Positive Feedback

Here at RFF we invest in new ideas but don’t count on immediate, high rates of return. Tracking the growth of an idea can be challenging, as it progresses and evolves through academic channels and on to conversations with policymakers. But we are patient people: building a portfolio of truly workable policy ideas takes time.

Year after year, we hold seminars and host workshops to bring together scholars, government officials, the press, and the public. RFF researchers disseminate their findings by publishing in journals; attending conferences, often overseas; and writing comprehensive reports that lay out their conclusions in the clearest terms possible.

But lately, more people are recognizing the value of what we do here at RFF. Over the past 12 months, several RFF researchers have received very substantial grants that will allow them to expand their efforts—gathering data, engaging in vital research, and doing greater outreach.

Much of this new support is geared toward addressing various aspects of how to mitigate, and adapt to, climate change. However, RFF researchers have been studying these problems for over 30 years and we view these generous contributions from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Simons Foundation, and other foundations, government agencies, and corporate donors as a further endorsement of how we work to solve perhaps the most critical environmental problem of our time. The recipients include Senior Fellows Ray Kopp, Alan Krupnick, Molly Macauley, Richard Morgenstern, Billy Pizer, and Fellow Joe Aldy.

But not all of us work on climate change. NASA has awarded a large grant to Senior Fellow Molly Macauley, the author of this issue’s cover story, who will conduct three studies on environmental policy directions and earth science valuation techniques. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has given Senior Fellow Ramanan Laxminarayan and his colleagues major funding for continuing research on antibiotic resistance. And the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has provided support to Laxminarayan for research and an international conference on the scientific merits of a multiple drug regimen to fight malaria.

Recognition can come in many forms, including through the quality of people who serve on our Board of Directors. We are delighted to announce two new additions to our board. Joseph Stiglitz, winner of the 2005 Nobel Prize in Economics, has rejoined the board, an indication of the value placed on RFF from the very top of the economics profession. In addition, Mark Tercek, managing director at Goldman Sachs and head of the Goldman Sachs Center for Environmental Markets, was elected to the board at our April meeting. Mark’s innovative work promoting environmental goals through market forces makes him a wonderful fit for RFF, and for his new role as president of the Nature Conservancy, a post he will assume this summer.