

60 Years of Investing in Ideas



In the long run, economic growth and environmental protection must go hand in hand. But achieving both requires innovative and tough-minded thinking. This has been at the heart of our work at Resources for the

Future since 1952.

This year RFF celebrates its 60th anniversary. The organization was created in response to fears that scarce natural resources eventually could jeopardize economic growth and national security. *Resources for Freedom*, the presidential commission report that recommended the creation of RFF, was truly a landmark in the analysis of environmental and natural resource scarcity.

has changed markedly and scarce minerals such as rare earths have joined the roster of traditional concerns like oil and copper. Darmstadter suggests that today may be an opportune time to conduct a systematic and comprehensive assessment of U.S. and global resource prospects.

While some questions from the past remain with us, we are also faced with a whole set of new ones. Perhaps none is more challenging than reconciling sound environmental protection with the imperative for robust economic growth. In particular, the stakes around the climate change issue are large, for both the economy and the planet.

With the world economy in the midst of tenuous recovery from economic crisis and the fiscal situations of many national governments looking bleak, there is now an

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We've come a long way. Yet 60 years later, some of the same concerns are still on people's minds, particularly with rising prices in many commodity markets. It's important to keep some perspective, however. As Senior Fellow Joel Darmstadter's piece in this issue of *Resources* reminds us, we've been down this path before.

That isn't to say that past experience is an infallible guide for the future. The world

intense focus on what government costs us, either directly in the form of expenditures or indirectly in terms of reduced economic growth. Against this backdrop, governments, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector are emphasizing getting the most out of environmental investments.

It's no surprise that this means an important role for RFF's brand of rigorous economic analysis. RFF has been at the

forefront of measuring the costs and benefits of environmental and natural resource policies and has pioneered approaches to including hard-to-measure values. In this issue, you'll find numerous examples of how RFF experts are identifying and measuring the real return of approaches to environmental and natural resource policy:

» As Director of RFF's Center for the Management of Ecological Wealth Jim Boyd notes, the challenge with measuring return on investment for conservation efforts is that many of the returns—improved air and water quality, more abundant biodiversity, and improvements in other ecosystem services—are difficult to measure.

» RFF Fellow Juha Siikamäki's innovative research finds that state parks contribute roughly one-third of all nature recreation in the United States and produce billions of dollars' worth of benefits each year.

» Ray Kopp, director of RFF's Center for Climate and Electricity Policy, argues that governments should think like the private sector in seeking out carbon reductions—look for the best deals out there.

» When Senior Fellow Dick Morgenstern

and his RFF colleagues Jhih-Shyang Shih and Billy Pizer looked at the impacts of environmental regulations on employment over ten years ago, their work was mainly noticed in academic circles. That's changed recently, and as Morgenstern's interview in these pages makes clear, the policy community is beginning to take a keen interest in this very complicated issue.

These are just some of the ways that RFF is interacting with the public and private sectors to address new problems and account for new realities. The fundamentals, however, have remained constant throughout the life of our organization: research excellence, independent analysis, and meaningful policy recommendations.

Clear thinking about the costs and benefits of environmental protection and resource management is no longer a luxury; it's a necessity. When it comes to the critical global challenges of today and tomorrow, we believe the best long-run rate of return comes from unbiased research, innovative thinking, and a commitment to practical solutions.



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