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Montana's Perspective: Environmental Regulators and the Regulated

Sara Rinfret, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Montana – Missoula

For 2015-2016 I received a University of Montana small research grant (UGP) for \$3,800. This research focused on understanding the perspective of the regulated community in state-level environmental policy. With such acknowledgment, this project sought to fill a gap in the literature by providing valuable insights from the regulated community itself about their perceptions and day-to-day experiences of environmental regulation in Montana.

Because of the generous support from the faculty research grant, I was able to send a mail survey to approximately 1,200 Montana businesses that are regulated by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. In order to develop, administer, and evaluate the survey results, the grant also enabled me to hire political science students, which was extremely helpful with data entry and analysis.

Most importantly, I was able to use the data collected from this project to write an exploratory paper to present at a regional political science conference and based upon feedback submit to a peer reviewed journal. I am confident that this paper will be accepted for publication with a political science journal and provide a much needed examination of how the regulated community perceives the regulated in order to provide information for the next generation of environmental policy.

Lastly, the goal is to use the data collection as a starting point for a larger scale study with other states in order to provide more generalizable results. I am also very grateful to have received a UGP grant. Because of this grant support I was able to conduct important research to contribute to a growing field that is trying to better understand state level environmental policymaking in the U.S.