

### Advice and Insight from New RFF Board Member Michael Mantell



**R**esources recently talked to Michael Mantell, a new member of the RFF Board, about the evolving dynamics of environmental and natural resources policymaking and RFF's role in this process. Mantell is the founder of the Resources Law Group, a multidisciplinary practice that specializes in resources law and policy and in conservation philanthropy. Previously, he was Undersecretary for Resources for California.

#### Can you recall how you first became aware of RFF? Why did it appeal to you?

My relationship with RFF goes back some 25 years, to when I served on the law review at Lewis and Clark Law School. I was inspired by Marion Clawson's seminal work on land economics, which greatly influenced the future of public land management in this country, leading to the establishment of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the National Wilderness Preservation Act, and the updated statutory frameworks governing the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

During my time at the Conservation Foundation, I worked with several RFF staff members and was always impressed with the objectivity and quality of their research and RFF's ability to reframe the national policy agenda.

#### What do you see as the next big challenges facing RFF?

The problems we face in our environment globally, nationally, and locally are only becoming more complex—it's no longer simply a matter of controlling what comes out of a pipe. In many ways, RFF performs an essential R&D

function, both in helping us to better understand emerging problems and in proposing practicable solutions. Forecasting has always been among RFF's strengths, with researchers looking ahead 20 to 30 years and laying the groundwork for new approaches to problems still on the horizon and encouraging worthy experiments in policy to address them.

Unfortunately, we also find ourselves in increasingly polarized times, when ideologies seem to carry more weight than reasonable, achievable solutions. And we all face an information overload. Consequently, RFF must speak ever more clearly and in every forum possible. In the academic world, RFF is well regarded, and it must increasingly find effective ways to engage and inform the policymaking world.

#### How is the conservation movement evolving at the state and national levels?

Given the constraints on the federal budget and polarization in Congress, states are coming to play much more of a leadership role, often working in partnership with philanthropists and other key groups. Activist state attorneys general are also banding together to

address larger issues, such as whether the Clean Air Act gives the EPA the authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles.

But what is new and heartwarming to me is the growth of interest in environmental issues among the African-American, Asian, and Latino communities. In California, there has been a sharp rise in the number of these voters who support conservation measures, and in higher proportion than the white population.

#### California is always in the vanguard of social and environmental change, and your work with the Resources Law Group puts you in the forefront. Can you tell us about an important recent victory?

California's coastal waters contain world-class resources but also face enormous threats. As a result, California passed a landmark law in 1999, the Marine Life Protection Act, which requires the creation of a master plan for a network of protected marine areas that would allow diminished fish stocks to rebuild and biodiversity to improve. However, the program had become moribund and politically charged. And the state government announced earlier this year that the program would be halted due to a lack of funds.

Working in collaboration, three foundations have developed a partnership with the Schwarzenegger administration to revitalize the program. They have agreed to fund scientific studies, public meetings, and other administrative costs needed to get the program implemented. A memorandum of understanding has been drawn up, outlining project objectives, process, and time frames. Together, the foundations will contribute about \$2.5 million per year for three years, and the state will increase its budget by \$500,000 in the first year, with the prospect of more in the future to ensure the success of this pathbreaking effort. ■

## New RFF Fellow Siikamäki Develops Methods for Valuing Nature

The surroundings of his family's farm in Finland's Lake District sparked a lifelong fascination with the environment that shapes the research of RFF's new fellow, Juha Siikamäki. While he was fascinated by people living off the land, declining old-growth forests and lakes stifled with algal blooms concerned him as a youth. He saw the source of ecological problems in the competing interests of landowners, industries, and the gen-

eral public. He believes that economics—in particular studying how people value benefits of the environment—can provide a solution to these conflicts.

His professional career began in Helsinki as an economist for the Agricultural Economics Research Institute. Siikamäki later moved to the United States, receiving a master's degree and a doctorate from the University of California, Davis. Most recently Siikamäki was an economist at Triangle Economic Research, a research firm specializing in assessing damages to natural resources in the event of hazardous spills.

Siikamäki's research focuses on developing methods for valuing benefits and costs from environmental policy programs. Issues regarding the conservation of endangered species and



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their habitats and the design of large-scale conservation programs on private land provide a central theme for his research. The two elements of such programs, in his view, are landowners' willingness to enroll their land and the public's willingness to pay for it. At RFF he hopes to continue this work and

examine how to better incorporate ecological information into conservation policy analysis.

Beyond the environment, Siikamäki has studied food safety, consumer purchasing decisions, and survey design. He is a referee for the *Journal of Forest Economics and Agriculture* and *Ecosystems Journal*.

Siikamäki lives in Washington, DC, with his wife Sonia. ■

## Book Notes

### **Northern Landscapes: The Struggle for Wilderness Alaska.** Daniel Nelson, RFF Press

Heather L. Ross

If those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it, are those who do remember favored to reach historic success? People looking to remember and learn from past accomplishment will find much of interest in Daniel Nelson's extensively researched and documented story of the struggle for wild Alaska, set against the backdrop of the campaign for statehood.

Congress awarded vast acreages of federal land to the state in 1958 and to native groups in 1971. During this same period, an effort to place wild lands in

permanent federal protection as parks, refuges, and wilderness areas also took root and grew. Nelson, a labor historian, intertwines the stories of these historic land allocations that culminated in the 1980 passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), which set aside under federal stewardship more than 107 million acres, over a quarter of the state.

The story of how ANILCA came to pass is largely one of grassroots organizing, starting with an intellectual base of politically active Alaskans, reaching out to an array of other like-minded citizens, pushing forward against the "booster" mentality of the state's economic interests, grouping and regrouping through failure and success, and building a winning national coalition for the final legislative battle in Congress.

Nelson closely follows the extended

legislative battle and the corresponding public opinion and lobbying campaigns that Rep. Morris Udall called "head and shoulders above anything put together in the public interest field since the civil rights movement."

Nelson chronicles some memorable features of the 1970s environmental movement, including the rise to prominence of women and the support of eastern and mid-western Republicans. He also records the turning point signaled by the 1980 election of a Republican administration and Senate. Within two weeks of that election, the long struggle for Alaska lands came to an abrupt close, with a bill full of compromises sent to a lame-duck president, a bittersweet victory for some at the time but a lasting monument nonetheless to nature and to civic enterprise. ■

Heather L. Ross is a visiting scholar at RFF.