

Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future

Title: “*Sustainable Futures: Linking Science and Decision Making*”

Host: Lynn Scarlett, Global Managing Director for Public Policy at The Nature Conservancy

Date: Thursday November 9, 2017 12:00 – 1:00 pm 300 Rice Hall

In her role at The Nature Conservancy, she influences climate and nature-based solutions policy—in the United States and the 69 countries in which the Conservancy influences conservation.

My experiences over two decades as a public official and conservation manager have placed me at the intersection of science and decision making—in many settings and across issues pertaining to lands, waters, wildlife, cities, climate, and more. That intersection is complex and varying—both in style and purpose. Both the decision context and the features of scientific knowledge present challenges. There are many different decision types—budgeting, rulemaking, legislation, and on-the-ground resource management are very different contexts. And the interface of science and decision making invokes questions about attitudes.

Why do people think what they think? How do attitudes change? What is link between attitudes and behavior? How does scientific information affect attitudes and behavior? The challenges of integrating science and decision-making also present governance challenges. What decision processes and structures enable participants to work across interconnected issues and multiple jurisdictions? What processes enable synthesis of knowledge into a more integrated picture of functioning ecosystems and the human communities linked to those systems? What structures and processes strengthen feedback loops through which decision makers shape the questions that inform scientific inquiry and through which scientists, in turn, help frame those questions and build knowledge to address them? Effective linkage of science and decision making thus involves matters of knowledge content, relationship processes, communications, laws and governance. Drawing from examples in energy policy, natural infrastructure and ecosystem services, climate action, and other issues, I will probe these questions.