, they were strictly patrolled by officers and guards from the state forest service. Even now, walking in Franche-Comté's forests can be an exercise in frustration, for their densely coppiced understories and even-aged uniformity make it hard to orient one's self, much less to enjoy a view. This is not a disparagement of Franche-Comté—I would not have spent years on the region if I didn't appreciate it—rather, it is an acknowledgment of the character of intensively managed woodlands. As elsewhere in Europe (the Schwarzwald and shores of Lake Saimaa come to mind), France's forest environments are the product of longstanding, interactive coexistence with humans and there are few if any spaces of the sort that Americans call “wilderness.”

Even today, Franche-Comté's tourist economy is small. (A 2015 *New York Times* article called the region “France's Well-Kept Secret.”) Striking geological formations—hidden valleys, tiered waterfalls, craggy cliffs—lend appeal, and the growing network of ski and biking trails is wonderful, but overall, the workaday asceticism and unadorned appeal of Comtois forests is best expressed in the work of Gustave Courbet, Franche-Comté's foremost painter, whose enormous compositions depicted unprepossessing country folk in harsh surroundings, their faces creased with age and their clogs stained with mud. Therein lie the region's charms: diffidence and dogged endurance

Ecological data vs. declensionist discourses?

In his review, Richard Keyser notes that he would have liked to see the book pay closer attention to the physical dynamics of forests and the specific ways they changed over time. In particular, he suggests that greater use of economic and ecological data, like financial records, cadastral surveys, and paleoscientific evidence, might have helped reveal the actual impact of forest exploitation, as opposed to the

discursive sources that I favored, especially grievance petitions and administrative reports, which tended to blame ironworks and other wood-powered industries for forest deterioration. One should be dubious of such accusations, Keyser notes, particularly in light of the analyses of eminent forest historians Oliver Rackham and Denis Woronoff that industrial demand for fuel wood not only raised forests' value—thereby increasing incentives to protect them—but also preserved forest's productivity through the comparatively sustainable practice of coppicing. More broadly, Keyser urges a skeptical outlook toward eighteenth-century declensionist narratives that warned of imminent forest crisis across France. Though widespread in the proceedings of provincial academies and the correspondence of certain Eaux et Forêts officials, these dire warnings would seem to be contradicted by the fact that well into the nineteenth century France's forests were able to support massive demands by metallurgical, salt, glass, and other industries, as well as naval exploitation and the needs of a rapidly growing populace.

This is a sound critique, though perhaps also of a glass half-full/half-empty variety. It brings to mind a conversation I had years ago as a graduate student when, puzzled by what appeared to be a contradiction between England's apparently extensive oak forests in the eighteenth century and the dire warnings of contemporaries that the island nation was facing a timber famine and the fatal weakening of its "wooden walls"—its all-important naval fleet—I went to the distinguished economic historian Timothy Guinnane to ask his perspective. With succinct gravitas that I've never forgotten, Guinnane replied, "Sometimes people just like to bitch."

Was this the case in Franche-Comté? Probably to some extent. As we saw so clearly in the recent American election of a "post-truth" president, people's perceptions of blame and ideas of injustice can be far more powerful than actual facts in shaping behavior and propelling policymaking. Moreover, for municipal administrators and other local commentators, the motivation to downplay resources and paint a bleak picture of fiscal health was powerful, lest tax burdens and requisitions be increased. Short of tangible dendrological evidence, such as one might obtain from pollen and soil analysis, it is difficult to ascertain how much eighteenth-century perceptions of forest decline aligned with material reality. Baselines, too, surely played a role in perceptions—for rural inhabitants attempting to gather enough sticks to heat their homes, or procurers of naval timber on the prowl for the perfect hull-shaped tree, difficulties in meeting their needs may have been taken as a worrisome signal of wider shortages.

Nonetheless, post-modernist musings aside, ironworks and other wood-fueled manufactures were on the rise the eighteenth century, their numbers and output driven by war and population growth. Though the 1669 Ordinance and later eighteenth-century decrees set strict limits on the minimum age at which coppices could be cut, in practice, as the discursive evidence suggests, rotation periods became shorter and shorter under rising demand for wood. With less time to grow back, the small wood produced by coppice stumps yielded less heat and lower quality charcoal, thus spurring further cutting—a vicious cycle.

In Franche-Comté, the longstanding custom of coppicing beech rather than more suitable species also contributed to woodland deterioration. Even before the 1669 Ordinance established special protections for oaks based on their irreplaceable importance in shipbuilding, rural communities refrained from harvesting oak and other *fruitiers* (apples, chestnut, hazelnut, pear), preferring instead to let them reach old age so as to maximize their productive years. Less prized for its nuts, beech was consigned to coppice, despite the fact that the shade-loving species resprouts poorly from stumps. Beech also fared badly when subjected to fire, a common practice among glass manufacturers, who needed ash and ferns for their manufacturing process.²⁵

Saltworks had an even more enduring impact. Pollen analysis—available for the Neolithic era if not more recent periods—shows that as far back as 7,000 years ago, even small-scale salt-making in Franche-Comté left its mark. Early sites indicate overall forest decline, while studies of later periods suggest an increase in oak, hornbeam, and hazel, species that were more effective for coppicing.²⁶

Keyser is right that more physical evidence of this nature would bolster my case concerning industries' strain on woodland ecosystems, or at least offer nuance to the laments of Comtois communities that manufacturers under the impetus of entrepreneurial nobles were squeezing them out of their forest rights. While I would not suggest that eighteenth century industry had a comparatively greater impact in Franche-Comté than the rest of France—the region is too large, the timelines of different manufactures too varied, and the terrain too diverse to generalize to that degree—there is no doubt that localized impacts were severe. Around the saltworks at Salins, for example, formerly wooded slopes were so denuded and transport of wood from ever farther distances so onerous that the crown eventually decided to shift production twenty-one kilometers to the north, where the brine could be funneled to the fuel source rather than the other way around.

Common pool resource management and tragedies of the commons

Though I perhaps invoke narratives of forest decline too readily in Keyser's view, he and Ford both underscore that the story is not, on the whole, a tragedy. Rather, I make a strong case for peasant communities' success in holding onto communal control and pressing their claims to access in state-owned forests. Ford observes in this regard that my book engages the long-running, and recently revived, debate over the “tragedy of the commons,” and notes as well my debt to Elinor Ostrom et al.'s favorable analysis of common pool resource management.

²⁵ Georges Plaisance, “La chasse au hêtre dans le passé.” *Revue forestière française* 9 (1950): 458-61.

²⁶ Émile Gauthier, *Forêts et agriculteurs du Jura: les quatre derniers millénaires* (Besançon: Presses universitaires Franc-comtoises, 2004), 102-104, 109.

The true tragedy of the commons, I argue in the book, was their transformation during the Revolution from sites of collaborative and collective oversight, to ever-more fragmented, individuated parcels whose owners were accountable to no one. Though the allocation of benefits under Old Regime modes of customary rights and communal woodland access was far from egalitarian, rural communities and at least initially their noble landlords took as a given the forest's collective importance and sought to reconcile the pressures of overlapping interests. By contrast, the extractive and exclusionary approach that was introduced by the crown in the seventeenth century and accelerated under the Revolution forced stakeholders into an adversarial relationship with each other and with the forests. The state's paramount emphasis on the needs of the nation and the liberty of individual landowners culminated in the Forest Code of 1827, which reclassified customary practices as illegal and transformed forest users overnight into criminals for carrying out activities they had practiced for centuries. Loss of their vital forest access enraged rural inhabitants, encouraged subterfuge, and fostered open opposition—in some cases to the point of bloodshed.

Lingering on the commons and the issue of forest benefits, Dunlop wisely asks whether my characterization of Comtois communities as widely harmed and fiercely resistant to the state's policy reforms paints the situation with too broad a brush. Surely, she remarks, there were people who benefited from the new policies and may have even pushed for the changes in the law. This is an important question, and it is one that frustrated me in writing *Forests in Revolutionary France*. Numerous individuals - industrialists, timber purveyors, contractors, other claimants—must have been glad for the prospect of reduced competition from rural communities and happily embraced the new regulations, yet determining who exactly they were and how they stood to gain proved to be beyond the scope of the book. My current research, therefore, is devoted to exploring this very question. Seeking to understand the disparate ways that community members experienced conservation, the project investigates the brutal assassination of two forest guards in 1813, focusing on different families' reliance on forest benefits and their tangled, often tenuous relationship to the state.

Where does *fraternité* factor in?

In her review, Dunlop enthusiastically invokes the phrase *liberté, égalité, et fraternité*—that triumvirate of political ideals that is considered synonymous with the French Revolution. Liberty and equality do indeed loom large in the narrative of *Forests in Revolutionary France*, but reading Dunlop's review made me realize that I actually say very little about *fraternité*—brotherhood—and it prompted me to examine why.

Inhabitants of a frontier province that was violently annexed to France in 1678 and only haltingly integrated into French administrative oversight, Francs-Comtois still considered themselves a century later as a people apart: tenacious survivors of an asymmetrical struggle who remained resentful of the crown's exactions,

ultramontane in their Catholicism, and at best reluctantly French. This sense of detachment persisted throughout the Revolution. Despite—or perhaps because of—the conscription of thousands of Franch-Comtois men into the Revolutionary wars, the rhetoric of universal brotherhood appears very little in Franche-Comté—neither during the peak of national unity and optimism from 1789 to 1792, nor during the suppression of the region's counter-revolutionary “*rébellion des montagnes*” in 1793. That said, if the concept of *fraternité* rarely appears in the documents of the period, indications of communal identity were common. My research focused on forest revolts, naturally, but there were many other protests involving wine taxes, potato prices, the impoundment of pigs, and more that point to a sense of local solidarity and faith in collective action that persisted well into the nineteenth century. Community, I suggest, rather than the assemblage of individual (male) actors implied by *fraternité*, was the operative political force in the Revolution, and it explains both the Revolution's successes and its ongoing failure to meet the expectations of all its stakeholders.

Conclusion

Dunlop hails my book as a “promising model for how environmental history can invigorate our study of provincial France by bringing new attention to the role of non-humans, climate, and natural resources in shaping the French past,” and she asks how this emphasis on the environment may transform the next generation of Revolutionary histories. To be fair, environmental or at least geographic outlooks have influenced French provincial studies, particularly of earlier and later periods, for quite some time. One need only look to the work of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (particularly in *Montaillou*) for an exemplar of this approach. Among Anglophone historians of the Old Regime, Peter McPhee, Noelle Plack, Jeremy Hayhoe, and Hamish Graham have proved adept in integrating physical factors such as climate, terrain, flora and fauna into their analyses of the French socioeconomy. Nonetheless, with regard to studies of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras, environmental history has not been integrated into the standard interpretive toolkit as much as it could, a change I would love to see. The traditionally separate field of military history, for example, could be enormously enriched through attention to the sourcing of materiel, the transformation of landscapes and harnessing of natural resources, the exploitation of human and animal energy, and the movement of pathogens during France's continent-wide, two-decade span of war. Likewise, the outstanding and rapidly growing body of work on Saint Domingue and the Haitian Revolution might fruitfully incorporate research on environmental knowledge and island ecology into its existing emphases on commodity production, labor, race and slavery.

For my part, while my focus on the central role of forests in France's revolutionary struggles is at present comparatively unusual among interpretations of 1789, 1830, and 1848, as Richard Keyser observes in his review, *Forests in Revolutionary France* demonstrates that forests are “‘good to think with’ for a wide range of people” over

a long period of time. I hope other historians as well as scholars of places, periods, and political movements far beyond France will agree.

About the Contributors

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Richard Keyser is a lecturer in the Legal Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He earned his doctorate in medieval history at Johns Hopkins University. His research focuses on customary law, property rights, and woodland history, mostly in medieval northern France, but with forays into other similarly remunerative topics as well.

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