

Mining Executive and New RFF Board Member Calls for Action on Global Warming

Preston Chiaro comes to the RFF Board of Directors with a belief that the energy sector as a whole has yet to take the first step in addressing climate change: “simply to acknowledge the scope, scale, and seriousness of the problem and the need to take action now, even in the face of some remaining uncertainties.”

As chief executive of the Energy Division of Rio Tinto, Chiaro has responsibility for the company’s coal and uranium mining operations in Australia, Namibia, and the United States. Rio Tinto is a major supplier of uranium to the nuclear power industry, a low-carbon energy source that is attracting renewed interest as an option for meeting worldwide energy demands. Chiaro is also the senior executive in charge of

Rio Tinto’s climate change program.

Energy companies, he says, need to engage in the policy debate to ensure that the decisions made by governments on behalf of their citizens are well informed and maximize environmental, social, and economic outcomes. Companies must reduce their “climate footprint,” Chiaro says, by conserving energy in their production processes. He also wants to see companies engage with their customers to help them address the issue at home.

Chiaro believes that the critical new technology for fossil fuels, including coal, will be carbon capture and storage. The components of such systems have long been available, but the technology “package” needed to collect, transport, and sequester carbon dioxide in safe geologic repositories is just coming on line. Rio Tinto is supporting FutureGen, a U.S. Department of Energy initiative to build the world’s first near zero-emissions coal-fired power plant, which incorporates the technology on a commercial scale. Alternative combustion processes, post-

combustion capture, and monitoring systems for carbon dioxide storage reservoirs will also be important as part of the effort to reduce emissions from coal-fired generators, Chiaro says.

An environmental engineer by training—he received his B.S. and

M.E. degrees at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, New York—Chiaro has a particular interest in sustainable development. He oversaw cleanup projects at the Bingham Canyon Mine, the world’s largest open-pit copper mine, and has set up a sustainable development leadership panel at Rio Tinto “to



PRESTON CHIARO

make sure that sustainable development becomes embedded in the organization’s DNA.”

His background and thinking, Chiaro says, “are very much aligned with what RFF is trying to accomplish—to make a positive contribution toward responsible, pragmatic, long-term policy thinking around resource development.” He says he has long respected RFF “for the depth, clarity, and independence” of its research. ■



RFF sponsors a summer internship program in which students from around the world work with the research staff. Pictured here are some of this year’s interns, from left:

Top row—Daniel Shawan, Laura Blessing, Daniel Stone, RFF President Phil Sharp, Yi Jiang, Griffin LeNoir, and Christina Dietrich.

Middle row—Andrew Fleeter, Prabirendra Chatterjee, Tingting Yan (Spofford intern), and John Lekuton.

Bottom row—Francie Streich, Laura Chappell-Campbell, Ada Chen, Roshni Rathi, and Scott Salyer. Not pictured: David Bael, Yu-Ming Chang, Joseph Edemeroh, Radha Jujavarapu, Leah Menzies, and Nicholas Powers.