

From the President



PHIL SHARP

Our Compelling Mission

For more than half a century, RFF has been harnessing intellectual capital to the public good. Our scholars have made significant contributions in the analysis and design of critical environmental, energy, public health, and natural resource policies. I am delighted to join today's gifted team in building on the RFF legacy, and I am grateful to Paul Portney for his decade of skillful leadership.

No one doubts that America and the world face major challenges in managing our resources for the benefit of generations to come. The need for rigorous thinking and credible policy analysis is more crucial than ever.

Capitalizing on scholarship in the policy arena, however, has never been simple. Too often advocates and policymakers fail to appreciate the value of objective research or fear such research will undermine their political goals. And too often scholars fail to communicate in ways understandable to policymakers or focus research on questions with little apparent relevance to compelling public issues.

In carrying out its mission to improve environmental and natural resource policymaking worldwide through objective social science research, RFF has served as a bridge between these worlds. Today, spanning this divide is more difficult and more compelling than ever. The authority of scholarship has been under assault. Too much research has been distorted by ideology, partisanship, or profit—casting suspicion over findings and policy recommendations.

The global challenges we face—such as climate, change, loss of biodiversity, the spread of disease, and others—compel us to more effectively employ our intellectual capital. We must become smarter in our public discourse, wiser in our public policy choices, and more competent in implementing critical public policy. This is not about government versus the private sector; it is about the need for greater effectiveness from all of our institutions. And I believe the public will increasingly demand more of their leaders in every setting.

As we at RFF assert ourselves in this turbulent world, we must remain faithful to disciplined intellectual inquiry. To better grasp how we can continue to be effective and maximize our impact, RFF is undertaking a strategic review. You can help by contributing your thoughtful comments about what we do, how well we do it, and where we should head. In particular, I urge our friends and readers to help us identify emerging issues—those that are not currently bright on the public radar. Please send us your suggestions and thoughts to emergingissues@rff.org.

With your counsel and support, we are determined to make a difference in the lives of future generations.

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

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