COMMENTARY

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MY COMMENTS are concerned particularly with the development of public policy on environmental matters. Here are thoughts based on some of what I've heard, stemming in particular from Professor Thomas's remarks earlier today.

First idea, if you read the article in the Idaho Statesman by Rocky Barker, who is a fine reporter that has much on his plate, notice how important it is to have a strategy to be able to justify or validate your science versus it immediately being portrayed as "that's from The Peregrine Fund, therefore, they are an advocacy group, therefore it's all nonsense." This happens all the time. It's part of the "politics" of science. That is a classic move in American politics; just discount all the science because it is from a certain group's perspective. Of course those that do it take the opposite perspective. There needs to be somebody that is neutral, that is respected, to say that what came from the effort is good science, even though it was "sponsored", in part, by the Peregrine Fund.

Somebody asked a question earlier today about "why do we need all of this science? Why can't we just move ahead?" Of course, the obvious point there with many of our environmental laws is that science is demanded before we move ahead. So we need good science. I also like to say that science is a necessary, but insufficient condition, for public policy making. Though, on the other hand, in a democratic society we *could* certainly empower scientists to make decisions for us. That might be a way around the dilemma. I don't think I would advise it necessarily because, as an example: after all, I have a Ph.D. in Political Science, I know more than you do about politics and policy, shouldn't my vote count 100 times more than yours? Of course not, because I am going to vote based on my values. That is also hugely important when we use science. We have to make sure that we state up front what our values are that may have influenced our choice of research topic and our hypotheses. We also need to be as clear as we can about when it's our science speaking, and when it's our values speaking. Back to my Ph.D., my "hidden" value in studying public policy is that I value democracy, even with all its flaws. But there isn't a way I know of to assert scientifically that democratic decision-making is "best."

Federalism is an important topic, and it's important to Canada, too, but I'll refer to the United States right now. Some pretty interesting things come out of federalism. If one is going to use the EPA in a strategy for solving problems that are due to lead contamination, it's going to be very important who

runs the next EPA. Number one, we will clearly have a different philosophy whether it is President McCain or President Obama, but probably not President Clinton (I'm a political scientist remember, that's not a hard and fast scientific prediction). They will have a different philosophy about EPA and these people probably will be consumed at first by climate issues and figuring out if there are regulatory ways to attack those issues. Right, wrong, or indifferent, they will be consumed at first. That is something to be aware of. They have many science advisory boards that struggle through this. The strategy there, obviously, is regulatory change. This is what President Bush has done, and this is what other Presidents of both persuasions do when Congress can't do anything. One way to change policy in America is to rewrite regulations. This is why we are spending a lot of time idiotically right now in this part of the West trying to open National Parks to people so that they can carry their weapons openly into the park. Now there is a burning issue folks, but they are trying to change the regulations to allow that. But that is the way you would get EPA involved in the spent lead issue, though some might think it is a reach. That doesn't stop people from trying. There is nothing wrong with that strategy.

One can also try to use laws to attack problems best left to other laws. To be blunt, the Endangered Species Act is not the vehicle to attack climate change, but it is being used in the case of the polar bear. Those kinds of strategies will continue. Probably it is a difficult strategy unless you are able to find some hook in a law that courts are likely to give you some room to move on an issue.

Another danger is, quite frankly, in the United States we are developing a hollow state. We want our agencies to do all sorts of things, but we continue to cut their environmental budgets and reduce their staff, rendering them functionally incompetent, then we blame them for not being able to get things done quickly while making it impossible to solve problems. The reality is that the EPA is a great example of this. They are overworked. You can't imagine the many kinds of regulation and policy they have to develop, that they are tasked with under all our environmental laws. So, maybe using EPA is not a bad strategy, you just need to be prepared for that.

Under federalism in the United States, states remain important, so if you are going to think through trying to federalize this issue, and by that I mean making it a national issue, involve the states. The states on climate change issues have been more proactive than the national government has. We have an inherent tension in the United States between states and national government. Sometimes we like what the states do, sometimes we don't. Sometimes we like what the federal government does, sometimes we don't. You have a careful with a national strategy. Also remember, what you nationalize under a more "green" administration can be changed under a non-green presidential administration. Nothing is really set in stone.

Finally, consider time. This is an important issue, because as I said in my opening comments, there will be a lot of issues fighting to get on the policy agenda. Work hard, but be patient. It took, after all, 10 years to pass the Wilderness Act in the United States. It's just the nature of our political system. You just have to push ahead, but understand we don't act quickly most of the time, unless there is a big crisis.

Biography.—**John Freemuth, Ph.D.**, is the Senior Fellow of the Andrus Center for Public Policy, Director of the Energy Policy Institute, and Professor of Public Policy and Administration at Boise State University. Dr. Freemuth teaches in the Master of Public Administration Program and Political Science Department. His MPA specialty is Natural Resources and Public Land Policy and administration. He also teaches Organizational Theory, Introduction to Public Administration and Public Service and Democracy. In addition Dr. Freemuth teaches American Government, Environmental Policy, and Public Land Policy in the Political Science Department. Dr. Freemuth has published numerous articles and one book on public land policy, and has worked on several projects with federal and state natural resources agencies, including the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service at the federal level and the Departments of Fish and Game, Parks and Recreation, and Environmental Quality of the State of Idaho. He was the chair of the Bureau of Land Management's National Science Advisory Board.