

Research Front and Center— and on the Horizon



Paul R. Portney

This is an interesting and exciting time at RFF. For one thing, our budget is growing—to \$8.6 million for the fiscal year that just began, from \$7 million just a couple of years ago. This larger budget is due to no single benefactor but rather is the result of steadily growing support from all sources—our endowment, government, foundations, corporations, and individuals. These sources include many of you, the readers of *Resources*, for which we are most grateful.

Second, the issues on which RFF's researchers are hard at work are increasingly visible. Nowhere is this visibility more evident than on climate change policy, the subject of our two feature articles in this issue of *Resources*, as international negotiations proceed in the wake of the Kyoto protocol. RFF will continue to be an original source of careful and independent analysis of the major issues in the climate policy debate, and will also continue to help those interested to understand the various positions staked out by advocates.

Climate is not the only issue where RFF's work lines up well with important policy debates. For instance, we continue to pay close attention to the ongoing changes in the electricity industry in the United States. Are you aware, fair readers, that we will all be “shopping for good deals” on electricity before too long? RFF Director Linda Taliaferro, the subject of an interview in this issue, believes that the interests of traditionally disadvantaged parties must be well represented if retail competition in this industry is to succeed.

Also, RFF continues to devote a lot of attention to the environmental consequences of the transportation sector—at a time when newspapers are replete with stories about the emissions standards to which the ubiquitous “sport utility vehicles” ought to be held in future years, and about the consequences of alternative fuels and fuel additives for cars, trucks, and buses.

Throw into this mix our ongoing work on forestry, waste management in both the public and private sectors, biodiversity policy, risk management and regulatory reform, and corporate social responsibility and we are right in the center of important debates.

RFF's reach is expanding in other areas as well. To take but one example, a steadily growing share of our work deals with environmental and resource problems in newly emerging democracies and developing countries. Recent or ongoing projects involve collaborators in China, Thailand, Mexico, Taiwan, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Romania. RFF is just now embarking on what may be a very ambitious collaboration with the new government of Colombia. Future issues of *Resources* will bring you news of these and other projects with a distinctively international flavor.

So, stay tuned, readers, and—if you can—please contribute to RFF so that we can continue to expand in this exciting era. Thanks!