

Department of Environmental Science and Policy

Seminar Series

Choosing Futures – Climate Adaptation Justice & Transformation

A.R. Siders

University of Delaware

DATE: Friday, 3/3/2023 TIME: 10:30 am

Zoom: <https://bit.ly/3GQ6ZGn>



Abstract: Adaptation to climate change has, to date, generally involved small shifts in routine practices that do not challenge the physical, social, or ethical status quo. Future adaptation could (and some studies argue it should) involve radical shifts in social and socio-ecological systems. Such transformations, however, may create, perpetuate, or exacerbate injustice. How can adaptation practitioners – whether academics, government officials, or community leaders – promote just adaptation? Justice theories often fail to provide answers as they struggle to prioritize the distribution of adaptations that cause both harms and benefits; to weigh uncertain harms and benefits; to identify participants and resolve conflicts in participatory processes; or to redress historical injustices. Adaptation decisions are often made within frameworks that constrain the ability of decision-makers to pursue just solutions, and holistic approaches to justice may require larger-scale reforms in adaptation governance. Break-the-box approaches are politically challenging but may also create space for creative approaches to adaptation with multiple co-benefits for society far beyond risk or emissions reductions.

Bio: A.R. Siders is an interdisciplinary social scientist and lawyer advocating for ambitious climate adaptation. At the University of Delaware, she is a director of the Climate Change Science and Policy Hub and holds faculty appointments in the Biden School of Public Policy and Administration, the Disaster Research Center, and the department of Geography and Spatial Sciences. Her research explores climate adaptation decision-making: how communities and organizations make decisions about when, where, and how to adapt and how values are defined and negotiated in those decision-making processes. She holds a JD from Harvard Law School and a PhD from Stanford.

