

## The American Political Setting and the Environment

**E**nvironmentalism is one among many complex and technical policy issues that has challenged political leaders and citizens alike since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. As one journalist specializing on U.S. environmental policy observed, “The economic prosperity of the Industrial Revolution—indeed the rise of America—came at a steep price: lost wilderness, contaminated waters, dirty skies, endangered animals and plants.”<sup>1</sup> By the mid-1960s, the modern American environmental movement focused not only on domestic concerns but also included transnational environmental policy issues ranging from acid rain to stratospheric ozone depletion to global warming and climate change. In short, it became increasingly clear that the United States and other countries were exponentially threatening the health of the environment at home and abroad.

To what extent have U.S. public officials included environmental issues as a central feature of the public agenda? For some, the question of environmental protection concerns value conflicts between preservation and development, where tradeoffs are demanded of contending forces. While some public officials have advocated that the federal government play a strong role in protecting the environment, a limited number of their colleagues are reluctant to impose governmental authority over business and industry with respect to the environment. Still others argue that state and local governments rather than the federal government should play the primary role in managing environmental affairs.

The history of the environmental policy process in the United States has been associated with state-level politics where policymakers, more often than not, have supported economic development over environmental protec-

tion. Over the last half-century, however, the federal government assumed increasing responsibility for managing environmental affairs. At the same time, public opinion informs us that American citizens have supported protecting the environment over economic development.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Americans are more likely to prefer that the federal government take action to protect the environment, rather than rely on business and industry to do so.<sup>3</sup>

The political struggle regarding the environment is framed within the American constitutional system of government involving the three major institutions of the federal government. A secondary consideration involves federalism and the extent to which the national government and the fifty state governments should play a role in environmental management. The environment as an important public policy issue also includes the debate over the extent to which science should be involved in environmental policy-making. Consequently, environmental management can be viewed as being subject to a variety of influences that have affected the decision-making process.

### The American Political System, Public Policymaking, and the Environment

In the American political system, public policy is subject to a variety of political constraints including but not limited to the dispersion of power prescribed by the Madisonian model of separation of power and the system of checks and balances. The federal system of government divides political power between the national government and the fifty states. Moreover, as the framers of the Constitution were well aware when they argued in *Federalist #10*, the governmental system was subject to pressures exerted by organized interests. This motivated the framers to design a system that would moderate the actions of the myriad political actors within the system.

In the American political setting, the three major national institutions (legislative, executive, judicial) have specific areas of political responsibility yet also exert their influence beyond their respective jurisdictions. Congress has the power to pass legislation, yet the framers of the Constitution gave to the president the ability to negate the efforts of those 535 legislators through the power of the veto. Then again, Congress can override the president's veto power if it can muster sufficient support (two-thirds of the congressional membership) to oppose the president's actions. Furthermore, the Supreme Court can exercise its power of judicial review in response to actions taken by the other two institutions.

Congress is a decentralized institution in which political power is fragmented among a variety of committees and subcommittees that can promote, delay, or oppose legislation as well as expand their jurisdiction. For example, several different committees and subcommittees in the House and the Senate have jurisdiction over environmental affairs. Consequently, notwithstanding congressional responsibility for advancing the national interest, members of the legislative branch of government remain committed to protecting state and local interests. In the process of doing so, important issues at the national level may become subverted by subnational pressure. In addition to these considerations, Congress is also influenced by the partisan makeup of the legislative body. Although bipartisanship is evident on some legislation, partisan conflict over public policy is an integral feature of the legislative process. As far as Congress and the environment are concerned, the “golden age” of environmental legislation occurred during the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, as a result of bipartisanship among legislators, important bills (some modest, others substantive) were passed by Congress and signed into law. This legislation, some with subsequent amendments added, included the Clean Air Act (1963, 1970, 1977), Wilderness Act (1964), Endangered Species Conservation Act (1966, 1973), National Environmental Policy Act (1970), Marine Mammal Protection Act (1972), Clean Water Act (1972, 1977), Safe Drinking Water Act (1974, 1986), and the Superfund (1980, 1986).

Although certain presidents have used the power resources available to them to take action on behalf of the environment—signing legislation, issuing executive orders, using the veto power—the environment has yet to assume a central place in their legislative agenda. Later in this book, we will discuss the classification of presidents as *activist* or *symbolic* in their behavior toward the environment. As an activist, the president can take actions that promote environmental protection or support a developmental ethic over conservation efforts. Or, the president can respond to environmental challenges in a symbolic way, exhibiting only modest to little attention to environmental challenges.

Moreover, just as the president sits atop the executive branch of government and sets the public agenda, executive agencies also play an important role in the policymaking process. The bureaucracy is similar to the legislative branch, in that it is a decentralized institution comprised of numerous agencies, departments, and bureaus sometimes having overlapping jurisdiction. As a public policy area, the environment is under the jurisdiction of a variety of regulatory agencies that either cooperate or engage in turf wars.<sup>4</sup>

As well, executive agencies, including major players such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of the Interior, have been politicized as a result of presidential budget priorities and the appointment process. During the 1980s, for instance, both offices received considerable news media attention due to problems arising over political and personal matters. Anne Gorsuch, EPA administrator, resigned and Rita Lavelle, assistant administrator for hazardous waste was fired, due to allegations of mismanagement and lax enforcement of environmental regulations.<sup>5</sup> Secretary of the Interior James Watt had what Robert Durant called a “confrontational, arrogant, and badgering style” that “fanned the flames of conflict with congressional oversight committees . . . and the environmental community.”<sup>6</sup> Although Watt eventually resigned in response to mounting pressure from environmentalists, citizens, and members of Congress, Watt’s protégé Gale Norton was later nominated by President George W. Bush to serve as his Secretary of the Interior. On the other hand, Bush’s initial appointment of Christine Todd Whitman to head the EPA was viewed positively since she had a background of being sympathetic to environmental concerns. However, her tenure was relatively short since her views were increasingly at odds with the administration. As Kristina Horn Sheeler informed us, when Whitman accepted the position of EPA administrator, she made reference to Teddy Roosevelt, “our first conservationist president,” who “understood the necessity of striking the right balance between competing interests for the good of all Americans.”<sup>7</sup> The notion of Bush employing a balanced approach was quickly forgotten as Whitman was characterized as “shoved to the margins,” “undercut,” “undermined,” “isolated,” “the odd woman out,” “out of step,” and the “lone voice.”<sup>8</sup> In contrast, President Barack Obama appointed Lisa Jackson to the head the EPA. Jackson was a strong, committed EPA administrator who used the regulatory process in support of ecological issues especially in the policy domain of climate change and its threat to the environment and to public health.

While Congress, the presidency, and executive agencies are characterized as political institutions, the Supreme Court exercises its authority through the judicial process. The Court, third pillar of the country’s national institutional framework, has an important role in influencing the actions of the other two branches as well as the states. As a result of the 1803 *Marbury v. Madison* decision, the Court has the power of judicial review, which underlies its ability to interpret the actions of the executive and legislative branches of government as well as events at the subnational level. As far as the role of the Court and the environment is concerned, it is not surprising to say that appointments to the Court make a difference. More importantly,

as Rosemary O’Leary has argued, while “[m]ost environmental conflicts never reach a court, and an estimated 50 to 90 percent of those that do are settled out of court,” since the 1970s, the “courts in the United States have become permanent players in environmental policymaking” although their involvement in environmental affairs will “ebb and flow over the years.”

As we have seen in the discussion above, jurisdiction over environmental affairs has been divided between the major institutions of government. Once legislation is passed by Congress and signed into law by the president, executive agencies establish regulations as the lawmaking process places new responsibilities on the fifty states for implementing federal guidelines. However, as power has shifted from Washington to the states, subnational governments have not necessarily acted consistently in the implementation process. While some states have engaged in innovative efforts to improve environmental quality, others have opposed federal environmental guidelines or have not acted on federal legislation in a timely manner. Almost two decades ago, the research of Evan Ringquist clearly confirmed that the fifty states play an important role in environmental policymaking, James P. Lester reminded us that the actions of individual states are influenced by several factors including the state’s wealth and the severity of its environmental problems compared to other states.<sup>10</sup> The value of Lester’s work is that he organized states into policy types defined by their commitment to environmental protection and each state’s institutional capabilities to take action. In doing so, a portrait of subnational government was established, placing the fifty states into one of four policy types.

As the Founding Fathers informed us in *The Federalist Papers*, the U.S. political system was created to control factions, yet the fragmented system of government also provides numerous access points for organized interests to pursue their causes, supported by the First Amendment right of free expression. Similar to other public policy issues, conflict over the management of the environment has resulted in a proliferation of ecological interest groups. Nonetheless, although these groups share a common commitment to protect the environment, they are characterized by different sociodemographic attributes, size, budget, tactics, and strategies. Moreover, not all ecology groups conduct themselves in politically legitimate ways. For instance, where the National Wildlife Federation is considered a “mainstream” organization that engages in influencing legislation or lobbying efforts, Greenpeace is identified as a “direct action” group whose members are willing to engage in nonviolent but confrontational actions (e.g., challenging whaling ships) while Earth First! has been characterized as a “radical” direct action group due to its willingness to go beyond nonviolent actions. In short, members

of environmental groups engage in conventional and unconventional participation, modes of behavior that will be further discussed later in this book. Interest groups are not limited to the environmental movement. They have ample options. The interests of business and industry are also represented by a host of groups ranging from large groups with considerable resources, including the American Petroleum Institute and the National Association of Manufacturers, to smaller yet active groups that have focused on specific or narrowly defined issues, such as the National Wetlands Coalition or the Marine Preservation Association. Think tanks such as the Heartland Institute and the Cato Institute push a conservative philosophy that is pro-development/pro-growth, less inclined to support conservation efforts, and opposed to federal and state environmental regulations on business and industry.

While interest groups serve as linkage institutions that connect the public to the political system, public opinion remains an important yet problematic aspect of American politics. On the one hand, in a democratic society the public's preferences should be expressed in government action. Yet the extent to which this should be done is part of a long-standing debate in American politics. How well is the citizenry informed about political and environmental issues? To what degree should policymakers rely on public opinion as a guide for action? While some observers have argued that the American public is not an informed, rationally thinking body of individuals, others contend quite the opposite.<sup>11</sup> Although public opinion data indicate that Americans hold strong views about environmental protection, to what extent do policymakers take these into account? Policymakers must listen to their constituents but are also influenced by other political and economic interests regarding their participation in the environmental policymaking process.

In addition to the role played by a variety of actors in American democratic politics, the United States also has an international role to play. The United States is but one among some two hundred countries whose actions affect the health of the planet, and it is a member of numerous regional and international organizations that engage in environmental policymaking. Similar to political conflict within the domestic policy arena, due, in part, to differing interests, nation-states have shared, as well as distinct, concerns that impact their orientation toward global environmental protection. For example, the United States joined other countries and became a signatory to the 1987 protocol addressing ozone depletion. In contrast, at the Earth Summit in 1992, President George H. W. Bush didn't seek to unite the United States with other members of the international community in their effort to secure a global commitment to environmental quality. Although

global warming and biodiversity were salient issues at the summit, President Bush refused to sign the biodiversity treaty—the only participant to do so—and signed the global warming treaty only after it was revised to reflect voluntary rather than mandatory guidelines.<sup>12</sup>

### Science, Politics, and the Environment

The environment is a policy area in which the well-being of the American people is determined by public officials at different levels of government. In the process of decision making, lawmakers are subject to numerous influences and, for example, they are inclined to reject scientific research that might be contrary to their self- or constituency interests, they might disregard what they don't understand, or they might hesitate to act when science lacks a consensus. Moreover, opposition to the scientific community can be found among politicians harboring ideological or partisan differences, business and industry leaders who are worried about their economic interests, citizens concerned about tax increases needed to resolve environmental problems, and state governments that might oppose the intervention of "big" government in the environmental policymaking process or are resentful at being forced to act due to unfunded mandates.

Against this background we are challenged by the following question: To what extent should science be involved in the environmental policymaking process? It has become commonplace to hear members of the scientific community argue that the earth's atmosphere, oceans, rivers, land, and wildlife have been profoundly affected by human activities. Some potential problems, among others, include increasing amounts of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere, growing threats to global biodiversity through the destruction of natural habitats, reduced levels of clean water, and depleted supplies of the ocean's fisheries at a time when the human population is increasing. In short, how and in what ways do lawmakers respond to scientists who alert them to real and potential environmental problems?

As an example, global warming and climate change are key challenges for the scientist and lawmaker alike in the United States. On the one hand, 97 percent of climate scientists argue that the "greenhouse effect" is due, primarily, to human actions. On the other hand, entrenched economic interests, public officials guided by ideological rigidity, and a confused body of American citizens ensure that climate change will remain a divisive issue where inaction rather than progress carries the day. Moreover, the technical dilemma regarding decision making has a profound impact as one moves

from the national to the global arena. As Lamont Hempel has argued, “Because attempts to solve global environmental problems invariably collide with the narrow self-interests of a state-centric system, few nations are prepared to follow the logic of collective environmental action to its political conclusion.”<sup>13</sup> This does not deter action on the part of international political actors but it does make it more difficult.

Accordingly, in the United States, more needs to be done to ensure that the American public has a better understanding of science, and scientists must improve their understanding of and communication with American citizens.<sup>14</sup> This dilemma has been cogently described by Walter Rosenbaum in the following way:

Public officials seek from scientists information accurate enough to indicate precisely where to establish environmental standards and credible enough to defend in the inevitable conflicts that follow. Scientists want government to act quickly and forcefully on ecological issues they believe to be critical. . . . The almost inevitable need to resolve scientific questions through the political process and the problems that arise in making scientific and political judgments compatible are two of the most troublesome characteristics of environmental politics.<sup>15</sup>

In the end, we face a fundamental challenge whether policymakers and the scientific community supported by the American public can establish effective measures to ensure appropriate responses to the myriad ecological problems that are salient at home and abroad.

### Environmental Beliefs and Value Orientation

When discussing the politics of the environment, we are confronted with disputes over how to address environmental problems that are framed within value conflicts that occur between various stakeholders in the United States. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the philosophical debate that occurred between John Muir and Gifford Pinchot—preservation versus conservation—set the stage for the future. For example, for Muir it was imperative to set aside public land in its pristine state for future generations. He articulated his vision of environmentalism in the following way: “Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul



alike.”<sup>16</sup> Pinchot argued instead that land and natural resources could be used wisely and conserved for the future.

By the 1970s, a number of analysts set forth new explanations regarding the nature of values and value change in advanced industrial (postindustrial) democracies, including the United States. Samuel Hays, for instance, argued that as a result of post–World War II improvements in educational attainment and wider distribution of wealth in American society, new values took hold. According to Hays, “The driving force in the new interest in shaping improved levels of environmental quality were human and social values which took on an increasing level of importance in the second half of the twentieth century.”<sup>17</sup> More importantly, Hays argued that “[t]he expression of environmental values and the evolution of environmental culture can be understood only in terms of its engagement with opposing values associated with development rather than environmental objectives.”<sup>18</sup> One can easily imagine the preservation/development debate staged between advocates of yet another hotel in a row of hotels along a tourist beach and preservationists demanding that green space be maintained for today and tomorrow.

For more than four decades, Ronald Inglehart has conducted research about value change in postindustrial democracies.<sup>19</sup> Inglehart built upon the work of Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, and he determined that, as a result of postwar prosperity and world peace, citizens’ values were changing. Based on cross-national survey data, Inglehart reported that a new “postmaterialist” value orientation had emerged in which individuals put more emphasis on nonmaterial goals (e.g., a clean environment) than on materialist values (e.g., fighting rising prices).

Values and value change have an impact on public attitudes and behavior. In other words, values serve as “standards that guide conduct in a variety of ways.”<sup>20</sup> Consequently, values (preservation, conservation, development) and value conflict affect our social and political outlook and influence the priorities of political institutions and the environmental policymaking process.

## A Brief History of Environmental Policy in the United States

### *The Early Twentieth Century to the 1950s*

During the first half of the twentieth century, the United States experienced periods of growth and depression, both of which militated against substantive governmental efforts to address the quality of the environment.

World War I, the Great Depression during the 1930s, World War II, and the Korean War turned the attention of political leaders to the issues of economics and national security. The period of the Roaring Twenties as well as the postwar prosperity during the 1950s created a mindset of unchecked growth, development, and continued exploitation of natural resources to meet consumer demands, industrial development, and national defense. Consequently, although environmentalists argued for years in favor of public policy initiatives to address issues ranging from the proper management of public lands and natural resources to resource depletion to air and water pollution, public officials tended to move incrementally rather than implementing a comprehensive national environmental policy.

Having said this, it is important to note that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, appropriate measures to manage the environment were promoted by several prominent individuals, including John Muir and Gifford Pinchot, and environmental groups (e.g., the National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club)—measures that were the outcome of the continuing debate between conservationists and preservationists. For example, Glen Sussman and Mark Kelso have argued that the environmental measures that were advocated by the modern presidents beginning with Franklin D. Roosevelt were grounded in the conservation philosophy begun during the administration of Theodore Roosevelt:

As Theodore Roosevelt moved the nation forward through industrial development and the politics of the Progressive era, he also had the vision to protect a large part of the nation's natural heritage by reserving huge tracts of public land for national parks, national forests, and wild preserves, embodying a conservationist strategy set forth by Gifford Pinchot, who would lead what we now know as the U.S. Forest Service.<sup>21</sup>

The conservationist philosophy of Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot had a profound impact on American national politics. Not only did Roosevelt establish a model for his successors but the conservationist philosophy was “broadly accepted by Congress as well as the public and to a large extent extraction industries that were ensured access to resources.”<sup>22</sup> Moreover, despite the fact that John Muir, president of the Sierra Club, promoted preservationist principles, Gifford Pinchot was successful in promoting the idea of conservation over preservation. As Pinchot argued:

The first great fact about conservation is that it stands for development. . . . Conservation does mean provision for the

future, but it means also and first of all the recognition of the right of the present generation to the fullest necessary use of all the resources with which this country is so abundantly blessed. Conservation demands the welfare of this generation first, and afterward the welfare of the generations that follow.<sup>23</sup>

Consequently, Gifford Pinchot and President Theodore Roosevelt embraced the notion of conservation over John Muir's idea about preservation. In short, prior to the 1930s, the role of the federal government in environmental policymaking tended to focus on land management and conservation of natural resources.

The decade of the 1930s was characterized by both the expansion of the federal government generally and the increasing role of the federal government in environmental policy in particular.<sup>24</sup> During the era of Franklin D. Roosevelt, new and influential environmental groups were established, including the Wilderness Society (1935) and the National Wildlife Federation (1936). These groups began to exert pressure on political leaders, adding to the efforts already underway by groups such as the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society.

Moreover, the federal government became increasingly involved in environmental issues, in such initiatives as Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and the Soil Conservation Service. For example, the CCC played a significant role socially and economically by putting to work millions of unemployed young men, and environmentally through the planting of millions of new trees, fighting soil erosion, and protecting wildlife refuges. As a result of the Tennessee Valley Authority project, which provided much needed low-cost energy for American citizens, the environmental damage to the Tennessee Valley wrought by lack of planning was resolved and millions of trees were planted.<sup>25</sup> Also, the TVA was cited as attracting the attention of more foreign government leaders than any other resource conservation project, due to its success.<sup>26</sup> A. L. Owen described the conservation efforts of the 1930s in terms of the quality of planning: "The leadership necessary for the integration of any comprehensive plan was supplied by Franklin D. Roosevelt. Throughout his presidential years, he insisted upon the need for thoughtfully devised plans that would carry out an overall conservation policy."<sup>27</sup> FDR himself stated to the Congress as he began his first term in office in 1933 that programs like the CCC were

an established part of our national policy. It will conserve our precious natural resources. It will pay dividends to the present

and future generations. It will make improvements in national and state domains which have been largely forgotten in the past few years of industrial development.<sup>28</sup>

At this time, Congress was instrumental in passing important environmental legislation that was signed into law by the president. These included the Taylor Grazing Act (1934), which addressed the problem of overgrazing on America's grasslands, and the Flood Control Act (1936), in which the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers assumed responsibility for implementing a policy to protect watersheds and improve flood control. The Roosevelt era also saw the United States engaged in several important regional environmental treaties that protected flora and fauna, including a treaty with Canada to protect salmon and halibut fisheries and a treaty with Mexico to protect migratory birds and animals.<sup>29</sup> During the early postwar period of the late 1940s and 1950s, presidents Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower were most concerned about national security issues and the communist threat rather than the environment. Although they issued several executive orders that were confined to land use and/or national parks and national forests initiatives, during a fifteen-year period, Congress passed and Truman and Eisenhower signed only a few pieces of significant environmental legislation. Moreover, Eisenhower had asserted that pollution issues should be considered a state and local responsibility rather than falling within federal jurisdiction.<sup>30</sup> James Sundquist has argued that the Eisenhower years were a time when "the federal government undertook few major new departures to conserve or improve the outdoor environment."<sup>31</sup>

### *Environmentalism: 1960s to the Present*

The decades of the 1960s and 1970s were characterized by increasing levels of environmental initiatives by governmental authorities in the United States that involved presidential actions, congressional legislation, court decisions, state-level programs, and interest group activism, among others. In the early 1960s, for instance, biologist Rachel Carson moved the discussion about how to address new ecological issues of growing importance from the conservation-preservation debate to the environmental consequences of new technology. In her book *Silent Spring* (1962) she described the threat to the public and environmental health posed by increasing use of pesticides, especially DDT. She argued that "future generations are unlikely to condone our lack of prudent concern for the integrity of the natural world that supports all life."<sup>32</sup>

The Clean Air Act (1963) and the Clean Water Act (1972), for instance, were passed by Congress and signed into law by presidents Kennedy and Nixon, respectively. Subsequent clean air amendments were added in 1970 and again in 1977. Amendments were added to the Clean Water Act in 1977. The Endangered Species Act, which was passed in 1966, was amended and expanded in scope in 1969 and again in 1973. Although many other pieces of environmental legislation were passed by Congress and signed into law by the president, what was most significant was the increasing role the federal government began to assume in environmental policymaking. This was highlighted when both the government and the public embraced the first Earth Day in April 1970. That same year, the Environmental Protection Agency was created—a major development despite the failed effort to create a cabinet-level Department of the Environment and Natural Resources.<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, the judicial branch of government became increasingly involved in questions raised about the role of the federal government in environmental policymaking. As a result of congressional and presidential action, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) passed into law and was signed by President Nixon in 1970. This compelled both the federal courts and the Supreme Court to respond to issues related to the scope and nature of NEPA in general and environmental impact statements (EIS) in particular.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, President Richard M. Nixon's New Federalism began a shift in responsibility for the implementation of federal environmental programs. When state and local governments had been responsible for environmental policy, priorities tended to favor development over preservation. As a result of changes at the federal level, states were becoming increasingly obligated to carry out environmental policy according to federal guidelines that also encouraged governors and state legislators to establish new sub-national environmental initiatives and state-level environmental bureaucracies.<sup>35</sup> By the end of the decade, the Superfund Act (1980), which addressed hazardous waste sites and established a National Priority List for the most hazardous sites, was passed, as was the Alaska Lands Act (1980), which set aside millions of acres of land in the forty-ninth state.

During the 1980s, environmental protection was less a priority for the United States when Ronald Reagan assumed the presidency. The Reagan administration has generally been characterized as anti-environment, as it rejected previous bipartisan support for environmentalism and embraced instead a decidedly pro-development philosophy. Despite setbacks for several environmental issues including renewal of the Clean Air Act, which had sat dormant since 1977, Congress passed several pieces of legislation important

to environmental protection, either with the signature of the president or by overriding his veto. Included among this legislation were the Safe Drinking Water Act (1986), Superfund Amendments (1986), and Clean Water Act Amendments (1987).

During the last decade of the twentieth century, only a few important environmental proposals were passed into law, namely, the Clean Air Act Amendments (1990) and the California Desert Protection Act (1994). Notwithstanding former president George H. W. Bush declaring himself the “environmental” president and the fervent hope among environmentalists that Bill Clinton would be a “green” president, little substantive action occurred. Bush used the resources of the presidency to ensure passage of the Clean Air Act amendments. However, he disappointed environmentalists when he reversed his position on environmental issues, in response to pressure from fellow Republicans in the Congress and business and industry interests. The California Desert Protection legislation was successful due to the efforts of California’s senators, primarily Dianne Feinstein. Still, those who supported and worked for the legislation were bolstered in their efforts, knowing that they had an ally in the Clinton White House who would at least sign rather than reject the bill.

In the Congressional elections of 1994, the Republicans captured both chambers of Congress for the first time in four decades. Faced with an obstructionist Republican-majority Congress, Clinton used the 1906 Antiquities Act in order to set aside large tracts of public land. He did so in 1996 when he established the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah despite local opposition to his action. As he reached the end of his presidency, Clinton set aside millions of acres of land—an effort to bolster his environmental “legacy.” Clinton was attempting to act as a “conservationist” president following in the steps of Theodore Roosevelt by preserving public lands for future generations.

Clinton’s successor, George W. Bush, the first president of the twenty-first century, made it clear from the outset of his administration that he would follow and expand the pro-development, anti-regulatory approach set forth by Ronald Reagan. This was demonstrated early in his presidency when he dealt with three important issues—namely, water quality, oil exploration, and carbon emissions. Partly in response to President Bill Clinton pushing for stricter standards regarding the amount of arsenic in drinking water, Bush indicated that he would relax the standard. Bush and his EPA were eventually compelled to comply with the Clinton standard due to pressure from Congress and the public. Bush spoke frequently about opening Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil and gas explora-

tion. He argued that this would be a way to achieve energy independence. However, he was opposed by members of the Congress and environmentalists who were concerned about protecting wildlife and a pristine environment. As his first administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, Christine Todd Whitman informed us that during the presidential campaign of 2000 the Republican presidential candidate was committed to reducing carbon dioxide emissions that are associated with the greenhouse effect, global warming, and climate change. Once in office, however, Bush remained an opponent of substantive action to address global warming and climate change. Later in his presidency, Bush used the power resources of his office in support of efforts opposed to environmental protection.<sup>36</sup> He offered his Clear Skies Initiative, which would weaken the Clean Air Act, and he pushed his Healthy Forests Initiative that would make millions of acres of forests exempt from environmental review. He attempted to weaken the Clean Water Act by allowing mining companies to be exempt from compensation when wastes polluted waterways, wetlands, and streams. In short, during his presidency, not one major piece of environmental legislation was passed.

As a result of the election of Barack Obama in 2008, Democrats regained control of the White House and the Senate. However, two years later, the Republicans regained control of the House of Representatives. This set the stage for partisan executive-legislative contention over environmental policymaking. While the new president would be challenged by a host of issues ranging from a national crisis facing financial institutions to a weakened auto industry to home foreclosures to two wars, he offered hope to environmentalists who were thrilled by his election. Obama engaged in a number of efforts to include the environment as part of his larger public agenda. During his first term in office, he signed the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act that would set aside more than two million acres of public land as national wilderness. He issued an executive order that would commit state and local governments to work with the federal government in an effort to maintain the health of the Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary in the country. He also announced a National Fuel Efficiency Policy that would impose increased fuel efficiency standards on new vehicles and at the same time cut greenhouse gas emissions. Nonetheless, he has been criticized for having a weaker record than George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush when it came to cleaning up toxic waste sites. Moreover, Obama's Department of the Interior and the Fish and Wildlife Service failed to terminate a war on America's grey wolves that continues in different parts of the country.

While this discussion so far has been focused primarily on domestic environmental affairs, in the international arena, the United States has also engaged in several important global initiatives. For example, with the support of President John F. Kennedy, the ratification of the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with the Soviet Union in 1963 moved the two adversaries away from potential nuclear conflict and toward mutual nuclear arms control. It also reduced the public health and environmental risk posed by radioactive debris resulting from above-ground nuclear testing. A decade later, the International Convention on Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was a global effort to protect endangered plants and animals. The United States was the first nation to ratify this treaty in the mid-1970s, prohibiting international trade while promoting conservation of flora and fauna. The treaty was ratified by nearly one hundred nations by 1987.<sup>37</sup> Also in 1987, President Reagan signed and the U.S. Senate ratified the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depletion. The accord was an important expression of the multilateral effort to address “new” global climate environmental issues. Reagan’s successor, George H. W. Bush, used the resources of his office in support of the 1990 Clean Air Act amendments that improved relations with Canada over acid rain caused by emissions from power plants in the United States. At the same time, Bush supported the Earth Summit’s commitment to addressing greenhouse gas emissions as long as the effort was voluntary not mandatory.

The North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA) signed into law in 1994 and geared toward enhancing free trade, was supported by President Bill Clinton. Although environmental groups voiced their concern about the ecological impact of the treaty, Clinton stressed the importance of environmental protection via provisions added to the agreement. Seven years later, only two months into his presidency and despite a campaign pledge to reduce carbon emissions, George W. Bush rejected the U.S. commitment to reduce greenhouse gases associated with global warming and climate change. In contrast, Barack Obama, the forty-fourth president, has had a promising record when considering the issue of climate change. He has been involved in several efforts, both regional and international, in support of clean energy technologies. Having said that, he has been strongly opposed by House Republicans in his effort to make progress on a climate change agenda.

For more than a half-century, the history of environmentalism in the United States has been characterized by conflict and compromise as the federal government increased its role in environmental management. During this period, the environmental policymaking process has involved a variety



of old and newly emerging ecological issues. For example, environmental policymaking was, during the late nineteenth century, first concerned with the conservation of public lands. Since then, American citizens have been confronted with the changing nature of environmentalism and the evolution of environmental problems, namely, the first-generation problem of air and water quality; second-tier issues including toxic and hazardous wastes; then, new, third-generation issues involving stratospheric ozone depletion, global warming and climate change, and biodiversity.<sup>38</sup> Global warming and climate change, in particular, have constituted a quite different range of issues for American citizens since, in contrast to the visibility of air and water pollution, the nature of a global “greenhouse effect” is difficult to grasp and quite remote from the typical person’s realm of understanding.

### Design of the Book

The environment as an important public policy issue in the United States is the focus of this book. Its purpose is to assess the roles of both political institutions and the public in the making of environmental policy and to offer the reader insight into how the American political system works. The book includes several features unique in the study of U.S. environmentalism. First, we use an institutional/behavioral approach—namely, how do institutions and the political actors working within them respond to environmental problems? In doing so, in contrast to other books that focus on specific environmental issues in each chapter, we turn our attention to politics and the political process. Second, we include two box inserts in each chapter that focus on a person and a case study. The person and the case study are linked to the institution being covered in the chapter. Third, we include a box insert in each chapter that focuses on global climate change. This is an innovative mechanism that ties the chapters together. Finally, we provide a set of questions in the preliminary discussion of the chapters below that guide the analysis that begins with chapter 2.

Chapter 1 provides an analytic framework for the chapters that follow by discussing how the organization of American constitutional democracy influences the policymaking process. In doing so, it narrows its focus to environmental politics and policy, including how government and policymakers shape environmental policy. The chapter also provides a discussion of science and politics important to environmental policymaking and gives attention to the role of environmental belief systems and value orientation that impact the policy making process. In short, each chapter will focus

on a single institution (two related institutions in chapter 3) and examine major environmental debates, decisions, accomplishments, and problems.

American federalism, intergovernmental relations, and the environment are examined in chapter 2. The discussion in the chapter analyzes the historical roots of relations between the national government and the fifty state governments generally, and the contemporary dynamics of federal/state relations in the shaping of environmental policy. This will be conducted against the backdrop of the devolution of power from Washington to the state capitals. How important have state actions been in shaping national policy? Why might some states be active in promotion of environmental policies while others have been resistant to the same? Which states, if any, have initiated creative environmental policies?

Chapter 3 evaluates the impact of public opinion and interest groups on environmental issues. Public opinion polls provide a portrait of American citizens' attitudes about a host of environmental issues. Yet government action does not always reflect public preferences. Interest groups serve as an important linkage institution that ties the American public to the governmental process. How important has the public response to the environment as a policy issue been in the shaping of environmental policy? How does one explain variation in public opinion about environmentalism? What has been the pattern of public opinion over time? Which interest groups have been most influential over the years in shaping environmental policy? What kinds of tactics and strategies have environmental groups employed in the promotion of environmentalism?

Congress, the legislative process, and the environment are addressed in chapter 4. As a deliberative body engaged in the process of bargaining and compromising among diverse interests, Congress can either work with the president or compete with the president's goals. Congressional efforts in environmental policymaking have been characterized by bipartisanship as well as partisan differences. What is the nature of the legislative process in creating environmental policy? Which committees and congressional leaders have been most influential in shaping environmental policy? How has partisanship united or divided members of Congress when voting on environmental policy? Which Congresses have been most productive in producing environmental policy and what are the key pieces of environmental legislation passed by the Congress?

The environmental presidency is the focus of chapter 5. Although the president is the most visible political figure in American politics, the chief executive is confronted with a diversity of public policy issues, among them environmentalism. The level of presidential action depends, of course,

on a variety of factors. The roles played by the president (e.g., legislative leader, environmental diplomat) help explain presidential involvement in environmental policymaking. Has the environment been at the center of the president's public agenda? How has the presidency compared to the Congress in the promotion of environmental protection? Which presidents have been more protective of the environment and which presidents have promoted a pro-development philosophy toward the environment? Which presidents, if any, can be considered "environmental presidents"?

We examine the executive branch of government and the role played by executive agencies and environmental policy in chapter 6. The federal bureaucracy comprises numerous agencies, bureaus, departments, and commissions with jurisdiction over the environment and each has varied in terms of its influence on environmental policymaking. What has been the role of presidential influence and the independence of executive agencies in the shaping of environmental policy? What has been the impact of key personnel and/or heads within the executive bureaucracy in environmental policymaking? Has the Environmental Protection Agency or the Department of Interior been the dominant player in environmental policy making? Which other executive agencies have been important in environmental policymaking?

The environmental court is the focus of chapter 7. Similar to its two federal counterparts, the judiciary has played an important role in the life of the nation and environmental issues. How important have Supreme Court decisions been in shaping environmental policymaking? How important have the Court's decisions been in influencing other policymakers? How have other political actors in the polity responded to the Court's decisions? How influential have individual justices been in particular cases involving environmental decision making?

Chapter 8 concentrates on global environmental politics and policy. While most of the discussion in this book addresses domestic politics, the United States also has a role in the international environment. Regional and international treaties have been signed and are in force, and regional and international organizations have increasingly included the environment as a policy area demanding global attention and solutions. What have been the major global environmental issues? What are the major international organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) involved in global environmental policy? How successful have international environmental agreements (treaties, protocols) been in protecting the environment? What is the relationship between national security and global environmental security?

The concluding chapter evaluates the U.S. approach to environmentalism. In doing so, it assesses how political institutions and policymakers

have responded to environmentalism at home and abroad. In the discussion leading up to this concluding chapter, we examine how American political institutions and the individuals working within each of them have shaped environmental policymaking. Based on our observations, we close with a set of propositions that offer the reader a better understanding of American politics and the environment.

The discussion that follows examines the environment from the perspective of the various policy units in the political system. As you, the reader, examine the role played by each institution covered in the following chapters, keep in mind how political actors responded to environmentalism within the institutional setting. How might the political behavior of citizens and public officials be characterized in analyzing environmental policymaking? What have been the major influences on political institutions and the political actors working within them? Why have some policy actors embraced the effort to protect the environment while others have resisted or delayed environmental initiatives? Finally, consider to what extent the environment, in comparison to other public policy issues, has been an important issue in American politics.