

On the Frontiers of Climate Policy



For more than 60 years, experts at RFF have been analyzing the economic impacts of environmental and climate policies. This year, in particular, we are engaged on the frontiers of several important climate-related policy

decisions at the regional, national, and international levels.

One conversation under way is focused on the significant commercial developments in the US Arctic, from fishing and shipping to oil and gas exploration. Scientists find there are observable consequences of global warming in the region, so new development—particularly of oil and gas—brings both opportunities and challenges. In this issue, articles by former deputy secretary of the Interior David J. Hayes and Carol Lloyd of the National Petroleum Council explore how we balance this development with protection of the Arctic's pristine environmental assets, while ensuring that local communities reap the benefits.

On the national level, some of our scholars are focused on EPA's Clean Power Plan—the first policy that will significantly reduce emissions from the existing fleet of power plants across the United States. Many of the most important policy choices will be made by state governments, which will decide how to meet the federally set goals. Most of the technology and policy options available as compliance mechanisms are not new to the states or the electric utilities. A number of these options are outlined in this issue by RFF's Karen Palmer and Anthony Paul, who have been working extensively with various stakeholders.

Finally, RFF is engaged in the coming international climate negotiations to be held in Paris at the end of the year. A key question is how to compare nations' pledges and efforts to ensure a fair and measurable outcome. RFF Visiting Fellow Joe Aldy of Harvard and University Fellow Billy Pizer of Duke have been tackling this question and, in this issue, suggest a series of metrics to guide a comparative analysis of the national action plans.

The international community has its eyes set, in particular, on the United States, where the record on climate policy over the past decade has not been considered aggressive or adequate. Indeed, critics of US policy are asking whether there is political support in the United States to back up our government's pledges. In my view, political support is growing, as seen in public opinion polls, state actions, and changing public discussion. But the proof is in the pudding.

RFF is not in the business of advocacy or lobbying, but we have done—and will continue to do—extensive analysis of the policy options for addressing climate change.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Phil Sharp".

Phil Sharp, President
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P.S. On a personal note, I want to acknowledge that RFF Vice President for Finance and Administration Ted Hand recently retired after 35 years of service. All of us at RFF wish him well and deeply appreciate his work in building an effective and financially sound institution.