

# Breaking down barriers to environmental progress

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Hurricane Katrina was a forceful reminder of how much we depend on, and are at the mercy of, the environment. The natural forces that sustain our life also can irrevocably alter and destroy it.

The policy debate already has begun about what could have been done to reduce the vulnerability of communities in the storm's path, and what should now be done to prevent similar losses along our coasts in the future.

It joins a long and daunting list of environmental policy challenges facing society today. Global climate change, carcinogens in our air and water, the health of fisheries and forests—these and other concerns are shared by governments, communities and corporations worldwide.

Over the past year, we've been speaking of these issues in a series of commentaries published on these pages.

Today, on Duke University's campus in Durham, N.C., we are launching the Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions to put our thoughts and expertise into action.

## Transcending party politics

With leadership from its distinguished advisory board, chaired by former EPA head William K. Reilly, the Nicholas Institute will bring together the best minds in science and policy, representing all sides of the issues.

It will unite the broad resources of the Duke University community with the expertise of partners in industry, government and environmental organizations around a common mission: To provide decision makers with independent, science-driven evaluations of policy risks and rewards, and to work with them to develop innovative, practical solutions.

Though our doors have just opened, we're already hard at work.

At our inaugural Environmental Summit in Durham this week, we're convening leaders from government, corporations, nonprofits and academia to prioritize challenges in six critical areas: energy, global climate change, environmental health, water quality, the health of oceans, and the health of forests and wildlife habitats.

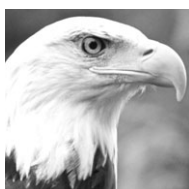
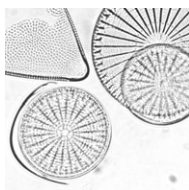
We've teamed with the Aspen Institute to issue a report, "A Silent Tsunami," on international water quality.

And working with Duke Energy, we've launched the Climate Change Policy Partnership to evaluate the impact of federal climate change policy options. The partnership will pool the expertise of the Nicholas Institute, the Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences and the Center on Global Change with those of other corporate and academic partners.

These initial steps represent the start of a major endeavor.

For too long, we've seen our world's ecological problems intensify while our political ability to address them has faded. The Nicholas Institute will fill that gap by serving as an impartial source of creative thinking and credible information that is trusted equally by all parties.

The solutions are out there. Isn't it time we worked together to find them?



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What do you think? visit us at [www.nicholas.duke.edu/institute](http://www.nicholas.duke.edu/institute)

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FOR ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY SOLUTIONS  
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