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**The Consortium for Ecological Law congratulates the awardees of the 2025 Elisabeth Haub Award for Environmental Law and Diplomacy and invites you to follow the ceremony at Pace University in New York City on October 23, 2025**

The Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University has announced that the 2025 Elisabeth Haub Award for Environmental Law and Diplomacy will be jointly awarded to Professor **John H. Knox** and **Dr. David R. Boyd** for their groundbreaking efforts as successive United Nations Special Rapporteurs on the human right to a healthy environment. The award will be presented during a ceremony at Pace University in New York City on October 23, 2025. Visit the Pace Haub Law website to follow online.



John Knox and David Boyd are visionary leaders who laid the legal and moral groundwork for one of the most consequential developments in international environmental law: global recognition of the human right to a healthy environment.

Together, Professors Knox and Boyd have profoundly shaped the field of international environmental law by laying the foundation for the recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Their work as Special Rapporteurs—Knox

from 2012 to 2018 and Boyd from 2018 to 2024—has been instrumental in inspiring legislative, diplomatic, and judicial support for environmental rights around the globe. Their achievements were bolstered by the recent landmark ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which affirmed the right to a healthy environment as a binding norm of international law.

For decades, the right to a healthy environment was absent from foundational human rights documents, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was adopted in 1948. Despite growing awareness following the environmental movements of the 1970s, efforts to enshrine environmental rights at the United Nations met repeated resistance, even as over 150 countries adopted such protections domestically or regionally. It wasn't until 2012 that real momentum began, when the UN Human Rights Council appointed Professor John Knox as the first Independent Expert on human rights and the environment. Knox spent six years building the legal foundation for environmental human rights, culminating in the *Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment*, a landmark set of guidelines that clarify how existing human rights obligations relate to the protection of the environment. His successor, Dr. David Boyd, expanded on that legacy, leading a global coalition of governments, UN agencies, and over 1,300 civil society organizations to champion recognition. Together, Knox and Boyd steered a decades-stalled conversation toward success, culminating in the landmark resolutions of the UN Human Rights Council (2021) and UN General Assembly (2022) recognizing the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Their shared journey—rooted in scholarship, diplomacy, and advocacy—transformed a long-ignored principle into a universal standard for environmental justice.

John H. Knox, the Henry C. Lauerman Professor of International Law at Wake Forest University, served as the first UN Independent Expert—and later the first Special Rapporteur—on human rights and the environment. His mandate focused on clarifying the human rights obligations of States in relation to environmental protection. Professor Knox consulted with hundreds of stakeholders worldwide, visited more than 25 countries, and authored over 30 reports. In 2018, he presented the *Framework Principles*. Professor Knox has long urged the integration of human rights principles into climate protection and biodiversity conservation and has been a leading voice on the promotion and protection of the rights of environmental defenders and Indigenous Peoples.

Dr. David R. Boyd, professor at the University of British Columbia, succeeded Knox as UN Special Rapporteur. In his role, Boyd worked with governments, courts, and communities to operationalize the right to a healthy environment. He submitted amicus briefs in 15 landmark legal proceedings, delivered over 500 speeches globally, and produced more than 30 UN reports that further defined the legal contours of environmental rights. His efforts have been cited by the International Court of Justice, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and the European Court of Human Rights. Beyond his UN work, Dr. Boyd is the author of ten books and over 100 publications on environmental topics and has advised governments across the globe on environmental and constitutional law.