



A couple of weeks ago, [I noted in a discussion of water and climate change, that in many cases, seeking to adapt to climate change effects might actually wind up undermining efforts to mitigate it.](#) My example was lining irrigation canals, but there are lots of them out there.

I began to think “Gosh. There really should be an article discussing this problem.” It was only a few days later that I realized that [there *is* a very recent article discussing this problem](#), and what’s more, it was written by my wife: *Holistic Climate Change Governance: Towards Mitigation and Adaptation Synthesis*, by Professor Katherine Trisolini of Loyola Law School. In my completely objective and totally unbiased opinion, it’s excellent. It’s really well-worth reading, because policymakers need to integrate mitigation and adaptation: the water and canal lining example is the tip of the iceberg. Here’s the abstract.

Climate change already has begun destabilizing natural systems, prompting unprecedented heat waves, droughts, floods, and severe storms. While scientists admonish us that greenhouse gases must be cut deeply and quickly to avoid the worst impacts, past emissions have committed the planet to some further warming. Resulting physical changes will require a legal system that functions amidst extreme weather, rising seas, and scientific uncertainty about the stability of natural systems upon which we relied in designing institutions and infrastructure. An effective response requires both substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to limit the harm (“mitigation”) and significant adaptation. Scholars and policymakers have largely treated mitigation and adaptation as distinct strategies, overlooking critical interactions between the two issues. This Article addresses the resulting gap in scholarship.

Adequate preparation for climate change requires fundamentally rethinking systems and infrastructure designed for more stable conditions. Part of this rethinking process includes evaluating whether legal measures designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will ultimately aid or hinder adaptation. Using a case study of one proposed mitigation measure — expanded reliance on nuclear power — this Article illustrates how disconnected approaches to adaptation and mitigation can undermine both efforts. The Article then offers a preliminary framework for holistic climate change governance that directs mitigation investment toward adaptive and adaptable infrastructure that reduces human risks, decreases reliance on complex networks, and moderates the extent of scientific uncertainty that legislators and administrative agencies will face in an unpredictable future environment.