



BREN SEMINAR

PRESENTED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF SCIENCE IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY: CASE STUDIES



LOIS SCHIFFER

Environmental Attorney

Formerly General Council at NOAA and Assistant Attorney General for Environment and National Resources Division at US Dept of Justice

Monday, November 13, 2017 11:00 – 12:00
Bren Hall 1414

Lois Schiffer is one of the most knowledgeable, articulate and experienced individuals in the US regarding the laws and policies governing federal public lands and waters. Her vast, high-level, and significant experiences at both the Department of Justice and at NOAA will be both interesting and informative to students and faculty alike. — Deborah Williams, Lecturer, Environmental Studies

ABSTRACT US environmental statutes provide a significant role for science in establishing and applying standards. Statutes provide the legal standard, scientists provide relevant studies, policy-makers decide. Different approaches to communication and thinking between policy-makers and scientists make this task both important and challenging.

Case Study #1 – Addressing natural resource damages caused by the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico by applying the Oil Pollution Act to extensive scientific study and research. [See more.](#)

Case Study #2 – Listing of Loggerhead Turtles under Endangered Species Act. In 2010, NOAA and DOI considered separating Loggerhead Turtles into 9 “distinct population segments” and classifying each separately. The Act sets the standards; scientists develop the science to apply the standard. The approach and decision making reflect the intersection of science and public policy. [See more.](#)

Case Study #3 – Clean Air Act and greenhouse gases. The Clean Air Act requires EPA to determine whether pollutants from diverse sources such as carbon dioxide endanger public health and welfare. EPA made such an Endangerment Finding in December 2009, following the direction of the Supreme Court, by applying the standards of the Clean Air Act to extensive scientific research. [See more.](#)

BIO A distinguished graduate of Harvard Law School, Lois has held prominent positions in all sectors. During President Obama’s Administration, Lois served as General Counsel for NOAA, and in that capacity was the chief legal officer for all NOAA activities, and policy advisor to the Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere. In the Clinton Administration, Lois was the Assistant Attorney General of the Environment and Natural Resources Division, the highest ranking position in the Department of Justice regarding the environment and natural resources. An adjunct professor of Environmental Law at Georgetown, Lois has argued important cases before the US Supreme Court.

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