



Integrating Systems, Disciplines and Stakeholders
for More Effective Conservation Policies—From
Climate Change to Endangered Species
Restoration

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**The Role of Science in International Legal Action on
Climate Change**

The prospects for an ambitious and binding global agreement on climate change have grown increasingly uncertain, even as the evidence of serious climate impacts grows around the world. These impacts are being felt from Arctic communities to African villages to small island nations, many of which are struggling for their very survival. As political processes have stalled, State and non-State actors are exploring new legal strategies to transform the climate debate and drive meaningful policy change to address the climate threat. These strategies involve a huge array of forums, plaintiffs and defendants—from legal opinions at the International Court of Justice, to appeals to human rights bodies by individuals and communities, to consideration of transboundary climate impacts in environmental impact assessments under regional treaties. Along with the traditional legal hurdles faced in all litigation, potential plaintiffs in transboundary climate litigation must confront intense diplomatic and economic pressures, the limited jurisdiction of tribunals and the complexities of proving cause and effect in the climate context. International trade law and its fora must learn to accommodate climate policies as well. By building our understanding of the linkages between global trends and local impacts, scientists will play an important role in the development and utilization of these new legal approaches to addressing climate change, and in their outlooks for success.
