LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

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As of this writing, the National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP) has wrapped up another successful annual conference in sunny St. Petersburg, Florida. One of my jobs as editor in chief is to work with managing editor Dan Carroll and the NAEP Publications Committee to identify issues that we feel are of interest to our readership and then present these topics in the form of thematic issues of *ENP*. Past thematic issues of *ENP* have been devoted to sustainability, fracking, and professional ethics, as well as environmental issues in China and in the Great Lakes, to name but a few. This approach is vital to maintaining and sustaining NAEP's membership, authorship, and readership. In addition, this approach has been quite effective in introducing new perspectives on environmental issues to achieve greater interdisciplinarity, as well as to maintain the mission of NAEP by providing quality articles that balance interests of both the practitioner and the scholar in the environmental profession. This *ENP* issue, which is related to the 2014 NAEP Annual Conference, is generally nonthematic and features articles on disparate topics and themes. In this issue, we have assembled a wonderfully diverse group of research articles and environmental reviews/case studies by academic scholars and practitioners.

There is growing concern among scientists and policy makers about the potential environmental, social, and economic impacts of climate change on water supply, policy, and management. In their research article, **Kristan Cockerill, Christopher Badurek, and Robin Hale** note that a greater understanding is needed of the factors that motivate the development of water management policies and programs, as well as the processes that decision makers use when creating such policies and programs. The authors used survey data to better ascertain how decision-maker perceptions about water availability, growth, and environmental concerns correlate with water allocation and conservation policies. The survey results were quite eye-opening. Survey respondents expressed only moderate concern about water availability but greater concern about the impacts of drought on development of water management policy. In addition, they found that a minority of the decision makers have actually implemented water education programs, whereas many have implemented drought-related conservation programs.

Jeffrey Cook, a doctoral student at Colorado State University, refocuses our attention on the controversial issue of fracking, which was the thematic focal point of *ENP* volume 14, number 4. Mr. Cook's article focuses on the ascertaining why variations exist among states with respect to the regulation of fracking. In applying subsystem theory to determine the causal factors underlying variations in fracking policies and regulations in Colorado, Wyoming, and Louisiana—states with active ongoing fracking operations, Cook has found that policy subsystem theory is useful in explaining this variation and that the strength of regulatory programs is often tied to the position of regulatory agency staff and privileged stakeholder groups (often with strong ties to the oil and gas industry).

One of the greatest challenges for scientists is how to effectively communicate complex data and risk to nonscientists, particularly policy makers. **Brandon Johnson** of Decision Research tackles this issue in his research article. Using a novel risk-trading option authorized by Congress for setting standards for radon levels in drinking water, Mr. Johnson clearly illustrates interactions and gaps among scholarly advice, practitioner behavior, and citizen responses, as revealed in utility-customer focus groups. In addition, he addresses topics including effects of knowledge, risk comparisons and information framing, values clarification, presentation of policy options and evaluation, and their implications for risk communication and policy development.

A fundamental precept of US democracy is that our citizens have a right to know about government business, despite the attempts at times in our history of our federal government and media to quash public inspection of events and stories. Now, as China opens up to a market economy and embraces some democratic fundamentals, it, too, is faced with the contentious issue of "the people's right to know." In his article, **Zhao Yue**, a doctoral student at the University of Montréal, focuses on the development of an open-information culture in China with respect to the disclosure of nuclear information. Despite development of a new nuclear safety information disclosure system, affording the public true open access to nuclear information remains difficult because of the various exceptions for not disclosing this information, propagandist legislative objectives, and the absence of a clear definition of the people's right to know.

I am sure that in our collective travels we have all visited places that, for whatever reasons, are seared into our memories. For me, such a place is the Palouse region of eastern Washington State. I spent five years tooling around the Palouse while attending graduate school at Washington State University, and even today, 20 years after my graduation from WSU, I still reminisce about the Palouse people, culture, and landscape. Furthermore, in the 20 years that I have lived in Chicago, I have grown attached to this magnificent city's green spaces, notably Millennium Park, located at the north end of iconic Grant Park. Urban planners are increasingly engaging in the process of *placemaking*, "a people-centered approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces" (http://www.placemakingchicago.com/about/). This approach involves considering, listening to, and asking questions of the people who live, work, and play in a particular space, to understand their needs and aspirations. Placemaking fosters the creation of vital public destinations—the kind of places where people feel a strong stake in their communities and commitment

doi:10.1017/S146604661400012X

to making things better improvement, including sound management of the natural resource base and the protection of ecosystem services. Placemaking informs the development and implementation of land use policy. So, what meanings and values do you attach to the places in your memory? The issue of how the meanings we ascribe to certain places and how these meanings inform the development of natural resource policy and land management decisions is the subject of the case study by **Diane Besser and her coauthors**, who discuss how—in order to inform natural resource policy and land management decisions—*landscape values mapping* (LVM) can be used to collect data about the meanings we attach to places and the activities associated with those places. LVM provides geographically referenced data on areas of high-density values or associated with different types of values. The authors discuss the issues and challenges that commonly occur in LVM, including the selection of proper spatial scale for collecting data, the creation of a base map, development of data collection strategies, the use of ascribed versus assigned values, and the pros and cons of different mapping formats. Describing the lessons learned in using LVM in the US Forest Service Olympic Peninsula Human Ecology Mapping Project, Besser and colleagues note that understanding the challenges in LVM will assist policy makers, land managers, and researchers in designing a LVM project that effectively balances project goals, time and budgetary constraints, and personnel resources in a way that ensures the most robust data and inclusive public participation.

With the growing concern over the impacts of climate change on the future supply and availability of water, as well the increased jockeying and associated disputes among states for scarce water supplies, how do compacts ultimately influence intrastate water management policies? **Megan DeMasters**, a doctoral student at Colorado State University, addresses this issue in her case study. Focusing on the question of how effectively Colorado implements compliance with interstate compacts, Ms. DeMasters applies an implementation model to examine how Colorado's Water Division 2 (the Arkansas River basin) ensures compliance by water users party to the Arkansas River Compact. Her work has broad application for academics and practitioners interested and invested in the development of water management policies. Her findings suggest that interstate compact compliance is contingent upon the effective implementation of rules curtailing local water use, including the ability of local water resource agencies to communicate effectively with water users and other entities involved in the maintenance of compact compliance.

In closing, I am grateful to the many NAEP members and others who choose to submit manuscripts for publication in *ENP*, particularly since there are many other venues for publishing their work, including myriad online publications. As always, the editorial office appreciates comments and suggestions regarding improving the content quality of *ENP*.

James Montgomery, Dan Carroll

https://doi.org/10.1017/S146604661400012X Published online by Cambridge University Press