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UNH Professor's Book Examines Complexities And Contradictions Of North American Climate Change Policy

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Stacy VanDeveer, associate professor of political science at UNH

DURHAM, N.H. - North American policy responses to global climate change are complex and sometimes contradictory and reach across multiple levels of government, according to the first book that examines climate change politics across North America. The book is co-edited by Stacy VanDeveer, associate professor of political science at the University of New Hampshire.

"Changing Climates in North American Politics: Institutions, Policymaking, and Multilevel Governance," (MIT Press, 2009) investigates North American climate change policy at levels ranging from continental to municipal, from Mexico to Toronto to Portland, Maine. The book is co-edited by Henrik Selin, assistant professor of international relations at Boston University.

Contradictions in North American climate change policy are numerous and significant, according to VanDeveer. For example, the U.S. federal government rejected the Kyoto Protocol and mandatory greenhouse gas (GHG) restrictions, but California developed some of the world's most comprehensive climate change law and regulation. Canada's federal government ratified the Kyoto Protocol, but Canadian GHG emissions increased even faster than those of the United States. Mexico's state-owned oil company addressed climate change issues in the 1990s, in stark contrast to leading U.S. and Canadian energy firms.

"Although national climate policies vary widely, we found even greater policy conflict at the state, regional, and local levels. When states, provinces, cities, large corporations, NAFTA bodies, universities, NGOs, and private firms develop different and separate policy initiatives, it limits the effectiveness of coordinated multilevel climate change governance. And in North America, unlike much of Europe, climate change governance has been largely bottom-up rather than top-down," VanDeveer said.

The book has received accolades from those who study North American environmental and energy issues.

"The strength of this book is its comprehensive coverage of policymaking at all levels of government, including subnational entities. 'Changing Climates in North American Politics' is an important contribution to the fields of climate change and political science because it bridges the gap between state and province environmental efforts and federal policymaking,"

said Gary Bryner, professor of public policy at Brigham Young University.

"Bringing together an impressive lineup of leading experts, Henrik Selin and Stacy VanDeveer reveal the fascinating complexity of the bottom-up dynamics of climate change governance in North America. A pioneering analysis, 'Changing Climates in North American Politics' tracks the innovation of deepening interactions—both vertical and horizontal—across North America's many actors, institutions, and jurisdictions. It is a treasure chest of insights for anyone looking for pathways toward more effective governance of climate change," said Peter Dauvergne, professor and Canada research chair in global environmental politics at the University of British Columbia.

"Timely, accessible, and vibrantly written, *Changing Climates* maps out the complex terrain of climate politics across North America. The authors cast a wide net, and demonstrate how individuals, agencies, and groups across levels of government and sectors of society are driving policy innovations now that will shape our response to the challenge of climate change for decades to come. This much-needed volume challenges the conventional wisdom that there has been little climate action in North America to date, and will be a must read for students, activists, policymakers: anyone, in fact, wanting to understand how climate politics actually work," said Kate O'Neill, associate professor of environmental science, policy and management at the University of California at Berkeley.

Stacy VanDeveer is an associate professor of political science at the University of New Hampshire. His research interests include international environmental policymaking and its domestic impacts, the connections between environmental and security issues, and the role expertise in policy making. He has authored and co-authored numerous articles, book chapters, and working papers and reports. He has co-edited four books: "Changing Climates in North American Politics: Institutions, Policymaking, and Multilevel Governance," (MIT Press, 2009), "Transatlantic Environment and Energy Politics," (Ashgate, 2009), "EU Enlargement and the Environment: Institutional Change and Environmental Policy in Central and Eastern Europe" (Routledge, 2005), and "Saving the Seas: Values, Scientists, and International Governance," (Maryland Sea Grant College, 1997).

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