

RFF Board Elects Esty, Yale Law School Professor

Calling the RFF team a group of “stars in the environmental constellation,” Yale Professor Daniel C. Esty joined the RFF Board of Directors for a three-year term that began in January. “I consider RFF to be the pre-eminent environmental think tank in the United States and perhaps the world,” Esty says, citing its record of “putting important ideas into the public policy debate.”

Esty is Hillhouse Professor of Environmental Law and Policy at the Yale Law School and the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. He also directs the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy, which seeks to advance fresh thinking and analytically rigorous, interdisciplinary approaches to environmental decision-making. He also heads the Yale World Fellows Program, which brings to Yale mid-career professionals from around the globe to explore critical issues, contribute to international awareness, and prepare for leadership roles.

Esty earned his law degree at Yale, where he was coordinator for the school’s environmental litigation program and editor of the *Yale Journal on Regulation*. As a young lawyer in a District of Columbia corporate firm, Esty did some pro bono work for environmental groups and was tapped by William Reilly, EPA administrator under President George H.W. Bush, to join the agency. There, looking for

new ideas in environmental regulation, he encountered RFF studies. “It was impressive,” Esty recalls, “to see this group producing important ideas and analyses about how we might do environmental protection differently and better.”

One of his first challenges at EPA was the Exxon Valdez oil spill crisis of 1989. Later, serving as Reilly’s chief of staff, Esty was responsible for coordinating policy on the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments and other regulatory reform and enforcement efforts, as well as preparing for the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development—the “Earth Summit”—in Rio de Janeiro. He then managed the EPA policy office, overseeing initiatives on climate change, trade and the environment, and energy and the environment. In 1998, he returned to Yale as associate dean for the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

Esty is co-editor, with Marian Chertow, of *Thinking Ecologically: The Next Generation of Environmental Policy*, published by Yale University Press in 1997. Chapters consider what has worked well in environmental law and policy over the past several decades—and what has not.

“We’re moving toward a world of new and more diverse approaches to regulation,” Esty says. Some command-and-control approaches will continue, he believes, but he foresees more information strategies, economic incentives, market-based regulations, and pressure from the marketplace as consumers, investors, and other participants become increasingly focused on environmental issues.

Other books co-edited by Esty include *Global Environmental Governance: Options and Opportunities* (Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, 2002), *Regulatory Competition and Economic Integration: Comparative Perspectives* (Oxford University Press,

2001), and *Sustaining the Asia-Pacific Miracle: Environmental Protection and Economic Integration* (Institute for International Economics, 1997). Asia, he says, represents a great case study for the concept of sustainability: “The long-term payoff to efforts to promote economic growth will be diminished if environmental challenges are not addressed.”

Esty holds a bachelor’s degree in economics from Harvard and earned first-class honors in philosophy, politics, and economics at Balliol College, Oxford. A hiker with a long-time interest in environmental concerns, Esty considers it fortunate “when a personal interest can be a professional opportunity.” ■



DANIEL C. ESTY



In off-the-record sessions on “The Evolving Environmental Movement,” RFF Council members at their October meeting heard perspectives from a wide range of representatives of the environmental and energy policy communities, including major foundations and advocacy groups. In a session focused on new entrants to the environmental policy field, RFF Board Member David Hawkins, director of the Climate Center at Natural Resources Defense Council, moderated a discussion with Adam Meyerson, president of the Philanthropy Roundtable; Ann Korin, co-director of the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security; and Jim Ball, executive director of the Evangelical Environmental Network.

RFF Announces Major Conference on Frontiers of Environmental Economics

Continuing its longstanding role as a center for new thinking on environmental economics, RFF will host a special conference in Washington, DC, February 26–27, 2007, on the “Frontiers of Environmental Economics.” The session will extend RFF’s historical efforts to advance prescient and seminal research in the field.

Supported by EPA’s National Center for Environmental Economics, the conference will showcase 12 competitively chosen, commissioned papers.

An honorarium of \$4,000 will be provided to authors of accepted papers.

Abstracts must be submitted as a PDF file attachment and emailed to John@rff.org by April 1, 2006. The acronym FEE should be included on the subject line. Notification of acceptance will be made by May 15, and authors must complete contracted papers by February 1, 2007.

Alan Krupnick, an RFF senior fellow and principal organizer of the conference, aided by Joseph Aldy, an RFF fellow, encourages submissions from academics of any discipline who can contribute to identifying or resolving important policy problems at the forward edges of environmental economics. “We welcome the participation of social scientists and non-economists who will help pioneer the next stage of critical thinking on environmental and natural resource policies,” Krupnick said.

In addition to Krupnick and Aldy, the Paper Selection Committee will

include Catherine Kling, Iowa State University; John List, University of Chicago; Paul Portney, University of Arizona; and V. Kerry Smith, North Carolina State University.

Since the mid-1970s, RFF has convened landmark conferences highlighting the growing role of economics in environmental policymaking. Indeed, RFF’s experience with environmental economics dates from before the topic was recognized as a distinct academic discipline. Research results from these events have been recognized as signal pronouncements in such areas as valuation of environmental and health benefits, discounting and intergenerational equity, and the design of market-based incentives and approaches to environmental problems.

A formal description of the Call for Abstracts, and procedures for submission, is available at www.rff.org/frontiersconference. ■

Examining China's Mineral Consumption



In his December 14 speech, “The Hungry Giant: China and Minerals,” Colorado School of Mines and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile mineral economics professor John E. Tilton said that China’s consumption of minerals should be welcomed, not feared. The annual lecture was held in honor of Hans H. Landsberg, one of RFF’s founding fathers.

To assess whether economic development in China poses a threat to the availability of mineral commodities for developed countries, Tilton presented two views of mineral availability: the fixed-stock paradigm and the opportunity-cost paradigm. The first, he said, emphasizes that since Earth is finite, the available stocks of mineral commodities are fixed. Demand, on the other hand, is variable. According to this view, it’s only a matter of time before the fixed stock is consumed.

According to the second model, whether scarcity becomes a problem depends on a “race” between new technology and the effects of depletion. Unlike the fixed-stock paradigm, Tilton explained, “scarcity is not something that will come suddenly like a car speeding along the highway and running out of gas.”

Applying these models to China, Tilton suggested that the fixed-stock paradigm best explains short-run mineral availability and the opportunity-cost paradigm best describes long-run

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availability. In China today, he said, supply is not sufficient to satisfy demand at past price levels. Between the resulting higher prices and scarcity caused by inadequate supply, short-term, self-correcting problems can occur.

Turning to a longer view, Tilton said that although it is counterintuitive, mineral commodities today are more available for developing countries than they were for developed countries a century ago. He attributed this to the innovative technology that has sprung from the wealth presumably generated by past consumption of mineral resources. While there is no way to be sure this will remain true for China looking forward, he said, it is at least possible.

In his concluding remarks, Tilton stressed that China’s efforts to secure mineral resources should be encouraged. “In a world where, historically, most people have lived in poverty,” he said, “economic development in China and other developing countries literally means a better life for hundreds of millions of people.” ■

Resource Links

Learn more about the feature stories in this issue. The following links will take you to special pages on the RFF website, where you will find additional resources:

- *Voting for Conservation: What Is the American Electorate Revealing?*
www.rff.org/votingforconservation
- *Malaria among African Children: Hope for Progress against a Growing Menace*
www.rff.org/malariaamongafricanchildren
- *Making Tough Choices: Hurricane Protection Planning after Katrina and Rita*
www.rff.org/hurricanefloodplanning