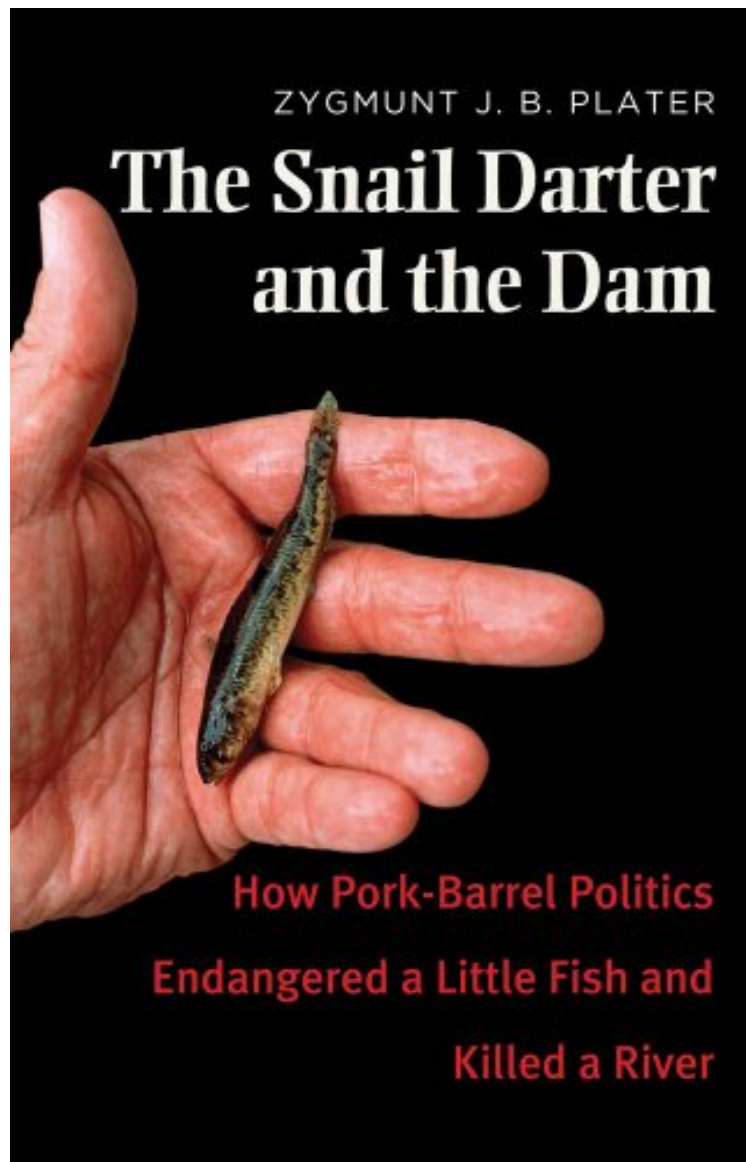


(Read now) The Snail Darter and the Dam: How Pork-Barrel Politics Endangered a Little Fish and Killed a River

## **The Snail Darter and the Dam: How Pork-Barrel Politics Endangered a Little Fish and Killed a River**

*Zygmunt Jan Broel Plater*

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**Zygmunt Jan Broel Plater : The Snail Darter and the Dam: How Pork-Barrel Politics Endangered a Little Fish and Killed a River** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Snail Darter and the Dam: How Pork-Barrel Politics Endangered a Little Fish and Killed a River:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. an immediate classic in environmental politics for all kinds of readers  
By Mark Lindeman  
I bought this book on a recommendation, but I was 50 pages in before I realized how far off my subliminal expectations had been -- much as many people described within missed the point of the Tellico Dam controversy in the mid-70s. I expected a fairly narrow rehash of legal arguments surrounding, y'know, the snail darter and the dam. Instead, Plater tells a story that involves an astonishing variety of themes in environmental politics -- or, really, American politics generally -- so engagingly that I got out of bed at 11:30 PM to finish it. (It's not that I "couldn't put it down," only that I couldn't sleep when I did!)  
Grassroots activists fighting for their land? Bureaucratic intrigue? Strategic and philosophical debates? Courtroom drama? Congressional shenanigans? All those things and more are in here, not as plot contrivances, but as the real deal. If you care about politics, or even if you think you're past the point of caring, this story will draw you in.  
Does it really make sense to read a book about some controversy from the 1970s? In this case, absolutely. Not only is the Tellico story compelling in its own right, but as Plater tells it, it provides a template for understanding a broad swath of environmental policy conflicts. Not that Plater shoves some theoretical framework down readers' throats: he simply writes with such clarity and intensity that we can't help but think more clearly about how the parts connect.  
Yale University Press has done fabulous work with this book -- it reads better than most best-selling fiction. (Of course Plater deserves huge credit for that, but so does the press.) But the book description does not do justice. "In a narrative that dispels widespread misperceptions about the environmental battle against the TVAs final dam project...." Yes, it does, but that isn't the point. Misperception is a ubiquitous process, not just an abstract "thing" that one might have about some past event. Environmental activists almost always struggle to convey their side of a policy conflict, for many reasons, which this book illuminates as evocatively as any I've ever read. Plater doesn't provide a dry punch list of dos and don'ts, but you're very likely to find yourself drawing parallels to other issues. Not only does much of the Tellico story read as if it happened yesterday (some specifics aside), but it feels urgently relevant for today and tomorrow.  
2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant read about a landmark case  
By Peter Appel  
I recently got this book from and read it pretty much in one sitting. I loved it! It's a masterwork! It's a wonderfully readable case study of how things really work in the interplay between the courts, the other branches of government, and the press in the context of environmental law. It also shows, painfully at times, how each of these institutions can fail, be it through path dependency, male menopause, venality, laziness, etc. The interchange with Phil Shabecoff of the NY Times that the author had and the account about Dan Rather after CBS aired a post mortem ("we missed the [expletive] story! How could we have missed the [expletive] story?") go to show the limitations of the press. There probably are still some Ida Tarbells and Jacob Riises out there, but they're so often drowned out by the bobble-heads on TV looking for both sides of the issues and "quote sluts" who can deliver pithy lines. Unfortunately, stupid little useless fish vs. big important hydropower dam became the pithy line about the fight over Tellico Dam and it still is. That line sums up the rest of the story the press missed. Now I know the truth, and it's even uglier than I thought. Tellico Dam was never a hydropower project until TVA needed to beef up the "benefits" in its analysis. The Tellico Dam project was primarily a land development project, and the TVA's land grabs for pie-in-the-sky dreams are shocking. The snail darter plays a central role in the telling of this story, but the history of the overall conflict over this destructive project is much more rich.  
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent book, detailing the history of the the first ...  
By Itzchak E. Kornfeld  
Excellent book, detailing the history of the the first endangered species case to wind up in the Supreme Court, and subsequent events. Photographs provide a very good guide to this epic battle and the local people that it impacted - badly.

The untold story of a notorious environmental case and the citizen crusade that carried a little fish through Washington politics and the Supreme Court  
Even today, thirty years after the legal battles to save the endangered snail darter, the little fish that blocked completion of a TVA dam is still invoked as an icon of leftist extremism and governmental foolishness. In this eye-opening book, the lawyer who with his students fought and won the Supreme Court case known officially as *Tennessee Valley Authority v. Hill* tells the hidden story behind one of the nations most significant environmental law battles.

This is the inside story, laid out with wonderful lucidity, of a long and fascinating battle that became an icon of its era and remains instructive today.  
Jonathan Harr, author of *A Civil Action*