

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM REVIEW, 2005–2010

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November 2010

**ROCKEFELLER BROTHERS FUND  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM  
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**Executive Summary**

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund's (RBF) Sustainable Development program advances global stewardship that is ecologically based, economically sound, socially just, culturally appropriate, and consistent with intergenerational equity. The RBF first began grantmaking on climate change in 1984 and has consistently maintained an interest in climate change through this period. Developments in politics, science, philanthropy, and the climate movement have provided a dynamic backdrop for the Fund's work to combat climate change over the past 25-plus years. The Sustainable Development program's funding strategies have both reflected and responded to these elements and, in several instances, had a role in shaping them.

The most recent phase of the RBF's work on climate change began in 2005, with the board's endorsement of the proposal to shift the bulk of the Fund's Sustainable Development resources toward combating climate change. During this period (2005–2010), overall Sustainable Development spending has totaled \$43.6 million. Of that total, \$38.5 million has been in support of the RBF's overarching goal of combating global warming with two targets in mind: to secure a meaningful global treaty to limit climate change to scientifically determine safe levels; and to secure effective U.S. federal policy on climate change. To achieve both goals, staff have largely focused their efforts on securing U.S. federal policy on climate change, recognizing that U.S. action is critical to any global agreement.

While many of the Sustainable Development program's strategies have proved successful in meeting their short-term objectives over the past several years, unfortunately, the goals of securing policy action at the U.S. federal level and at the international level have not been achieved. Political prognosticators are gloomy about near-term prospects of resurrecting policy action in either venue.

Against this backdrop, there is also good news: the U.S. House of Representatives passed a climate change bill in the spring of 2009; concern about climate change has energized a wide array of communities outside of the environmental movement to demand action; the economic case for acting is much stronger than it was in 2005 and is being made largely by the business community; a broad spectrum of local, state, and provincial leaders have taken it upon themselves to act and not wait for national and international decision makers; the funding base for all this activity has expanded dramatically; there is now a global consensus within the U.N. negotiation process that the world cannot allow global temperatures to rise more than two degrees centigrade; and developing countries at the U.N. meeting in Copenhagen in 2009 spoke loudly and urgently demanding global action, with some countries committing to take action themselves.

Over the past several years, the RBF has played a leadership role in the field of climate philanthropy. In addition to its grantmaking, hallmarks of the Fund's work on climate change include convening strategic planning meetings at The Pocantico Center, building new organizations and fields, enhancing philanthropic collaboration, and promoting alignment among RBF programs.

Though there is a lot the RBF can be proud of, the fact remains that we are very far from where we want to be—or where we thought we would be—at the end of 2010.

The paper examines lessons learned from the last several years to help guide the next phase of the Sustainable Development program's work, including the need for:

- better communications on climate change science and its impacts;
- translation of state and local lessons to federal policymakers;
- less groupthink around policy options;
- more encouragement for the White House to lead;
- continued work to build the business and national security case for climate action;
- "show and tell" examples that demonstrate working clean economies; and
- diversification and augmentation of the movement for climate solutions.

Recognizing that climate change remains an existential challenge for the planet, staff are increasingly convinced that it is time to move from a 20-year era principally defined by *advocacy* for energy and climate policy solutions toward a period where on-the-ground implementation will be a critical measure of success and the driver for policy change.

## **Introduction**

While many of the strategies employed by the Sustainable Development program have proved successful in meeting their short-term objectives over the past several years, unfortunately, our goal of securing policy action at the U.S. federal and international levels has not been achieved. President Obama's arrival in the White House ushered in a moment of great possibility and hope, but that promise has not been realized. While the White House has led in some important ways, both global and federal policy action are now stalled, and political prognosticators are gloomy about near-term prospects of resurrecting policy action in either venue.

Against this backdrop, there is also good news:

- The U.S. House of Representatives passed a climate change bill in the spring of 2009;
- Concern about climate change has energized a wide array of communities outside of the environmental movement to demand action and a multitude of new institutions are also now working for national policy;
- The economic case for acting is much stronger than it was in 2005 and is being made largely by the business community;
- A broad spectrum of local, state, and provincial leaders have taken it upon themselves to act and not wait for national and international decision makers;
- The funding base for all this activity has expanded dramatically;
- There is now a global consensus within the U.N. negotiation process that the world cannot allow global temperatures to rise more than two degrees centigrade; and
- Developing countries at Copenhagen spoke loudly and urgently demanding global action; some of these nations have agreed to take action unilaterally despite global inaction.

While grantees have clearly made progress on climate change on a number of fronts, the Fund is deeply discouraged by the global and federal policy failures of the past two years.

The volume and pace of positive developments in the field would, under most circumstances, be judged a significant success. Unfortunately, these are not normal circumstances. The planet is on the brink of

crossing geophysical boundaries of no return. We cannot afford to wait another decade to begin the necessary work of dramatically bending down the curve of greenhouse gas emissions.

The question now before us is an existential one: can the human species find a way to move quickly enough? In addition, the related question for the RBF is: how can we best contribute to that urgent challenge?

### **History of the Sustainable Development Program's Work on Climate**

The RBF began grantmaking on climate change in 1984 and has consistently maintained an interest in climate change through this entire period. The RBF's work on climate change can be thought of in four phases, which we briefly describe here.

#### ***The first phase, stretching from 1984 to 1992, focused on basic research on science and policy.***

Two strategies underpinned this phase of grantmaking: 1) distilling consensus on climate science and, 2) moving the discussion of climate change from the scientific community into the policy arena. Much of this early work involved convening experts. The RBF organized and funded some of the earliest meetings of advocates addressing climate change. It was also during this period that the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was created in 1988 and formal international negotiations on a climate treaty began in 1991; these culminated in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992 with a U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that the first President Bush and the U.S. Congress ratified. A review of correspondence between then-RBF president Bill Dietel and program staff clearly indicates that the Rio negotiation and treaty, and the creation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, were specific aspirations of the RBF program at the time. Total RBF funding committed during this eight-year period was under \$1,000,000. A handful of other foundations made modest grants for these purposes during this period.

***Phase two began after Rio and ran through December 1997 when the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement linked to the UNFCCC, was adopted,*** committing industrialized countries to reduce emissions by an average reduction of 5.2 percent from 1990 levels by the year 2012. Global adoption of a protocol to the Rio Treaty was articulated as the global goal of the Fund's climate change grantmaking in its 1993 program paper. In 1997, the RBF supported efforts in Japan to pave the way for Japanese support for a successful outcome in Kyoto. Support from the RBF contributed to positive results in both venues. Carefully orchestrated media and communications strategies supported by the Fund at the Kyoto meeting itself played a helpful role encouraging negotiating progress that resulted in Al Gore making an unplanned trip to Kyoto during the penultimate day of the two-week negotiation to announce U.S. support for a reductions target. During 1995 to 1997, fewer than 10 U.S. foundations contributed a combined amount of less than \$4 million to support this work, of which the RBF committed \$700,000.

***A third phase began post-Kyoto in 1998.*** The nongovernmental organization (NGO) climate community in the United States and Europe was slowly growing, but resources were limited. U.S. environmental donors, including the RBF, did not see many opportunities to make a difference at the federal and international level and were more focused on forest and land conservation than they were on climate change. A number of key environmental donors chose to exit the climate field at this time. A number of new large environmental donors in the late 1990s chose to focus elsewhere. Meanwhile, the RBF's effort began to shift to the sub-federal level to work with governors and mayors on developing model climate change policy planning and implementation efforts. This work began to gain some traction. By 2002, the science had become even more overwhelming that global climate change was accelerating and reversing

gains being made in land and forest conservation. Internal discussions at the Fund began about the need to increase effort on climate change and reduce work on other areas in the portfolio. Program Director Michael Northrop spent a year in Brussels between 2002 and 2003, on a German Marshall Fund Fellowship, to identify opportunities in Europe on climate change and returned convinced that Europe, in concert with sub-federal leaders in the United States, could help build momentum within the international treaty making process on climate change.

In 2003, RBF grantmaking moved heavily to support an alliance of mayors and governors in the United States and federal leaders in the United Kingdom and Germany. Each of these jurisdictions was successfully tackling climate action with positive economic outcomes. Support for The Climate Group trumpeted the economic case of climate action globally. During this six-year phase, the RBF devoted \$10 million to climate-related work.

***The fourth and most recent phase of the RBF's work on climate change began in 2005, with the board's endorsement of the proposal to shift the bulk of the Fund's Sustainable Development resources toward combating climate change.*** During this period (2005–2010), the program has embraced five strategies all designed to support U.S. federal and international climate policy enactment. These five strategies were:

- Supporting state and local activities on climate change
- Building non-environmental constituency support for climate change action
- Laying the groundwork for coordination among organizations
- Making the economic case for climate action
- Supporting targeted efforts to advance an international agreement on climate change

Following a review in 2005, the Sustainable Development program began to phase out grantmaking related to protecting ecosystems and conserving biodiversity. In addition, the program initiated grantmaking focusing on reducing the reliance on carbon intensive fuels (See Grants & Appropriations chart on page 11).

### **Contexts and Trends that Shaped RBF Work on Climate Change**

Developments in politics, science, philanthropy, and the climate movement have provided a dynamic backdrop for the Fund's work to combat climate change over the past 25-plus years. The Sustainable Development program's funding strategies have both reflected and responded to these elements, and in several instances, had a role in shaping them.

**Politics.** When the RBF began working on climate change in the 1980s, it was an issue confined to the scientific community and to a small subset of the environmental community. From 2000–2008, climate change was virtually ignored by politicians, and was not part of the President's agenda. In June 2009, the issue of climate change received its largest political boost with the House passage of the Waxman-Markey cap-and-trade legislation. It was the first time that climate change legislation that included carbon pricing had advanced in either chamber of Congress.

Unfortunately, that legislative victory was not duplicated in the Senate, which decided in July 2010 to abandon an effort led by Senators Kerry and Lieberman to move climate change policy. The hyper-partisanship that has characterized the past year and the inherent challenge of pricing a previously “free” pollutant like carbon dioxide conspired to block any legislative progress in the Senate in 2010. The economic recession and a crowded legislative agenda competing for President Obama’s attention—especially health care reform—also contributed to slowing efforts to move on comprehensive climate and energy policy domestically. It is now clear that there is no chance for climate policy in 2010 or 2011 and many experts suggest the window for federal legislative action on climate change will be closed for several years. However, the Environmental Protection Agency is beginning to flex its newly authorized muscle to regulate carbon dioxide as an air pollutant, which could lead to closures of the most polluting coal plants, the major domestic contributor to climate change.

### CAP-AND-TRADE 101

Under a cap-and-trade system, the federal government would limit the total volume of CO<sub>2</sub> that U.S. companies can emit each year and would issue (either by selling or giving away) permits that companies would be required to have for each ton of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted. The permits would be tradable and could be bought and sold. Companies that can keep their emissions under the level mandated by Congress could sell their excess permits, and companies that struggle to meet their targets could buy the additional permits needed. This trading of permits would establish a market price for the targeted CO<sub>2</sub> reduction. The deeper the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reductions, the higher the price for a company to emit. Companies would pass along the cost of the permits in their prices, pushing up the relative price of CO<sub>2</sub>-intensive goods and services such as gasoline, electricity, and a range of industrial products.

Whether the permits to pollute are sold (“auctioned”) or given away freely to companies has large implications on who will bear the cost of a cap-and-trade program. While the cap-and-trade system will intentionally raise the price of carbon-intensive energy, it could also raise hundreds of billions of dollars *if* the permits to pollute are sold. That money could be used in countless ways: offset the higher energy costs to consumers, fund necessary climate adaptation, support energy efficiency programs, etc. However, if the permits are given away, the program will fail to raise any revenue.

Globally, climate change has surged on the agenda of world leaders. In 2005, when climate change first appeared on the U.K.-hosted G8 agenda, the meeting’s only substantive political success on the issue was that President Bush recognized “that the surface of the Earth is warmer and that an increase in greenhouse gases is contributing to the problem.” The June 2010 G8 meeting in Canada yielded this language in its communiqué: “Among environmental issues, climate change remains top of mind. As we agreed in L’Aquila, we recognize the scientific view that the increase in global temperature should not exceed two degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels. Achieving this goal requires deep cuts in global emissions. Because this global challenge can only be met by a global response, we reiterate our willingness to share with all countries the goal of achieving at least a 50 percent reduction of global emissions by 2050, recognizing that this implies that global emissions need to peak as soon as possible and decline thereafter...we want a comprehensive, ambitious, fair, effective, binding, post-2012 agreement involving all countries, and including the respective responsibilities of all major economies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.” This statement marks a significant global diplomatic shift in just five years.

Further evidence of heightened global political attention to climate change can be found in the fact that, for the first time ever, over 60 heads of state attended the recent meeting of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conference in Copenhagen in December 2011

With this increased national and global political attention has come a much more coordinated and well-funded campaign by opponents of climate action. A recent research report from Greenpeace noted that, from 2005 to 2008, ExxonMobil spent \$8.9 million and foundations supported by Koch Industries, a large family-owned industrial company, spent \$24.9 million on activities aimed at slowing political progress on climate change. Oil, gas, and coal industries increased lobbying budgets by 50 percent, spending \$44.5 million in the first three months of 2009 alone.

Of course, the political context for U.S. climate change policy is very much a part of rapidly changing domestic political shifts, including increasing polarization, the power of corporate money in politics stemming from the Supreme Court decision to allow corporations to spend limitlessly on political campaigns, a weak economic recovery, and persistently high unemployment. In addition to these domestic trends, shifting geopolitical trends have affected global climate politics as well, including an increasingly powerful set of BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) that are playing a more assertive role in global climate negotiations.

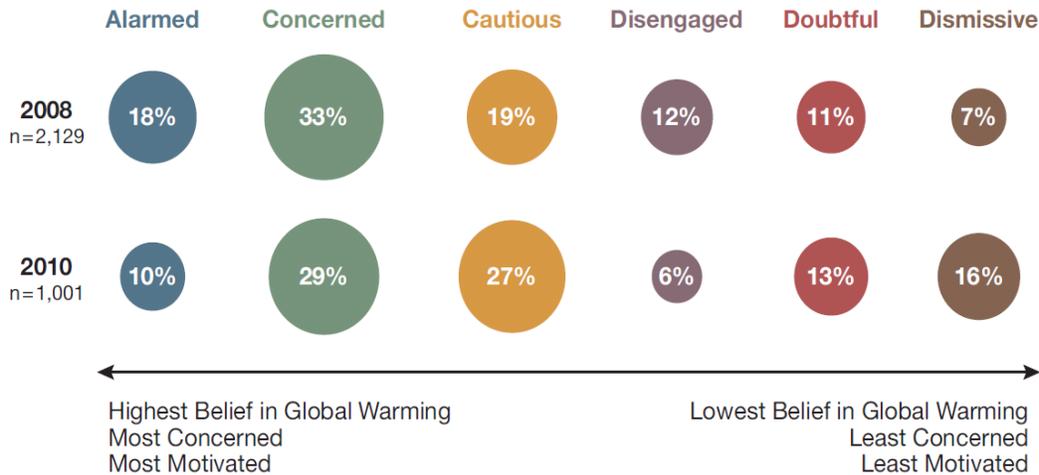
**Science.** The idea that carbon dioxide emitted from human activities, like burning fossil fuels and cutting down trees, could warm the planet is more than a century old—the Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius explained the concept in 1896. The first official report submitted to a U.S. president on the impact of atmospheric carbon dioxide was during Jimmy Carter’s presidency in 1979. Since that time, the confidence of scientists has grown and, in 2007, the IPCC stated, “global warming is unequivocal.” In that same year, the IPCC shared the Nobel Prize with Al Gore for raising awareness of the threat posed by climate change. Awareness of climate change peaked with the May 2004 release of the documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, and a flurry of news coverage and mainstream magazine covers highlighting the need for action.

Adding to the complexity and difficulty of the situation, during these past six years, the goal posts have been moving away from us. What was seen to be a sufficient atmospheric stabilization goal in 1996 by John Holdren, then at Harvard University, now President Obama’s Science Advisor, of 550 parts per million (ppm) of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, is now regarded as a nightmare scenario for the planet. Many scientists now believe we must get down to 350ppm to avoid catastrophic changes to the planet’s life support system. Using another metric, where we once thought we needed to work toward a 50 percent cut in emissions by 2050, most scientists believe we now need a nearly 100 percent reduction by then, with steep interim targets along the way.



**Figure 1:** Proportion of the U.S. adult population in the Six Americas, 2008 and 2010

*Proportion represented by area*



While public awareness of the urgency for addressing climate change spiked in 2007, a deep erosion of public trust in climate science was sparked by an unauthorized public release of e-mail messages from the computer system at the University of East Anglia in Britain in late 2009. These e-mails appeared to suggest that scientists were using tricks to hide temperature declines and attempting to discredit scientists who were skeptical of human caused climate change. While the e-mails were unflattering to the authors, six subsequent independent investigations revealed no evidence of scientific malpractice, nor anything that questioned the overwhelming scientific consensus.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the media jumped on the “Climategate” story and advocates did almost nothing to counter these attacks. A 2010 poll from Yale and George Mason universities reveals the extent of the impact of the “Climategate” controversy. As noted in Figure 1 above, the percentage of the population alarmed or concerned about climate change declined from 2008 levels, and the share of public who are doubtful about the science or dismissive grew. Despite multiple subsequent inquiries into these charges, all of which verified the urgency of the science, the impact on public confidence has been great, and it will certainly take a number of years before trust in the science will be restored.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, it seems clear that the effort to undermine the science of climate change being waged by the opponents of climate change action will continue.

<sup>1</sup> Project on Climate Science, “Scientific Foundation of Climate Science Remains Sound,” August 2010. <http://theprojectonclimatescience.org/white-paper-studies-reject-%E2%80%98climategate%E2%80%99/>

<sup>2</sup> As the body charged with assembling and collating data and projections for the international community, the IPCC knows it has to be rigorous in its methodologies and beyond reproach in its governance. Hence the UN decision earlier this year to commission a review of the IPCC from the InterAcademy Council, an umbrella body joining many of world’s science academies. The result was a decision that the IPCC needs to fundamentally reform its management structure and strengthen its procedures to handle ever larger and increasingly complex climate assessments as well as the more intense public scrutiny coming from a world grappling with how best to respond to climate change.

**Philanthropy.** Just as the political and scientific landscape for climate change has changed dramatically in the past several years, so too has the philanthropic landscape. Since 2002, global grantmaking on climate change has increased significantly. Despite the significant uptick in funding, environmental issues still receive only 5.7 percent of overall foundation grantmaking, and of that amount, climate change only receives 16 percent. In other words, even with the dramatic increase in recent years, climate change still receives less than one percent of overall philanthropic giving in the United States.

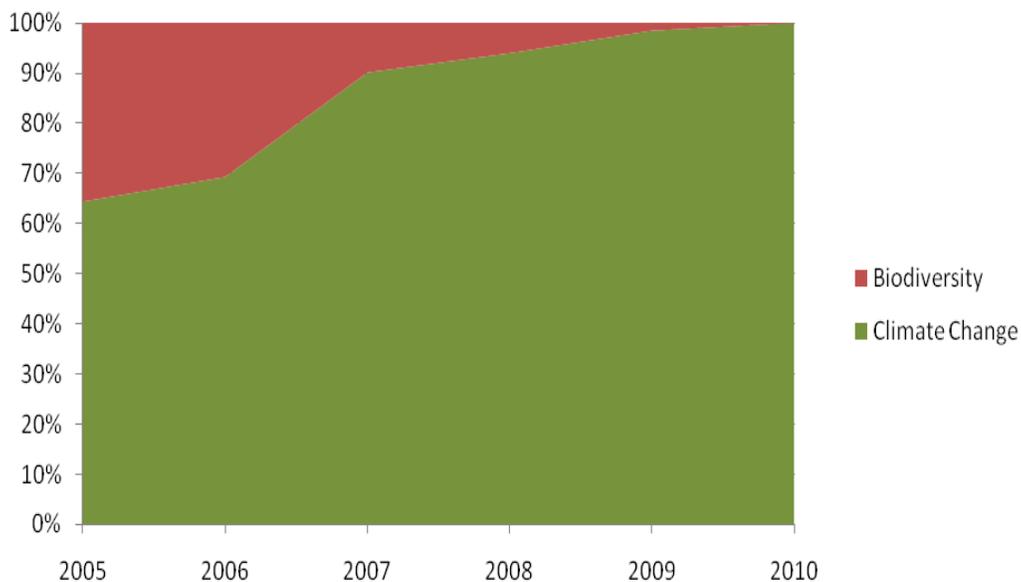
**Advocacy.** As philanthropic giving has grown over the past several years, with it have grown new organizations, new alliances, and new campaigns. Just a few short years ago, climate change was addressed by a small subset of the environmental movement. It is fair to say that the issue now has a growing movement of its own. Powerful voices from business, faith, national security, youth, labor, and agricultural groups have joined the fight for robust climate change policy.

In addition, several organizations dedicated solely to building grassroots pressure on climate change, such as the Alliance for Climate Protection, 1Sky, Energy Action Coalition, and 350.org have been formed in the past few years. In addition, many environmental organizations have prioritized climate change above all other issues.

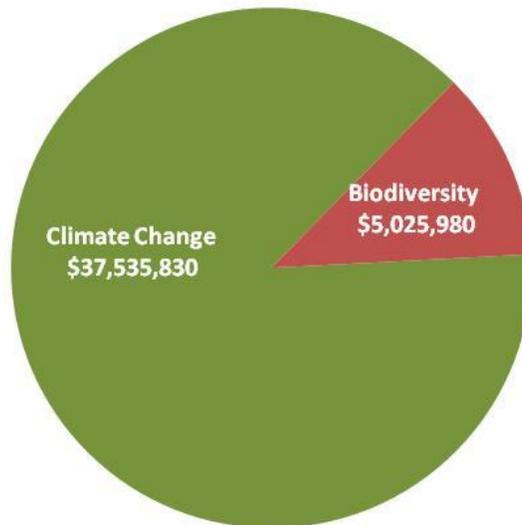
### **Sustainable Development Grantmaking, 2005–2010**

The Sustainable Development program has maintained two published goals since 2005: 1) combating global warming, and 2) protecting ecosystems and conserving biodiversity. Recognizing that all the progress being made on our goal of conserving biodiversity, including fishery and forestry management, would be undermined by unchecked climate change, the RBF made the difficult strategic decision to shift the Sustainable Development program to become largely a climate change program. This led to a dramatic shift in priorities over a five-year period—from a 60:40 balance between climate change and biodiversity in 2005 to nearly 100 percent climate change grantmaking in 2010, as demonstrated by the charts below.

**Percent of SD Program Budget by Goal**



**Sustainable Development  
Grantmaking Dollars by Program Goal  
2005-2010**



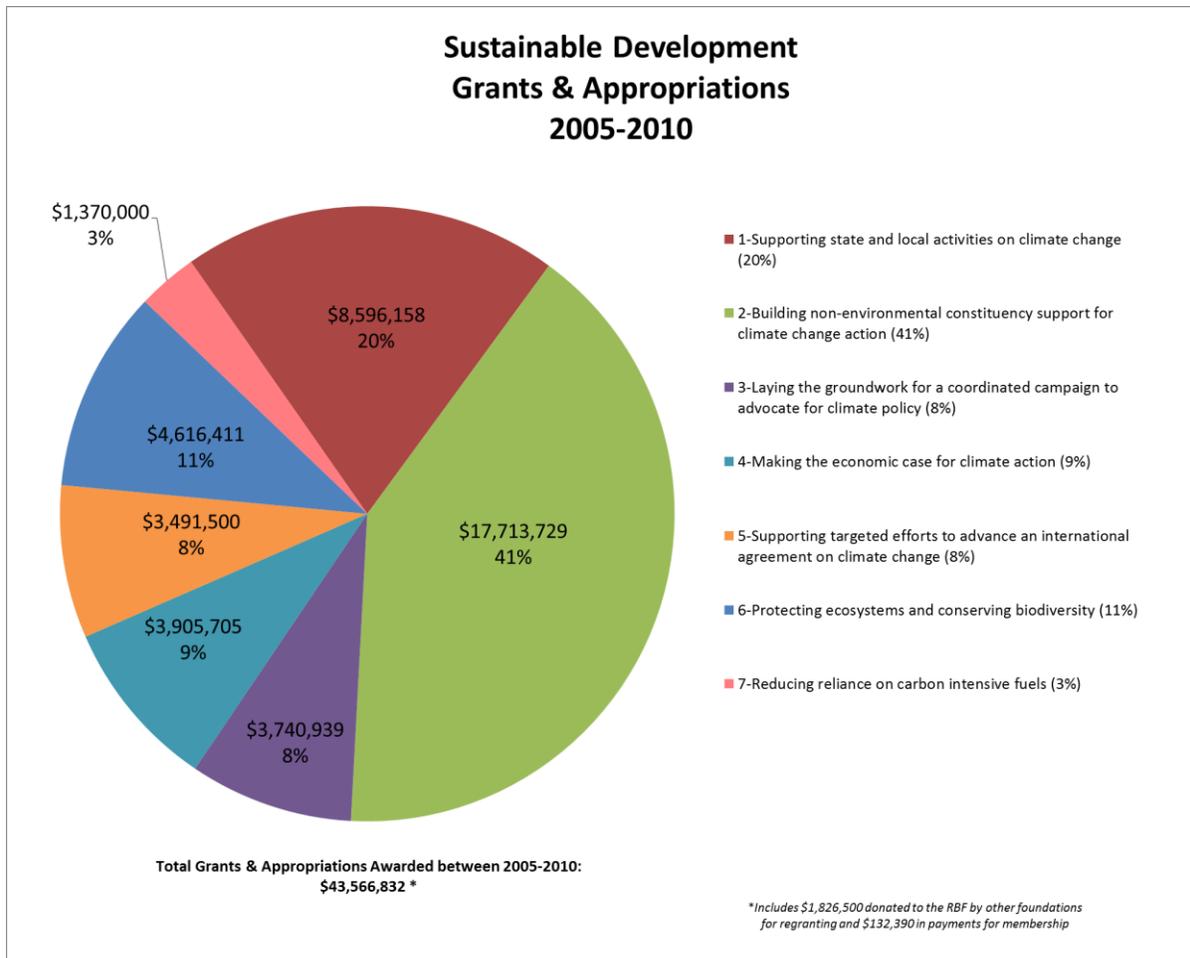
Over the past six years, the Sustainable Development program has made \$42,561,810 in grants,<sup>3</sup> \$37,535,830 to combat global warming and \$5,025,980 for biodiversity conservation. The average grant size increased from \$81,000 in 2005 to a high of \$125,000 in 2010. Comparatively, the average grant size across the RBF ranged from \$68,408 in 2005 to \$89,905 in 2009.

### **An Assessment of the Impact of the Program's Strategies**

We will break our evaluation into the more specific baskets of work that staff have used to guide and describe its program during the past five years. [See [www.rbf.org](http://www.rbf.org) for the new Sustainable Development guidelines.] Program Goal. We have pursued the RBF's overarching goal of combating global warming with two targets in mind: to secure a meaningful global treaty to limit climate change to scientifically determine safe levels, and to secure effective U.S. federal policy on climate change. To achieve both goals, we have largely focused our efforts on securing U.S. federal policy on climate change, recognizing that U.S. action is critical to any global agreement.

Program Strategies. The strategies we have articulated as underpinning the Sustainable Development program's grantmaking over this period of time have been: 1) Supporting state and local climate planning and action; 2) Building non-environmental constituency support for climate change action; 3) Enabling coordination among organizations; 4) Making the economic case for climate action; 5) Supporting targeted efforts to advance international negotiations on climate change; 6) Protecting ecosystems and conserving biodiversity; and 7) Reducing reliance on carbon intensive fuels. Though many of these strategies intentionally overlap—for example, state climate planning has been an important component of making the economic case—we will assess them separately. The following pie chart breaks Fund strategies down by grant allocation.

<sup>3</sup> Grants total does not include \$1,005,022 in funding for Pocantico conferences and non-grant appropriations.



## Supporting State and Local Climate Planning and Action

Recognizing, in 2005, that progress on federal climate policy was unlikely, the RBF focused its greenhouse gas policy work at the U.S. state and local levels. RBF staff chose this path for several reasons:

- There is a long history of national policy being incubated at the sub-federal level;
- Governors and mayors are increasingly aware of the negative impacts of climate change and, because they are the nation's first responders, they tend to take a pragmatic view;
- State and local leaders have been more persuaded by the economic benefits of taking action on climate;
- The approaches typically taken by states and cities have been heavy on energy efficiency measures which not only save energy, but also save money for public treasuries and for citizens;
- State and local action is influential at the federal level;
- Sub-federal policy action can begin reducing emissions in an absolute sense;
- No matter what national climate policy is eventually implemented, it will ultimately be introduced at the state and local level, so giving local policymakers a jump start on crafting and executing policies makes good long-term sense;

- The growing patchwork of local and state responses to climate action would likely cause businesses to argue for a standardized federal approach;
- The world needs some encouragement in the international negotiating process that the United States will eventually shoulder its responsibilities and join the global community in combating climate change; the upsurge in state and local action in the United States has proven to be a significant boost to international discussions throughout this period.

This has been a highly successful basket of work. By 2010, more than 800 cities committed to achieving at least a Kyoto-level reduction in their municipal facilities and nearly 25 states designed comprehensive plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Their commitments and action are both practically and politically important. American cities use nearly 75 percent of all energy consumed in the United States, and 34 states are among the 75 largest greenhouse gas emitters in the world. Actions by states have already reduced national emissions by seven percent since 2005 levels, according to an Environment America study. There is capacity to do much more. A Center for Climate Strategies analysis indicates that if all 50 states implemented two dozen carbon reduction measures, the country could reduce emissions by as much as 24 percent below 1990 levels and create two million jobs.<sup>4</sup>

Three RBF-supported organizations— ICLEI, Center for Climate Strategies, and Georgetown State Federal Climate Resource Center— have supported the rapid escalation of efforts by cities and states during this period, and have worked to translate lessons to the federal level:

~ **ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability USA, Inc.** ICLEI has been integral to encouraging more than 800 U.S. cities to begin reducing emissions. ICLEI’s practical counsel and strategic community building among mayors over the last 15 years has been an essential part of the growing wave of municipal interest in reducing emissions.

**800+ Cities Committed to Kyoto**



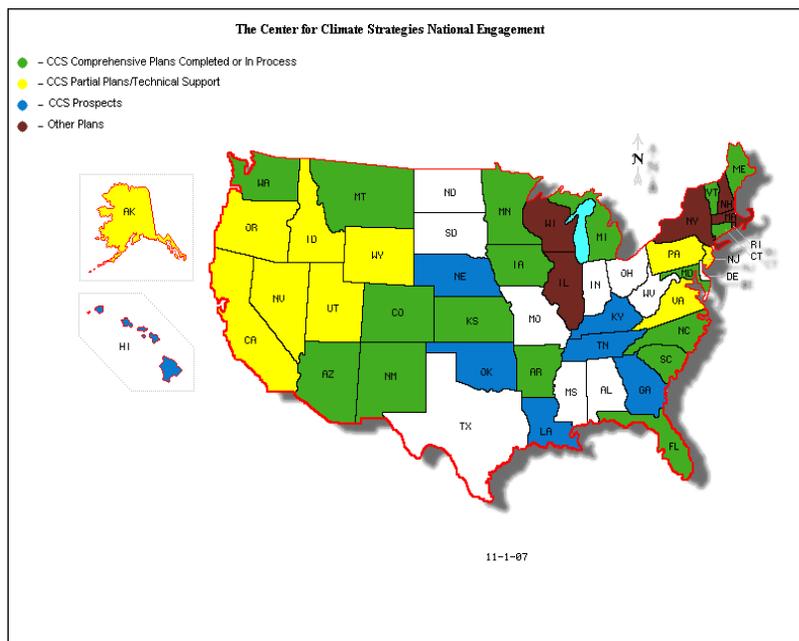
~ **Center for Climate Strategies (CCS)** CCS has led efforts by more than 25 states to create comprehensive climate action plans that significantly reduce emissions and generate positive economic returns for these states.

<sup>4</sup> Center for Climate Strategies, “New Climate and Energy Policies Could Create 2.5 Million Jobs, Hold Down Energy Costs,” July 21, 2009. <http://www.climatestrategies.us/news.cfm?Page=1&NewsID=56715>

~ **Georgetown State Federal Climate Resource Center.** RBF staff worked with the Emily Hall Tremain Foundation to launch the Georgetown Climate Center in 2008. The Center is dedicated to bridge building between state and federal policymakers on climate change.

Among its many accomplishments, the Center brokered a letter, signed by 37 of the nation's governors, calling for urgent federal action on climate change.

The RBF directly supported numerous other related initiatives working at the state and local level in the United States. Notable among them are efforts by both New York State and New York City to develop climate action plans. Governor Patterson completed a climate action plan at the end of his term. New York City has adopted a 30 percent reduction target for the city as part of PlaNYC. Both are models for the nation.



### **Building Constituency Support for Policy Action**

As the Fund began to seriously pursue the goal of securing climate policy at the federal level in 2005, staff recognized that meaningful climate policy at the federal level would only be possible when the majority of those calling for action were from outside the environmental community and, therefore, set out to diversify the voices calling for action on climate change. Staff recognized and carefully articulated that the environmental community would continue to be an important partner, but that it would not be sufficient to move a conservative Congress.

As we set out to strengthen these new voices for climate policy, we found only a small number of potential grantees, most of which were small and underfunded. We also discovered that climate donors rarely funded advocates outside the environmental community. In five years, the landscape has changed dramatically. Staff-led organizing, advisory and board service, technical assistance, donor education, and multiple Pocantico<sup>5</sup> convenings later, the field is now populated with powerful organizations with communications and advocacy capacity. There is also a promising integration of green and non-green voices within the climate advocacy community. Meanwhile foundation dollars expended to support these

<sup>5</sup> The Pocantico Center furthers the missions and reflects the values of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the National Trust for Historical Preservation. Its conference center provides a setting where nonprofit organizations and public-sector institutions can engage critical issues that reflect the Fund's programmatic interests, and which lead to new levels of understanding and creative resolutions. About 60 conferences, meetings, and public programs are held annually at Pocantico.

non-green voices have grown dramatically as well. The RBF has supported “allied voices for climate action” that include businesses, investors, evangelicals, farmers, sportsmen, labor, military leaders, national security hawks, veterans, youth, and governors and mayors. Each of these constituencies has an important role to play:

- The *agricultural community* is a central force to securing federal policy on climate change. Traditionally not supportive of environmental policy, some in the agricultural community have recognized that they have an economic self-interest in the new energy economy by harvesting wind, solar, and biomass energy on their lands and by using their land to sequester carbon dioxide.  
Grantee: 25 x '25
- *Youth* is a growing constituency with mobilize-able members around the country. Because they will inherit the planet, their voice brings a moral element to the debate. In recent years, this constituency also has become more organized politically.  
Grantees: Energy Action Coalition, Focus the Nation, 350.org
- The *business community* is a critical voice for countering the oft-heard argument that policy regulating carbon dioxide will harm the U.S. economy. Forward-thinking business leaders have been quite vocal about the opportunities associated with the new energy economy and are positioning their companies—both internally and externally—to take advantage of climate change policy. Further, many of these companies are recognizing that “going green” is good for their bottom lines.  
Grantees: Ceres, Clean Economy Network, American Council on Renewable Energy, The Climate Group
- *Religious Voices* are a crucial block pushing for climate action. “Creation Care” has inspired many faithful Christians to understand that God calls upon them to be stewards of the planet, which includes supporting efforts to address climate change. As advocates for the poor in developing countries, people of faith also recognize that climate change is having a disproportionately negative impact on the poor. Their voice is one of the very few advocating for international assistance for climate change adaptation.  
Grantees: Evangelical Environmental Network, National Wildlife Federation
- *Governors and mayors* have proven to be very effective advocates for climate change solutions domestically and internationally. Across America, states and localities are developing innovative climate programs and serving as laboratories for pioneering approaches. Many have launched climate initiatives in their cities and states and have seen the economic benefits of doing so. As they do more in their locales, they become aware of the importance of federal support to do even more.  
Grantees: Center for Climate Strategies, ICLEI, Georgetown State Federal Climate Resource Center, National Governors Association
- *National security, military, and intelligence experts* have spoken out about the need for a comprehensive strategy that takes on the destabilizing effects of fossil fuel dependence and global climate change. “Without bold action now to significantly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, our national security will be at greater risk,” testified Vice Admiral Dennis McGinn, before a U.S.

Senate panel. “Moving toward clean, independent, domestic energy choices lessens that danger and significantly helps us confront the serious challenge of global climate change. Because these issues are so closely linked, solutions to one affect the other. Technologies and practices that improve energy sources and efficiency also reduce carbon intensity and carbon emissions, and, most critically, increase our national security.”

Grantees: Truman National Security Project, Center for Naval Analysis, Center for New American Security

Foundations, including the RBF, have played a significant role in building the capacity of these groups to organize their base members, communicate publicly about their interest in climate solutions, and advocate for policies that will address climate change domestically and internationally. In addition to its direct financial support of these individual groups, the Fund has also provided technical assistance for strategic development, communications planning, and advocacy training. The Fund has convened these groups multiple times at The Pocantico Conference Center for conferences to explore strategies for coordination and collaboration.

In conclusion, great strides have been made over the past few years to bring non-green voices into the climate policy arena. The outpouring of diverse and passionate new voices in the debate has been noticed. To create a truly powerful climate movement though, more needs to be done. Given the powerful fossil fuel-associated industry forces arrayed against climate action now, these groups all need to grow in numbers and effectiveness.

### **Enabling Coordination among Organizations**

In addition to the grantmaking aimed at supporting individual constituency groups, a core piece of the RBF’s strategy throughout this period has been to enable coordination among organizations to generate the necessary pressure to encourage a strong national policy response. The Fund’s aspiration was to help build a genuine civic infrastructure around global warming, thereby democratizing and professionalizing advocacy that has been largely owned by a small subset of the U.S. public represented by the environmental community. With the support and assistance of the RBF’s Pocantico team, during 2006 to 2009, the RBF convened many of the constituency organizations on multiple occasions alongside a subset of leading environmental organizations. The question we grappled with was how to do more together and leverage the collective impact of these groups’ advocacy. One of the initial aspirations of 1Sky<sup>6</sup>, a campaign launched in 2008 with an RBF grant to activate grassroots support for federal climate policy, was to bring under one umbrella the various constituency organizations working on climate change, and in some respects, 1Sky succeeded. The challenge was always that the individual groups were both building their own capacity and trying to work in a formally coordinated way—not an easy task for any nonprofit group.

### **Making the Economic Case**

Perhaps the greatest perceived obstacle to climate action in the United States—and elsewhere—has been the fear that taking action will cripple the economy. Numerous groups representing status quo interests have spent millions of dollars over the past 15 years spreading this fear through an extremely effective

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<sup>6</sup> In 2011, 1Sky and 350.org merged under the banner of 350.org.

misinformation campaign aimed at slowing an eventual policy response. Unfortunately, this effort has been far more successful than anyone could have imagined. The success these groups have had spreading misinformation is especially striking given the empirical reality that shows just the opposite: cities, states, and companies taking action to reduce emissions have all discovered that it is possible to significantly lower emissions and generate economic benefits. The RBF has deliberately pursued a strategy that has cut across all of our grantmaking to debunk the myth that climate action equals economic disadvantage.

Though it remains a challenging area of work, we think we have partially succeeded. With significant support to a range of groups, the RBF has worked diligently to change the debate on the economics of climate action. Measuring the impact of this communications work is difficult, but anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a growing group of spokespeople now making the economic case and an increasing public resonance. We are now seeing an argument emerge that failure to take action will cause long-term economic harm to the U.S. economy if we pass up the chance to be a leader in clean energy development.

As the conventional wisdom has shifted, major economic and political voices, including McKinsey and Company, Deutsche Bank, HSBC, *The Financial Times*, *Business Week*, the National Governors Association, the U.S. Conference of Cities; more than half the nation's governors, and hundreds of mayors have weighed in on the positive economic benefits of climate action. The Fund has deliberately worked to support relationships between each of these important voices to help support the argument. The resulting shift in articulation will remain central to any successful policy advocacy work on climate change. Time and convening have been the most significant contributions the Fund has made to this shift. The relative share of dollars expended to advance this strategy has been modest.

### **Supporting Targeted Efforts to Advance an International Framework**

The Sustainable Development program has always had an international component to its work. In recent years, however, with the overwhelming need to move the United States to action on climate change and with the addition of staff devoted to international dimensions of climate work (Southern China and Democratic Practice-Global Governance), Sustainable Development grantmaking, at the global level, has been more geographically limited, but still important.

With the designation of Southern China as a "pivotal place" by the Fund and the decision to work on climate change and energy, we have found several opportunities to collaborate with the RBF Southern China program. China is clearly an enormous player in global climate change negotiations and has recently surpassed the United States in annual carbon emissions. The Sustainable Development program also has collaborated with the Global Governance program, which has pursued opportunities to support the engagement of underrepresented constituencies in global negotiations, as well as transparency and accountability of international financial institutions in relation to climate and energy in the United States.

### **The Pocantico Center and Sustainable Development**

In addition to its grantmaking, the Sustainable Development program has been active on climate change in other ways. Hallmarks of the Fund's work on climate change include utilizing one of its greatest assets—The Pocantico Center—for convenings, building new organizations and fields, enhancing philanthropic collaboration, promoting alignment among RBF programs, and responding to needs in the field through the use of delegated authority grants (DAGs).

Covenings at The Pocantico Center have helped to germinate many of the strategies, campaigns, institutions, and coalitions that the Sustainable Development program and others in the field now support. Between 2005 and 2010, the Sustainable Development program supported or convened 33 Pocantico conferences. The Pocantico Center has been and will continue to be a core part of this program.

To learn more about The Pocantico Center's role in convenings, visit:

<http://www.rbf.org/close-ups?tid=11> and read the grantee close-ups.

### **Reducing reliance on carbon intensive fuels**

Since 2007, the RBF has supported campaigns to slow the demand for carbon intensive fuels, including tar sands. These campaign face a number of challenges: Oil is the richest industry in the world; the Canadian tar sands are one of the few large non-nationalized oil reserves left in the world; the United States is eager to transition away from Middle Eastern oil for "energy security"; Canada is relying on tar sands oil to drive its economy; and, many Americans believe that more oil will keep the price of gas down. Increasing the import of tar sands oil also threatens to delay the U.S. transition to a new energy economy. As a result the Fund is determined to continue to educate Americans about the real costs of increased reliance on tar sands based fuels and to seeking alternative ways to fuel the U.S. vehicle fleet that are clean and economically beneficial for the country.

### **Lessons Learned**

Though there is a lot the RBF can be proud of, the fact remains that we are very far from where we want to be—or where we thought we would be—at the end of 2010. Here are some lessons we can take away from the last several years to help guide the next phase of our work:

- **Maintain Climate Science Communications:** Efforts must be made to reinvigorate climate science communications. When climate skeptics pitch misleading stories, scientists and advocates must be ready to respond.
- **Translate State and Local Lessons to Policymakers:** Half the states and more than 800 cities have taken meaningful action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. State and local action has already lowered U.S. emissions in ways that have been cost effective and economically beneficial.

Federal policymakers can learn from state and local level successes in advancing solutions to climate change.

- **Support the voices of Business and National Security Communities:** Two effective voices for climate action are the business and national security communities. Communicating the economic benefits of action and the national security risks of inaction to the American public will continue to be important.
- **Make the New Energy Economy Real:** We need to do more to show the positive impact of clean economies in specific places. While many cities are using action on climate change as an engine for economic development, there is only a low level of recognition publicly. More focus on specific projects will help make the new energy economy real.
- **Diversify and Augment the Movement for Climate Solutions:** Much of the work that the RBF has funded on climate change over the past several years focused on building a diverse movement calling for federal action on climate change. Much more needs to be done. Going forward, common ground must be found among nationally and globally focused environmental advocates as well as local groups.

## Conclusion

Despite the lack of federal climate action at this time, the RBF remains hopeful that there are ways to make progress going forward. The challenge before us is quickly bending down the curve of GHG emissions in real ways that are also economically beneficial. Numerous successful examples exist. The Fund remains determined to support the advancement and deepening of these solutions in the future.

Based on our reflections and their implications, and the simple fact that climate change remains an existential challenge for the planet, RBF grantmaking will continue to focus on advancing climate change solutions. Revised guidelines are available on the Fund's Web site, [www.rbf.org](http://www.rbf.org).

*Michael Northrop, program director, and Jessica Bailey, program officer, carry responsibility for the Rockefeller Brothers Fund's Sustainable Development program. Lydia Brown serves as program assistant.*