

Public Lecture

Collaborative Governance and Global Warming: Can We Change More than the Climate?

Dr. Kirk Emerson

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4:00-5:00 pm, Thursday, February 12, 2009

408 Baker Laboratory
SUNY-ESF, Syracuse

Climate change poses many challenges, not the least of which is how we prompt or force significant social and economic change within a western democracy. In this talk, I argue that in order to motivate change and manage social conflict we will need to do a better job of engaging people in making these important policy choices. This is particularly true for how we manage natural resources as they adapt (or don't) to changing climatic conditions. Collaborative governance offers opportunities for such engagement through public deliberation, improved coordination among public and private institutions, and constructive conflict resolution. We can ramp up our collaborative capacity to deal with the imperatives of climate change mitigation and adaptation. But we will also need to prepare for hard choices in the absence of certainty and consensus. That will take public leadership, new institutional arrangements, and stronger accountability structures. Dealing effectively with climate change will depend in part on how we manage the needed reassertion of state power with the public expectations for power sharing.

Kirk Emerson recently completed ten years as the Director of the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution of the Morris K. Udall Foundation. At the U.S. Institute, Kirk worked on a range of environmental and natural resource conflicts around the country as well as national policy issues concerning NEPA and public lands management. She is currently a visiting professor at SUNY-ESF, Syracuse University, and the University of Arizona and is focusing on the role of collaborative governance in climate change adaptation. Kirk received her B.A. in Psychology from Princeton University, a Masters in City Planning from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a Ph.D. in Political Science and Public Policy from Indiana University.

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