Program:

GOLDOILOCKS AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Impact of the Precautionary Principle on Feeding Current and Future Generations

June 24, 2013
PROGRAM

Welcome and Introduction

CARON GALA
NATIONAL C-FAR REPRESENTATIVE

Distinguished Speaker

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SANDRA DAY O’CONNOR COLLEGE OF LAW
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

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CARON GALA

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ABSTRACT
This paper first looks at the history and purpose of the precautionary principle (PP) and then examines problems of ambiguity, arbitrary application, and bias against new technologies. Because the publication is especially focused on the need to feed a growing population, the case studies center on agricultural issues such as pesticide use, genetically modified foods, and food irradiation. The authors give examples of the PP’s failure to offer a credible and reasoned framework for the application of risk management. They describe inconsistencies and suggest that the PP will be increasingly controversial, marginalized, and ignored in the future. They acknowledge the importance of appropriate precaution and give credit to the general concept that sparked the PP, but they indicate that the PP itself has become unworkable and counterproductive. If it is applied in its more stringent formulations, the PP will suppress innovation, to the detriment of both the economy and human health. In many respects, the PP does more harm than good. Of course, commonsense safety practices are necessary, and these findings do not advocate reckless abandon. But the future involves a mission to feed “a population of 9.1 billion by 2050.” The PP has failed as an overall risk management strategy, and it is time to move past it.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY
Gary Marchant, Ph.D. is currently the Regents’ Professor of Law in the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law at Arizona State University. Additionally, he is a Professor in the School of Life Sciences; the Faculty Director of the Center for Law, Science & Innovation; the Lincoln Professor of Emerging Technologies, Law & Ethics; and a Senior Sustainability Scientist at the Global Institute of Sustainability at Arizona State. His research interests include the use of genetic information in environmental regulation; risk and the precautionary principle; legal aspects of personalized medicine; and regulation of emerging technologies such as nanotechnology, neuroscience, and biotechnology. Prior to joining the ASU faculty, Dr. Marchant was a partner in a Washington, D.C., law firm focusing on environmental and administrative law. He received his J.D. from Harvard Law School, his Master of Public Policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and his Ph.D. in genetics from the University of British Columbia.
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