

Locating Legal, Regulatory, and Policy Information

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Introduction

Searching for environmental laws and regulations can be frustrating, especially if you're not sure where to start. This article provides a basic guide to locating environmental laws, regulations, and policy information. If you have a favorite legal or regulatory site that isn't listed here, please e-mail me at lbarnes@wmrc.uiuc.edu and I'll add it to the Librarian's Environmental Toolkit (on the web at http://www.wmrc.uiuc.edu/main_sections/info_services/library_reference_environmental_toolkit.cfm).

Where to Start

Introduction to Laws and Regulations

<http://www.epa.gov/epahome/lawintro.htm>

A plain-English explanation of how bills become laws and how laws and regulations relate to each other.

U.S. EPA's Laws & Regulations

<http://www.epa.gov/epahome/lawreg.htm>

A good starting point for federal environmental laws and regulations. Contains links to laws, regulations, proposed rules, dockets, and guidance documents.

Federal Laws and Regulations

Laws

Major Environmental Laws

<http://www.epa.gov/epahome/laws.htm>

Listing of more than a dozen major statutes or laws that form the legal basis for the programs of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Includes links to summaries, fact sheets, and full-text.

THOMAS

<http://thomas.loc.gov/>

The free place to go when tracking legislation or looking for committee reports and testimony. Also includes the full text of the Congressional Record.

Regulations

Federal Register

http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/aces140.html

The *Federal Register* is the official daily publication for Rules, Proposed Rules, and Notices of Federal agencies and organizations, as well as Executive Orders and other Presidential Documents. This site provides access to the entire Federal Register.

Federal Register Environmental Subset

<http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/>

Full text of all Federal Register documents issued by EPA, and of selected documents issued by other Departments and Agencies. Notices, meetings, proposed rules, and regulations are divided into twelve topical categories for easy access (eg. air, water, pesticides, toxics, waste).

EPA Semiannual Regulatory Agenda

<http://www.epa.gov/epahome/rules.html#proposed>

All agencies publish semiannual regulatory agendas describing regulatory actions they are developing or have recently completed. These agendas are published in the Federal Register, usually during the spring and fall of each year, as part of the Unified Agenda of Federal Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions.

EPA Dockets

<http://www.epa.gov/epahome/dockets.htm>

Dockets contain information and supporting documentation related to the rulemaking process. Public comments received on rules and proposed rules are also maintained in the appropriate Docket.

Code of Federal Regulations

<http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/index.html>

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) is a codification of the rules published in the Federal Register by Executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government. The CFR is divided into 50 titles, which represent broad areas subject to Federal regulation, with environmental regulations contained mainly in title 40. Each volume of the CFR is revised once each calendar year. Title 40 is revised every July 1.

Environmental Impact Statements

<http://nucat.library.northwestern.edu/>

Search for EIS's in the catalog by doing a Guided Keyword search using the term "EIS" in conjunction with any other keyword(s). EIS's are documents required of federal agencies by the National Environmental Policy Act for major projects or legislative proposals significantly affecting the environment. A tool for decision making, they describe the positive and negative effects of the undertaking and cites alternative actions.

Databases

Lexis-Nexis Congressional Universe

Subscription database containing regulations, laws, congressional testimony, bill histories, and pending legislation. Also provides full text access to articles that appeared in The Hill, Roll Call, or the Washington Post section A.

Books

There are many plain-English guides to specific laws and regulations. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is an excellent source of free information. Major commercial publishers include Government Institutes, McCoy & Associates, the Environmental Law Institute, and Aspen Publishers. Some representative titles include:

ABC's of Environmental Regulation (Government Institutes, 2002)

Book of Lists for Regulated Hazardous Substances (Government Institutes, 2001)

Environmental Law Handbook (Government Institutes, annual)

EPA Hotline Q & A : RCRA, CERCLA, EPCRA (Aspen Publishers, 1999)

RCRA Reference (McCoy & Associates, 2002)

RCRA Regulations & Keyword Index (McCoy & Associates, 2000)

RCRA Unraveled (McCoy & Associates, 2002)

Periodicals

There are many excellent journals and newsletters related to environmental law. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency publishes free newsletters on many different environmental topics. For a complete list, see <http://www.epa.gov/epahome/newslett.htm>. There are also journals produced by commercial publishers and associations. Some representative titles include:

Environment Reporter Current Developments (Bureau of National Affairs)

Environmental Law Reporter (Environmental Law Institute)

Hazardous Waste Consultant (Aspen Publishers)

Natural Resources & Environment (American Bar Association, Section of Natural Resources, Energy, and Environmental Law)

State Laws and Regulations

State Regulations Locator

<http://www.nmfrc.org/srt/>

Links to state environmental regulations and regulatory agencies.

State Resource Center

http://www.lexisone.com/legalresearch/legalguide/states/states_resources_index.htm

Extensive list of links to state officials, agencies, courts, and other information. Links for all 50 states.

Databases

Lexis-Nexis State Capital Universe (subscription database)

Provides access to bills, laws, regulations, state registers, and legislative members for all 50 states.

Books & Periodicals

Government Institutes publishes Environmental Law Handbooks for several states. Each state also has a state register, where proposed regulations are published for comment.

Business and Legal Reports publishes environmental compliance newsletters for all 50 states, the federal government, and the District of Columbia.

Environmental Policy

Almanac of Policy Issues: Environment

<http://www.policyalmanac.org/environment/index.shtml>

Provides comprehensive background information on major environmental issues including air and water quality, energy, recycling, hazardous wastes, and wildlife.

Environmental Law Institute Research Reports

<http://www.elistore.org/reports.asp>

ELI's mission is to "research pressing problems, educate professionals and citizens about the nature of these issues, and convene all sectors in forging effective solutions." They publish research reports on a wide variety of environmental issues, including brownfields, environmental health, energy, pollution prevention, sustainable development, and indoor environments.

National Council for Science and the Environment

<http://www.ncseonline.org/>

The Council helps Congress, government agencies, academia, civil society, business, media, and the public to understand and support policies and programs that increase the role of science in achieving environmental goals. The National Library for the Environment, part of NCSE, contains full-text Congressional Research Service reports and briefing books, which provide excellent background information on environmental issues.

State of the Environment Reports

<http://www.ncseonline.org/SciencePolicy/StateOfEnvironment.cfm>

Links to "State of the Environment" reports for many U.S. states as well as for other countries.