

IN THE HIGH COUNTRY: CRAFTING LONG-FORM STORIES ON RECREATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Magazine deck: The journalism profession needs to develop a process of best practices for avoiding cliché in environmental stories by treading a thin line between familiarity with a story arc that resonates with a reader and treading too far into the too familiar and resulting in cliché, that has less impact with readers of environmental journalism.

“In the High Country” is a master’s professional project that encapsulates a series of articles that examines ski area adaptation and informs readers what is lost as an industry adapts to climate change and economic pressures. In the end, a quintessential sport that thrived in the West through the early 20th century until the 1990s has increasingly become a lifestyle only enjoyed by an elite few. The articles were produced in close collaboration with *High Country News* editors and published as a three-part online series. Those stories were a small percentage of the content produced for the magazine during a six-month internship from July through December 2015. That body of work focused on the natural resource, public lands, recreational, environmental and energy issues of the American West. The analytical component of this project, an in-depth case study of the *Boston Globe*’s “Chasing Bayla,” a 2015 Pulitzer Prize finalist in feature writing, was examined to recommend best industry practices for sourcing and building story arcs in

environmental features to avoid cliché. The writer, editor, primary source and an outside media expert were interviewed for the analysis.