

Book review: *Global Climate Change and U.S. Law* (3d ed.)

Norman A. Dupont

Norman A. Dupont practices environmental law at the firm of Ring Bender LLP in its southern California office. He is currently the publications Section officer for SEER and an avid reader of climate change books.

Climate change is an existential crisis facing the world. It is existential in the primary sense of the word—it involves the continued viability of humans and other species on this fragile planet. Authors from the Section of Environment, Energy, and Resources (SEER) and beyond have written an updated and fundamental book on this crisis, [*Global Climate Change and U.S. Law* \(3d ed. 2023\)](#). The editors are three leading legal scholars in the field of climate change: Michael B. Gerrard, Jody Freeman, and Michael Burger. They have assembled a team of contributing authors who cover a wide range of climate-change-related topics, from the current state of U.S. law both in the legislature and courts to impacts on environmental assessments, endangered species, risk management, and disclosure to state and local initiatives and beyond.

To paraphrase J. R. R. Tolkien, *Global Climate Change* is intended to be “one book to rule them all” in terms of scope of coverage and overview of legal efforts in this field. Like Tolkien’s own classic, this book describes epic legal and administrative battles on climate regulatory measures and adaptation techniques responding to a dark threat visible on today’s horizon.

It is said that “You know the Gentleman by the company he keeps.” In this case, a very brief overview of the contributing authors shows the superb and diverse company of individuals who provided this book. The 28 contributing authors included distinguished scholars from law schools across the United States; lawyers at private law firms across the country; representatives of nongovernmental organizations such as Earthjustice; current and former lawyers from the Department of Justice, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of State; and a law student expecting her J.D. later this year. This range of backgrounds guarantees that the authors for the book’s 18 different chapters represent a wide variety of viewpoints across the legal and regulatory world in America.

As editor and professor, Michael Gerrard put it in classic understatement: “It is difficult to characterize U.S. climate law succinctly,” and “U.S. climate law. . . is rapidly evolving.” Indeed, climate change and its impacts on U.S. weather, water levels, droughts, heat waves, species with narrow historical ranges, and agriculture have demonstrated unpredictable results in any given season. The legal assessment and variety of responses to this metastasizing set of climate-change-related events are complex, sometimes overlapping and sometimes opposing.

The book has received significant advanced praise from experts in the field of climate change. They include former EPA administrator (Ms. McCarthy), the former head of the California Air Resources Board (Ms. Nichols), a distinguished private practitioner (Mr. Poloncarz), and one of the nation’s preeminent environmental law scholars (Professor Lazarus). Each reviewer provides encomiums for *Global Climate Change* in its current third edition.

John Cruden, a former SEER Section chair, a former head of the Environment and Natural Resources Division at the U.S. Department of Justice, and now a lawyer in private practice, summarizes: “This book provides a clear-eyed and comprehensive view of the economic, technology, and equity challenges climate change poses, explores the legal and regulatory obstacles to success, and conveys what must be done to overcome them, all in one readable source.” As always, there is little else to be said after Cruden’s summary of the book.

Global Climate Change provides a comprehensive and updated overview of this essential area, and lawyers in SEER and throughout the United States should buy it now. It is available [through the ABA](#) in both paper and e-book formats. SEER members (and especially law students who are SEER members) will receive a substantial discount on their purchase.