

Title – “Can We Make a Business Case for Planetary Health? Thoughts from around Campus”

Host – Steve Osofsky, Jay Hyman Professor of Wildlife Health & Health Policy, Dept. of Population Medicine and Diagnostic Sciences

Date – Monday February 6, 2017 12:15 – 1:15 pm 300 Rice Hall

“Planetary health is the health of human civilization and the state of the natural systems on which it depends” – Report of The Rockefeller Foundation-Lancet Commission on Planetary Health

By most metrics, human health is better today than at any time in human history. Over the past several decades, life expectancy has soared from 48 years in 1955 to 70 years in 2012. In 1955, there were 21 million deaths in children under the age of five; by 1997, that number was more than halved to 10 million. However, these advances have occurred coincident with a vast degradation of nature’s ecological systems, again on a scale never seen in human history. This is what some have termed the Environmentalist’s Paradox. The explanation of this paradox is straightforward and sobering: we have been mortgaging the health of future generations in order to realize economic and development gains in the present. By mining nature’s resources at an unsustainable rate, global societies can flourish in the short term, but face significant health impacts from the degradation of nature’s life support systems over the longer term.*

Focusing on experiences shared by Cornell faculty on efforts related to managing outcomes, impacts and trade-offs associated with infrastructure-building on some of the world’s major river systems (e.g. Amazon, Mekong, etc.), we will explore the ingredients necessary for developing robust planetary health case studies. We will also discuss whether there are additional transdisciplinary analyses we should be working on to bring sound science into the policy arena.