

ANALYZING LINKS BETWEEN NATURAL RESOURCES AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Rod Schoonover, PhD, Chemical Physics, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor

2009-11 S&T Policy Fellow; Diplomacy Program; U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Office of the Geographer and Global Issues

As the first Fellow in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), Office of the Geographer and Global Issues, at the U.S. Department of State, Rod Schoonover found himself performing intelligence analysis and operating primarily as an intelligence briefer for Under-Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs Maria Otero and Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern. It's a far cry from his previous duties as a professor in the Chemistry and Biochemistry Department at the California Polytechnic State University. Rod had spent the majority of his career in academia, and it was many years before he realized his background was applicable much more broadly.

A few years ago, Rod started exploring new opportunities and discovered contract work with the State Department. One assignment led him to Russia, where he performed chemical and biological weapon inspections. It was one of those "ah ha" experiences, which demonstrated there was a different way for him to apply science. Rod had been aware of the S&T Policy Fellowships but never considered submitting an application until the 2008 presidential election. He was energized by the new administration's focus on science and technology and wanted to participate.

"The analysis and intelligence support I've provided have been very valued." Rod noted. "Both Under-Secretary Otero and Special Envoy Todd Stern

have expressed that my work helped shape American foreign policy."

Now in his second fellowship year, Rod is the designated lead for the State Department on the National Intelligence Council's National Intelligence Estimate on Water Security, an effort that projects to the year 2040. Additionally, he is the State Department's lead on several efforts to dictate the National

Intelligence Priority Framework, helping to shape future efforts in the coverage of climate change, water security, and strategic minerals. Water security is one of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's top priorities due to its potential implications on national security.

The fellowship has afforded him additional "ah ha" experiences. One of those is the responsibility that individuals can have in representing not only a federal agency's position, but also speaking on behalf of the

"IT'S INCREDIBLE TO BE IN A SITUATION REPRESENTING THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. IT'S AMAZING AND DAUNTING AT THE SAME TIME."

nation. "It's incredible to be in a situation representing the U.S. government," he explained. "It's amazing and daunting at the same time."

Rod came to the State Department wanting to broaden his career path and examine what it means to be a federal employee, and how science can impact foreign policy. He achieved both, including a new understanding and appreciation of those who work in the government. Rod witnessed dedication and selflessness among his State Department colleagues, which he found impressive and surprising. "A person can never really understand the complexity of the issues that we deal with until we are in the midst of an issue that has international implications. The passion I've observed is something I never expected to find here."

