



THE WOODS HOLE RESEARCH CENTER

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Director John P. Holdren Nominated as Science Advisor by President-Elect Barack Obama

December 19, 2008

Center Director John P. Holdren was selected today as the nominee for Assistant to the President for Science and Technology. The post also includes directorship of the Office of Science and Technology Policy in the Executive Office of the President and requires Senate confirmation.

Reflecting on his appointment, Holdren commented, "None of the great interlinked challenges of our time – the economy, energy, environment, health, security, and the particular vulnerabilities of the poor to shortfalls in all of these – can be solved without insights and advances from the physical sciences, the life sciences, and engineering. President-Elect Obama understands this with perfect clarity. To be able to work with him and the rest of the splendid team he has assembled to be sure that the potential of science and technology to build a more prosperous society and a better world is fully developed and exploited in all that his administration does is the greatest opportunity – and the greatest responsibility – of my professional life."

In addition to his role with the Woods Hole Research Center, Dr. Holdren serves as the Teresa and John Heinz Professor of Environmental Policy at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and director of the Science, Technology, and Public Policy program in the School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. He is also Professor of Environmental Science and Policy in Harvard's Department of Earth and Planetary.

Holdren, who holds MS and PhD degrees in aerospace engineering and plasma physics from MIT and Stanford, is a specialist in energy technology and policy, global climate change, nuclear arms control and nonproliferation, and science and technology policy. He is a former president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) – the largest general science society in the world – and a member of both the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering.

Since 2002, Holdren has served as Co-Chair of the independent, bipartisan National Commission on Energy Policy and was a principal architect of the recommendations on energy-technology innovation strategy in its 2004 and 2007 reports. He was also a coordinating lead author of the 2007 report of the 18-member, 11-nation UN Scientific Expert Group on Climate Change and Sustainable Development, which he had the privilege of presenting to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and summarizing before the General Assembly.

From 1994–2001, he served as a member of former President Clinton's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST), leading major studies requested by the President on US-Russian cooperation to protect nuclear materials from theft, the US program of research on fusion energy, US energy research and development strategy, , and international cooperation on energy-technology innovation. He also served in this period as the US co-chair of a US-Russian bilateral commission on managing the plutonium from surplus nuclear weapons, reporting to Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin.

In parallel with his service on the Clinton PCAST, Holdren chaired the standing Committee on International Security and Arms Control of the US National Academy of Sciences, which advises the government and the nation on a range of matters where science and technology bear directly on the security of the country. During his tenure in this post, the



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Committee produced major studies on managing surplus plutonium, on the future of US nuclear-weapon policy, and means for monitoring and verifying deep cuts in the world's nuclear arsenals. Also in this period, Holdren chaired separate committees of the National Academies on technical issues related to ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and on US-India Cooperation on Energy and Environment, as well as co-chairing a joint US-Russian Academy committee on cooperation to reduce risks from nuclear terrorism and proliferation.

Center Founder and Director Emeritus George M. Woodwell commented, "John's talents, vigor, and brilliance in building the Center and its programs over his short term here leave no question as to President-elect Obama's wisdom in drawing Holdren onto the staff of the White House as Science Advisor. While we yield him reluctantly, we applaud the promise he carries with him into a government and a nation that need his unusual talents and we take pride in having been a part his experience over recent years."

Following receipt of his PhD from Stanford in 1970, Holdren worked as a physicist in the Theory Group of the Magnetic Fusion Energy Division of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, where he remained an active consultant until 1994. In 1972-73, on leave from Livermore, he was Senior Research Fellow in the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Environmental Quality Laboratory at Caltech, working on problems of population and development, energy-technology assessment, and causes and consequences of global environmental change.

In 1973 Holdren co-founded the interdisciplinary graduate program in energy and resources at the University of California, Berkeley, where he was Assistant Professor (1973-75), Associate Professor (1975-78), and Professor (1978-96) of Energy and Resources, as well as Class of 1935 Professor of Energy (1991-96). The hundreds of masters-degree and PhD graduates of his Berkeley program -- which is known as the Energy and Resources Group (ERG) and focuses on integrating insights from engineering, environmental science, economics, political science, and law in order to find solutions to the problems of energy, resources, environment, and development -- now populate positions of responsibility in the public, private, and NGO sectors all over the world.

From 1991 to 2005, Holdren served as a member of the Board of Trustees of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, helping shape that foundation's programs on international peace and cooperation, environment, and population. In the latter part of that period he chaired the Foundation's Institutional Policy Committee.

In 1981, Holdren had been one of the first recipients of a MacArthur Foundation Prize Fellowship (sometimes called "the MacArthur genius award"). He has also been awarded the Public Service Award of the Federation of American Scientists (1979), the Volvo International Environment Prize (1993, jointly with Paul R. Ehrlich), the Forum Award of the American Physical Society (1995), the Kaul Foundation Award for Excellence in Science and Environmental Policy (1999), the Tyler Environment Prize (2000), the John Heinz Prize in Public Policy (2001), and the Fletcher Award of the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth College (2007). He holds honorary doctorates from the University of Puget Sound (1974), the Colorado School of Mines (1997), and Clark University (2002).

In addition to the rare distinction of membership in both the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering, Holdren is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the California Academy of Sciences; a Fellow of the American Physical Society and the AAAS; and a former



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Chairman of the Federation of American Scientists. In 1995, he gave the acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, an international organization of prominent scientists and public figures in which he served as Chair of the Executive Committee from 1987–1997.

Holdren was born in Sewickley, Pennsylvania, and grew up in San Mateo, California, where he attended public schools. His undergraduate education was at MIT, majoring in space science and engineering with minors in physics and German literature. He now resides with his wife of 42 years, biologist Dr. Cheryl E. Holdren, in Falmouth, Massachusetts. They have two grown children and five grandchildren ages 3 to 17.

Dr. R. A. Houghton, Deputy Director of the Woods Hole Research Center, will serve as Acting Director. Houghton is an ecologist with interests in the role that terrestrial ecosystems play in climate change and the global carbon cycle. He co-ordinates the Center's efforts to understand the problems of global warming and climate change, especially the role biotic systems play in this accelerating process. Dr. Houghton has held positions as Assistant Scientist at the Ecosystems Center of the Marine Biological Laboratory and as Research Associate at Brookhaven National Laboratory. He earned his doctorate in ecology from SUNY at Stony Brook.

The Woods Hole Research Center is an independent, nonprofit institute focused on environmental science, education, and public policy. We seek to conserve and sustain the planet's vegetation, soils, water, and climate by clarifying and communicating their interacting functions in support of human well-being and by promoting practical approaches to their management in the human interest. The Center has projects in the Amazon, the Arctic, Africa, Russia, Alaska, Canada, New England, and the Mid-Atlantic — as well as integrative efforts at continental to global scale — working in collaboration with partners ranging from local NGOs, research centers, and enterprises to national governments and the United Nations.