Preface

This project evolved from a discussion we had about the state of the study of international environmental politics some five years ago. We were both dissatisfied with this literature, because it seemed to us that it was on the whole largely apolitical. Most attempts at general theorizing about international environmental politics, whether from the regimes literature or the market failure literature, began with the assumption of the "common enemy" of environmental threat, and of a collective action or tragedy of the commons situation that hindered international action to meet that threat. The study of international environmental politics thus became a process of finding the appropriate cooperative or institutional mechanisms to overcome the collective action problem. Like the functionalist literature on political cooperation and integration in the 1950s and 1960s, the issues to be dealt with were inherently transnational, but of a basically technical rather than political nature, and thus best addressed technically rather than politically. The measure of solutions to international environmental problems thus became the efficiency of the mechanism for dealing with overcoming collective action problems, rather than the viability of the political settlement underlying the mechanism.

This is unrealistic; international environmental issues are as heavily politicized as most other kinds of international issues. Ignoring this political element will neither make it go away nor make environmental degradation easier to address effectively. It is clear that all governments do not share similar interests in international environmental management, and they often have significantly different notions of what environmental management means. This volume, then, is part of a larger trend in the literature that is working to put the politics back into the study of international environmental politics. We have chosen to do so through the analytical lens of common pool resources, because this allows us to introduce these differences in interest within the framework of rationalist analysis that encompasses so much of the work done in this field.

We developed the hypotheses that are the focus of the analysis of this volume through a deductive examination of the logic of common pool resources, and the case studies were written to these hypotheses specifically. They were developed both by the volume editors and by the contributors to this volume, working as a group. This process of working through this logic, and examining its explanatory value for specific cases, was aided enormously by two workshops that brought the group together, one in the fall of 1995 and one on the spring of 1996. The first of these workshops, held at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, was funded by the Social Sciences Research Council/John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, through their Program on International Peace and Security's research workshop grant program. The second was held in conjunction with the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association (ISA) in San Diego, and was funded by the ISA's Small Workshop Grant program. We owe both of these institutions a debt of gratitude; without these workshops this volume would be much less coherent than it has turned out to be.

Much of this volume was also presented on a panel at the 1996 meetings of the American Political Science Association, in San Francisco. Duncan Snidal was the discussant for the panel, and he commented extensively not only on those chapters presented as papers on the panel, but on the manuscript as a whole. Tom Teitenberg also read and provided highly useful and incisive comments on the whole manuscript. Patricia Weitsman and Jacqui Shambaugh provided invaluable project management advice. Renae Ditmer compiled the index. Finally, we would like to thank our chapter authors, who contributed both with their own work and to the process of developing the theoretical structure of the volume as a whole; without their input this volume would not have been possible.