
Series Foreword

Social scientists are taught early on in their careers about the importance of challenging conventional wisdom in their research. They are instructed to never assume anything until rigorous, balanced inquiry is conducted. Blindly adopting a particular orientation can restrict the use of competing theoretical and methodological approaches and can lead to false findings. Many if not most of the important breakthroughs that have been reported in the social sciences (and other fields) tend to debunk a major assumption about some aspect of society. Findings drawn from survey research and reported in early studies of voting behavior and public opinion, for example, challenged long-held beliefs about the kinds of citizens who identify with a political party as well as who consider themselves political independents. Likewise, contemporary policy research has questioned previously held notions concerning the role of public opinion and interest groups in American politics and policymaking and has significantly improved our knowledge of influence, power, and decisionmaking.

An assumption held by many environmental policy scholars is that collaboration among diverse interests and constituencies in conflicts over natural resources and pollution control is "a good thing" because it tends to facilitate bargaining, negotiation, and compromise. Thus, instead of allowing environmental conflicts to endure for a very long time, collaboration among contending parties at the local or regional level is assumed to shorten the time required to reach a settlement. The literature also implies that final decisions from collaborative processes are likely to generate effective environmental policies which will endure over time. Beginning in the 1990s, these assumptions have led to a widespread call among policy analysts, as well as government officials, to decentralize

environmental policymaking and to pursue the development and implementation of collaborative strategies to resolve environmental and natural resource disputes at the local and regional level.

Judith Layzer's outstanding study presents an in-depth and comprehensive examination of whether the expectations underlying collaborative, place-based environmental problem solving are empirically valid. Her goal is to improve understanding of how ecosystem-based management (EBM) works in practice. EBM, according to her, "entails collaborative, landscape-scale planning and implementation that is flexible and adaptive." Professor Layzer analyzes seven prominent cases of such landscape-scale initiatives, four of which involve extensive use of EBM. The case studies possess a number of key similarities and differences, allowing her to draw insightful generalizations across a variety of terrestrial and aquatic collaborative efforts in different parts of the country. Her analytic approach makes it possible for her to determine whether EBM produces in practice the benefits promised in theory. Specifically, she investigates to what extent, how, and under what circumstances EBM leads to sustained, environmentally protective policies and practices that represent improvements on the status quo and are likely to conserve natural resources and improve environmental quality.

The findings reported in this book are quite surprising given the results of previous research, and they are likely to lead to intense debate over the value and efficacy of EBM. Professor Layzer finds that the seven case studies of EBM initiatives she examines have produced "land use or natural resource management plans that are more holistic and comprehensive than the piecemeal approaches they replaced." Moreover, each case produced concrete achievements that furthered environmental protection and natural resource conservation. However, her study finds that "the initiatives whose goals were set in collaboration with stakeholders have produced environmental policies and practices that are less likely to conserve and restore ecological health than those whose goals were set through conventional politics." Her book presents a number of explanations for these findings and discusses the implications of the results for future efforts to enhance environmental quality at the local and regional level.

The analyses presented in this book illustrate well our purpose in the MIT Press series in American and Comparative Environmental Policy. We encourage work that examines a broad range of environmental policy issues. We are particularly interested in volumes that incorporate inter-

disciplinary research and focus on the linkages between public policy and environmental problems and issues both within the United States and in cross-national settings. We welcome contributions that analyze the policy dimensions of relationships between humans and the environment from either a theoretical or empirical perspective. At a time when environmental policies are increasingly seen as controversial and new approaches are being implemented widely, we especially encourage studies that assess policy successes and failures, evaluate new institutional arrangements and policy tools, and clarify new directions for environmental politics and policy. The books in this series are written for a wide audience that includes academics, policymakers, environmental scientists and professionals, business and labor leaders, environmental activists, and students concerned with environmental issues. We hope they contribute to public understanding of environmental problems, issues, and policies of concern today and also suggest promising actions for the future.

Sheldon Kamieniecki, *University of California, Santa Cruz*

Michael Kraft, *University of Wisconsin-Green Bay*

American and Comparative Environmental Policy Series Editors