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Global Environmental Politics

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Abstract
Global Environmental Politics is about the politics of the environment on a global scale. Global environmental politics, can be interpreted as the politics which are practiced in different places, to protect the environment. Environmental problems are global beause the responsible activity, the impacts of that activity, or the concern about the solutions of those impacts do not all exist within one country's borders. Shared resources, like shared rivers and lakes, will become international issues relatively rapidly if the victims of those activities find domestic routes. Activities within a country's borders that have impacts on a global commons will become international. Ozone depletion and Climate change are caused primarily by activities occurring within countries borders whose impacts affect the global atmospheric commons. and concern grew in various countries. The environment in global environmental politics is about the human dimensions of the natural environment. The human causes of environmental change, pollution and resources use, and the human approaches to solving or trying to solve or preventing environmental problems and resource scarcities. The politics in global environmental politics is about international cooperation related to the environment. This might include addressing transboundary, regional and global problems through international conferences of diplomats, negotiating environmental accord or treaties. Global environmental politics is about how government policies contribute to environmental problems and about environmental policies, regulations and their environmental effects. Nation States cannot solve their environmental problems through unilateral action and domestic policy alone. There are four major issues of global environmental politics. First, Ecological consequences of the global political economy on issues ranging from global trade and finance to environmental injustice. Second, The implications for global environmental governance of the thickening layers of government policies, treaties, and international organizations. Third, there has been an analysis of the importance of corporate, nongovernmental, and market-based governance for environmental management. Fourth, there has been a growing focus on the problem of climate change. This paper traces the history and emergence of global environmental cooperation. We examine the actors, institutions, debates, historic moments, and cross-cutting issues that shape global environmental politics. This Paper analyses, why these problems emerge on the global agenda, why states do or do not address them, what affects the responses states adopt to each, and a variety of other crucial questions. This paper is intended to focuse basic understanding of environmental changes and the underlying politics that shape and to provide readers with a foundation of knowledge that can help them to promote new, more environmentally sustainable relationships between humankind and the natural world.

Keywords: ecology, degradation, environmental injustice, natural resources, scarcity, biodiversity, green politics, climate refugee, climate change, sustainable development, desertification, ozone depletion, nuclear radiation, environmental cooperation

Introduction

Global Environmental Politics is all about activities, policies, actions, behaviors that affect the environment, whether negatively through pollution or harm to natural resources or positively by reducing or preventing pollution, or using resources sustainably.

The practice of global environmental politics includes those activities of governments that relate to the environment in some way. This might involve the work of environmental ministries, the environment-related roles and activities of political executives and legislatures, notably the environmental policies, laws and regulations they deliberate, formulate and implement. Global Environmental Politics is also about the activities of all those actors trying to influence and shape government policies related to the environment, and the responses of those and other actors to environmental regulation. Thus the global environmental politics within countries includes the activities of special interests, notably corporations and, in many places, environmental advocacy groups, and the processes where by those interests attempt to shape government policies related to the environment.

The natural environment is in decline globally. Environmental indicators are growing worse. For example, water and air pollution are now so poor in some developing countries, such as China and India, that hundreds of millions of people are forced to drink severely tainted water and breathe in toxic air. Acid rain which has been reduced in North America and Western Europe in recent decades, is on the increase in East Asia and other developing regions, putting ecosystems and agriculture at great risk. Asian brown cloud of smog is so vast that it spreads across the Pacific to the America. Marine environments are degraded. Coral reefs shrinking and ocean dead zones now extending along the coastlines of all continents. Wildlife around the world is under great threat, with declines and extinctions of species on the rise. These problems are exacerbated by climate change, which is manifested in rising global temperatures, very serious threats to agricultural productivity from droughts and floods, more severe weather events, new threats to species unable to adapt to

environmental changes and pollution. Declines in marine ecosystems due to warming waters and ocean acidification, and immeasurable dangers posed by sea level rise, particularly for poor low-lying regions, countries and habitats. These are but a few examples of the environmental challenges that are increasing around the world.

The role that politics plays in these challenges, whether they play out within or among countries, can need to understand. The continuing decline of the global environment can largely be put down to the failure of governments and other actors to respond in time. When we do see successes in preventing or responding to adverse environmental changes and pollution, for example in cleaner local environments in many developed countries and a handful of international successes, such as agreements among countries to curb emissions of pollutants that destroy Earth's protective stratospheric ozone layer, they can often be put down to the willingness of governments and other political actors, including nongovernmental organizations and occasionally businesses, to negotiate and implement policies that prioritize environmental protection over short-term economic gain. Understanding and promoting these kinds of successes is crucially important, and in many cases vital, to the future of all societies and to natural ecosystems.

The roots of environmental deterioration are initiated by the activities of industrialised countries. They produce the largest proportions of the worlds current emissions of pollutants and hazardous waste. Recently the contribution of rapidly industrialising countries such as China and India to global pollution has also drawn attention. To correct the environmental problems that follow industrialisation, it is often argued that economically advanced countries should bear the main responsibility given their financial capacity and technological prowe ss to lead the combat against environmental decay. Environmental deterioration can be tackled at various levels. While local level action is important, global coordination is essential to achieve goals to prevent such problems as climate change, global warming and depletion of the ozone layer that have an impact on everyone on the planet. Management of the global commons also has important implications for the preservation of resources for humanity. Other important issues include protection of endangered species and maintenance of biodiversity. Resolving environmental issues requires agreements on norms, and it is essential to build consensus on the nature of global action. The implementation of environmental policies requires the participation of diverse actors, ranging from non governmental organisations and national government to international organisations.

UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm (1972) was the first initiative to put the environment on the global political agenda. The Stockholm Conference symbolically marked the coming age of the environment as a major global issue. Its significance can be found in lending legitimacy to environmental issues in international politics with an emphasis on the links between the environment and development. More specifically, the Conference adopted the first global action plan for the environment. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was created by the UN General Assembly as an instrument to coordinate the international response to the new agenda and build environmental awareness and stewardship. Since the first global environmental conference was held in 1972, the nature of international cooperation has dramatically changed. Along with the creation of new international institutions, multilateral treaties have been signed in areas ranging from reduction in global warming to the preservation of endangered species.

One of the other significant achievements at the conference was the establishment of international norms such as the recognition of state responsibilities for pollution. Article 21 of the Stockholm Declaration stresses the responsibility of sovereign states to ensure that activities within their own jurisdiction or control, do not cause damage to the environment of other states or areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. The next article calls upon the states to cooperate in the further development of international law regarding liability and compensation for the victims of transboundary pollution.

The urgency of problems with development and the environment prompted the so called the Earth Summit, officially known as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3-14 June 1992.This was 20 years after the first worldwide UN conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm. The highly publicised conference brought a wide range of people. Powerful political leaders were joined by some 10,000 representatives of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and scientific and business communities. They discussed a comprehensive action plan extending into the 21st century and provided a blueprint for integrating environmental protection with economic development.

The gathering produced global treaties on climate protection and on biodiversity as well as a set of proposed guidelines for forest management. In addition, it adopted the Rio Declaration that set principles for sustainable development. As a nonbinding action plan for the Declaration, Agenda 21 attempts to reconcile conservation and economic growth. It identifies and elaborates the social and economic dimensions of environmental concerns while mentioning financial mechanisms, technology transfer and other means of implementation.

Recognising the global nature of environmental problems that face humanity, the central agreement of the Earth Summit stresses that sustainable development is not an option but a requirement increasingly imposed by the limits of nature. It includes measures and incentives to reduce the environmental impact of industrialised nations, revitalise development in the Third World, eliminate poverty worldwide and stabilise the level of the human population. To facilitate the implementation of these goals, the Commission on Sustainable Development was created. In response to the Third World demand for financial aid, Western industrialised countries agreed to establish the Global Environmental Facility.

Environmental problems must be resolved internationally because of their inter connectedness across borders. International treaties and institutional arrangements are made to monitor problems, assess the effectiveness of agreements and facilitate policy coordination. The treaties are binding only on the signatories. To be effective, more importantly, multilateral agreements have to be implemented by the signatory governments. Due to a lack of enforcement mechanisms, the implementation by national governments relies heavily on public pressure and monitoring activities of both international organisations and nongovernmental organisations. Some types of

environmental issues have received much more scrutiny from international policy makers than other issues have. In particular, serious international efforts were made for establishing regulations for the protection of the atmosphere, management of the Antarctica and the sea, the preservation of biological diversity and the natural habitat and the control of air pollution. Depending on the degree of opposition from vested interests and the level of public interest, reaching international agreements to take action in some areas has been easier than others.

In the areas of protection of the ozone layer, international initiatives resulted in the March 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer that was signed by twenty countries. Though no enforcement rules were mentioned in the convention, the one agreement spells out the obligation of states to control activities that may adversely affect the ozone layer. In addition, participating states pledged cooperation in research and monitoring, information sharing on chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) production, emissions and continued efforts to pass Control Protocols. The Vienna Convention also provided fact finding and non dispute settlement systems to handle the problem of compliance.

The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Laycompulsoryer signed by twenty seven countries in September 1987 proposes plans for a gradual phase out of trade of ozone depleting chemicals with consumption control measures and reduction targets. In this commitment, production and consumption of CFCs would be reduced by 20 percent in 1994 and 50 percent by 1999 with the use of 1986 as a base year. The provisions include collecting data on production and consumption of CFCs, sharing technical information and promoting technical assistance to help Third World countries comply with the protocol. In concluding the Montreal Protocol, compromised solutions were negotiated between the United Sates and European Community, which are the major consumers and producers of CFCs. However, the refusal of developing countries, especially China and India, to sign the Protocol remains a serious concern.

The targets and timetables of the Montreal Protocol set earlier were amended in London, June 1990. The revision of control measures was affected by new scientific data that found the previously agreed measures inadequate in reducing damage to the ozone layer. In the negotiation on Protocol amendments, participating states accepted the mandate of phasing out all major ozone depleting substances by the year 2000, with interim reductions of 85 percent in 1997, and 50 percent in 1995. The financial and technology transfer provisions specify that a fund would be created to pay the costs for developing countries to meet their control obligations. Sanctions are supposed to be employed against non compliance in addition to trade restrictions with non-signatory parties on controlled substances and their products.

Compared with the efforts to protect the ozone layer, it has been difficult to produce agreements to specify a target and timetable for controlling emissions of green house gases given the vested interests of powerful corporate groups such as industries. Since greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of fossil fuels have been much higher in the North than in the South, industrialised countries have been called to take the major responsibility. In recent years, however, dramatic increases in carbon dioxide production in rapidly industrialising countries have become a serious problem especially since those countries refuse to take any responsible actions. Though China, India and Brazil account for more than 20 percent of global emissions, they have opposed tough regulations. Whereas some countries obstructed key international efforts to establish strong rules and regulations such as mandated reductions of CO2, the European Community assumed a lead role in the negotiations by virtue of its commitment to the reduction of joint carbon dioxide to 1990 levels by the year 2000. Strong support for negotiation on reduction in the emissions of green house gases has also been demonstrated by small island states that are concerned about rising sea levels.

Scientific consensus following a series of conferences on the atmosphere and general climate in the 1980s was pivotal to the conclusion of the 1992 Framework Convention on Climate Change signed by 154 countries at the Rio Environmental Summit. Its objective, as is stated in Article (2) of the convention document, is the stabilisation of atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. It promotes international cooperation in greenhouse science and coordination of various domestic policies and actions on reduction in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions. The Convention admits that given their dominant level of emission and wealth, industrialised countries are primarily responsible for addressing climate change at present and have been called upon to take responsibility for climate change prevention and mitigation policies. The provision of financial resources and transfer of technology were promised to meet the full costs incurred from the implementation of the agreement by developing countries. Most industrialised countries broadly pledged to cut down their greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000.

While the framework convention mentions the restoration of greenhouse gas emissions to earlier levels, the convention is mostly comprised of pledges to control green house gases. Whereas an emphasis was put on the need for governments to submit reports on their relevant policies and projections and meet regularly to evaluate progress for future amendments, no legally binding commitment was made to hold emissions to a specific level by a certain date. The framework convention's action requirements for all parties specified in Article (4) were limited to preparing contingency plans in reducing the level of climate change as well as developing national inventories of anthropogenic emissions.

In recognition that the commitments made by industrialised countries would not be sufficient to achieve the convention's goals, further negotiations were held for reducing greenhouse gas emissions beyond the year 2000. Eventually legally binding targets and time tables were set up by the Kyoto Protocol adopted at the Third Climate Conference held in December 1997. It produced an agreement on an aggregate 5.2 percent global cut in emissions from 1990 levels of six greenhouse gases in the period 2008 - 2012. However, the Protocol will not come into force until 55 states, with a combined emission aggregate of 55 percent of 1990 levels, ratify it. Overall, the negotiations on climate change have been dominated more by political and economic interests than environmental imperatives. This was clearly revealed by the U.S. government's consistent

opposition to any legally binding measures for greenhouse gas reduction.

Balance between the species, preserved over the last seventy five million years, has been seriously threatened by the unprecedented decimation of prime habitat in much of the tropical forests and wetlands. Special protect ion for the habitats of rare or endangered species, declared in the 1982 UN World Charter for Nature, has drawn growing international attention. The Biodiversity Convention signed by 157 states at the end of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in June 1992 takes a comprehensive approach to conservation efforts through the protection of not only the animal and plant species but also the maintenance of the habitat where they live. Its focus is on the sustainable use of biological diversity with the development of national strategies and a fair sharing of the benefits coming from the utilisation of genetic resources.

Other conventions shed light on the preservation of limited categories of wildlife with the identification of specific methods such as trade sanctions. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) controls, reduces or prohibits international trade of endangered animals and plant species and their products. In order to prevent the commercial overexploitation, the convention that became effective in July 1975 completely banned commercial trade of those species whose survival is threatened by extinction in the absence of strict regulations. It also created an elaborate series of trade permits within each category of endangered species and between importing and exporting countries. Lacking a provision for sanctions in the case of noncompliance, the convention's weakness lies in ineffective or rare enforcement of restrictions.

The rapid decline in the number of Elephants, Blue Whales, Panda Bears and other large animals represents human's overexploitation of nature. International concerns were raised by the dramatic decline of African elephant populations in the 1980s from 1.3 million in 1979 to 625,000 in 1989. Elephants were killed for their tusks to be processed in Hong Kong and China. More than 80 percent of ivory products were imported by Japan. Measures to ban trade in ivory were enacted under heavy pressure from NGOs, the U.S. and the European Community at the 1989 CITES conference. The ban reduced incentives for poaching and smuggling African elephants with a resultant plunge in world raw ivory prices. While CITES focuses on preventing the extinction of territorial wildlife, concerns with birds and other migratory species led to such international treaties as the 1979 Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, which was concluded in Bonn. The treaty recognises wild animal s as an irreplaceable part of the Earth's natural system. The Bonn Convention attempts to prevent the killing of migratory species, in general, with the removal of obstacles to their migration. States are obliged to maintain wetlands and other habitats for those migratory species. Despite its potential capacity to serve as a powerful tool for conserving migratory wildlife, only about 40 countries have acceded to the agreement due to its enforcement costs and requirements.

The International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling followed a long history of overexploitation of whales that threatened their extinction. The International Whaling Commission created by the 1946 Convention helped design quotas and minimum sizes for commercially caught whales along with the prohibition of certain species near extinction. These regulations, however, were not effective until a moratorium on all commercial whaling began to be implemented in 1986. In 1994, the pressure from antiwhaling groups led to the creation of a whale sanctuary in the Southern Ocean and Antarctica in addition to upholding the moratorium in 1993. These measures were resisted mostly by Norway, Japan and Iceland who wanted to protect their minor economic interests. These countries began so called scientific whaling after the international convention stopped commercial whaling activities. In particular, Norway openly defied the ban by killing 226 mink whales in 1993 to satisfy whaling interest groups.

In recent decades, there has been a growing recognition that population policy has to be integrated with environmental concerns. In response to overpopulation in the South, an international population programme has evolved since the mid pol1960s. In 1965, national icies to reduce fertility were adopted by only five developing countries. Now international population institutions such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA) conduct demographic analysis and research. They provide assistance to developing countries for all phases of their programmes in policy development and training as well as offering contraceptives.

The September 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo adopted the Programme of Action whose sixteen chapters are aimed at stabilising the human population by the year 2020. The gathering discussed inputs for family planning and related social welfare programmes. Improved reproductive health care as well as the issues of migration, AIDS and teenage sexuality became part of the main strategies to control global population growth. As well illustrated at the Cairo conference, obstacles to coordinated international actions are rooted in political and cultural fragmentation. In order to gain support for reproductive health and women's empowerment themes, women's groups actively lobbied at the three preparatory meetings and at the conference. Whereas the U.S., Germany and Japan pledged substantial increases in their funding for family planning and other population control measures, opposition to abortion and the use of contraceptives was made by the Vatican and conservative Muslim countries.

The global commons as biological or physical systems lie largely or wholly outside national jurisdictions, serving the welfare of humanity. The water of the oceans flows across many boundaries, and carries fish and other natural resources or pollutants with it. The use of satellites in orbit has significant economic potential, and it must be able to move without the restrictions of national airspace. The indivisible nature of the global commons along with the expansion of human activities has brought about the need for their management. The traditional norms of open access and free use have recently been challenged by the efforts of some countries to unilaterally control proportions of the global commons. The overlapping boundaries of oil drilling sites are sources of international conflict. Another source of tension is related to the abuse of the global commons by some states. Technological changes can easily result in the depletion of resources in the global commons. Therefore, traditional ways of using the global commons acknowledged by norms of free use and unlimited access are incompatible with the resource scarcities caused by overexploitation.

Technological development also brings about issues related to the equitable distribu human resources. Given their advanced technologies for mining the deeption of sea nodules, some countries have the advantage of exploiting natural gas and oil found in the continental shelves.

The allocation of resources takes place either on the basis of unilateral appropriations or an agreed method of determining rights of access and use. When resources are likely to be scarce due to a high international demand and cannot be divided among countries, the division of the global resources into national resource zones becomes a contentious issue. The regulation on the use of resources can be made through a shared management system. In the areas of fisheries, rules on the types of nets were adopted by international commissions for preserving certain sizes and types of fisheries. In addition, international fishery commissions assigned quotas specifying the amount of fish which each country can catch every year to put the combined harvest within the limits of the renewability of resources. Regulations have to be implemented with the support of monitoring and compliance mechanisms.

The international community needs to have more independent sources of information and analysis of the growing uses of global commons and their economic and political implications. The conservation and allocation of ocean and outer space resources would be assisted by international efforts that focus on improving capabilities for gathering and assessing information about the global commons. Scientific study is needed to determine which activities are likely to affect the conditions of resources and the surrounding environment. Expansion of international consultative processes needs to involve those who use and those who are affected by others activities in the oceans and outer space. A material basis for new institutional links among communities has been shaped by the interests and actions in the global commons. Conflicting interests can be clarified to reduce the prospects for increasing international conflict particularly between have and have not countries. Greater international consultation has been demanded by less developed countries. Questions also arise when the fundamental tenets of international ocean laws are applied to polluting activities. Discharging pollutants that contaminate fish to the point that they are unfit for human consumption would be an example of the exploitative use of the oceans. There is a growing understanding that states do not have the right to use the oceans as a sink for disposing of waste under the same navigation esteem of the seas doctrine that permits the use the seas for International policy does not recognise the right of a country to pollute areas beyond its boundaries.

The Geneva Convention on the High Seas of 1958 calls upon states to prevent pollution of the ocean, in particular, with the discharge of oil from ships or pipelines and the dumping of radioactive wastes or other harmful agents. In the 1972 London Convention on ocean dumping, it was agreed that certain highly toxic types of waste should not be disposed of in the oceans. Special permits for dumping are required for a list of other chemicals. The Law of the Sea Treaty in 1982 set forth an obligation to prevent, reduce and control marine pollution. States have responsibility for preventing polluting activities, and violators will be fined. Several international treaties now also ban such uses of the commons as testing and locating nuclear weapons in the commons. The Limited Test Ban Treaty (1963) prohibits testing nuclear weapons in the waters of oceans, the atmosphere ans outer space.

Such issues as the difficulty of dividing the global commons, the volatility of the technologies affecting the use of the global commons, and the growing conflicts over rights to the resources of the ocean and outer space require substantial international management. Effective international management of the global commons relies on the networks of legal and political accountability that is consistent with the interdependencies of user and resource. Efforts are needed to limit extensions of exclusive national authority in the global commons before the build up of the needed international accountability networks. Those who change the conditions of the global commons through pollutant materials should be responsible for their actions to the international community. The international community has the right to determine what pollutants may be introduced into the oceans or any other non-national area that is owned by all, such as outer space. This principle is to be based on UN resolutions on the ocean and outer space that the global commons are ‘the common heritage of mankind. The international community should have the authority to define and apply the accountability obligations, which ar the common resources.

The most serious problems with implementing international environmental agreements are related to the lack of an enforcement mechanism. Preventing the harmful accumulation of pollutants is an international objective that is difficult to argue against, despite a relative degree of urgency in priority. There are different interests between polluters and victims of the pollution. Many states simply refrain from becoming parties to the treaties designed to limit or reduce the negative human effects on the environment, and therefore states are not legally obliged to uphold them. Leaving the enforcement of environmental standards to the national governments of the polluters has not proved to be a satisfactory arrangement. In most cases, the principle tools of environmental implementation are persuasion and embarrassment by the public exposure non of compliance. Even the states committed to making good faith effort s to support international environmental regulations find it difficult, if not impossible, to fulfil their obligation.

There are conflicting perspectives on international pollution policy between the developed and less developed countries. The conflicts between rich and poor countries greatly hamper the adoption of global strategies. For instance, at the Stockholm conference in 1972, numerous Third World states argued that the industrialised countries are primarily responsible for the world's pollution problems. They insisted that it is unfair for less developed countries to be prevented from polluting the environment as they attempt to undergo rapid industrial growth themselves. The Third World continues to resist efforts to impose strict international pollution standards that would be expensive for them to implement. They consider it a luxury in view of the more pressing economic and social needs of their societies.

Obviously developed and developing countries face different sets of concerns and problems. There are also wide differences regarding priorities and strategies for protecting the environment. Many communities in developing countries struggle to mitigate the impact of soil erosion, desertification and rapid urbanisation. Environmental problems of developing countries arise from and contribute

to poverty. Based on the recognition that some of these problems were created by industrialised countries, in recent years, there has been a growing call for financial contributions from the industrial countries to overcoming environmental degradation of the South. Pollution control and species protection are important concerns for the public in the industrialised world. On the other hand, as is well reflected in the U.S. government positions in a series of negotiations on reduction in green house effects, there have been concerted efforts to oppose any serious measures that can hurt domestic economic interest groups.

Thus we can say that environmental problems are taking on a trans-national and global dimensions. At the global stage, there is no single centralized authority to manage and regulate the environmental issues. Instead, global environmental governance is organized through a patchwork of international treaties, multilateral institutions, non-governmental organizations, and multinational corporations. Global environmental problems present many unique challenges that require a variety of theoretical perspectives and analytical tools to study them. They frequently involve substantial scientific complexity and uncertainty, which has produced a wide-ranging scholarship on the relationships between science and policy. The very long timeframes of both the consequences of environmental problems as well as the efforts to address them create a number of governance challenges. While addressing environmental problems may involve decades of action, politicians and the citizens they serve in democratic systems tend to think in terms of election cycles involving two to six years. In addition, because environmental problems typically do not respect borders, they pose challenges for international cooperation, which has produced a growing literature on environmental negotiation and global environmental governance. Global environmental problems are a shared responsibility by the whole of humanity. These problems will be solved only by a cooperative, comprehensive global strategy. Whereas collective action is made easier by international institution building, consensus has yet to emerge on how to stop this disturbing trend for the entire planet beyond this generation. Global dialogue between different societies, beyond policy makers and scientists, would be able to help narrow the gap in our environmental thinking.

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