

Finding Environmental Law on the Web

Environmental law is a multi-layered welter of federal, state, tribal, transnational, and international law. Federal statutes dealing with environmental issues occur in at least eight different U.S. code titles, between Title 7, Chapter 6 (Agriculture—Insecticides and Environmental Pesticide Control) and Title 42, Chapter 85 (Public Health and Welfare—Clean Air Act). Statutes are accompanied by extensive state and federal regulations and an alphabet soup of abbreviations. Opinions from cases on the administrative level and the courts add yet more complexity to environmental law research.

Comprehensive Sites

The best site to go to for researching environmental law is one that will at least point you to the relevant law in each of the jurisdictions. Lexis and Westlaw offer environmental law databases that cover the full gamut of federal and state environmental law, plus newsletters, law reviews, etc.

But for those who don't have these commercial sources available to them or want some other environmental material, there are sites online that attempt to give a comprehensive approach to finding environmental law and related resources. This article highlights some of these comprehensive sites as well as some more specific sites.

Among the comprehensive sites is clay.net at <http://www.clay.net/>, which states it is a "quick-load, no-nonsense work platform for rapid information retrieval for the environmental professional." And the site does in fact give straight-forward lists of links to relevant federal agencies and legislative contacts, state agencies, professional organizations, conferences, etc.—easy to get to and to work from.

Environmental LawNet at <http://lawvianet.com/index.html> is a well-organized,

general site. The site includes links to statutes and regulations on the federal, state, international, and tribal levels, as well as court and administrative appeals from these jurisdictions, and documents from the various agencies. There are separate listings of links dealing with compliance, enforcement and litigation, and transactions (for example, property transfer and due diligence). Unfortunately, Michigan links are missing in many of the more specialized listings.

The FindLaw environmental law site at <http://www.findlaw.com/01topics/13environmental/index.html> presents some links that are unlikely to be found at other sites, such as links to expert witnesses, investigators, and a message board. For case law, there are searchable summaries of environmental law cases from the U.S. Supreme Court, circuit courts, and some state courts. In addition to links for journals, online databases, and government agencies, there are links to current news articles.

One of the largest of these comprehensive sites is the aptly named MegaLaw site for environment at <http://www.megalaw.com/top/environmental.php>. Discouragingly, many of the links on this site do not work; the site apparently has not been kept up-to-date, and linked sites have changed their addresses or disappeared. But for things other than primary law, such as links to environmental law journals, this is still a good resource.

Some sites present more of an international or transnational viewpoint. Instead of presenting lists of links, the ECOLEX site at <http://www.ecolex.org/ecolex/index.php> allows the researcher to get to links by conducting searches by country on a wide variety of environmental topics in four areas: treaties, national legislation, court decisions, and literature. The environmental website for the University of Denver's College of Law at

<http://www.law.du.edu/naturalresources/weblinks/default.cfm> presents links by country to a great variety of environmental sources—many that you might not encounter elsewhere.

Federal Sites

For research only on the federal level, the FedLaw website at <http://www.thecre.com/fedlaw/legal14.htm> presents links to the various environmental statutes, regulations, and relevant agencies in a clear, simple list. And the Environmental Protection Agency's website, <http://www.epa.gov>, is a must. This site is extensive and current. There are many pages of information by topic, as well as their EDOCKET containing "documents related to rulemakings and various non-rulemaking activities" on the departmental and regional levels, and documents on environmental matters in other departments. The websites for other agencies and departments with environmental responsibilities, such as the Department of Energy at <http://homer.ornl.gov/oepa/>, are must-go-to sites as well; the comprehensive sites detailed above generally link to these government sites.

Michigan Sites

For Michigan environmental law, the "number one" site is that of the Department of Environmental Quality at <http://www.michigan.gov/deq>. From the home page, the researcher can find pertinent information with a topic approach, or through the "Programs" link. On many pages, there is a "Laws and Rules" section (highlighted in yellow). There are also hosts of links to permits and other government documents. For the websites of other state departments that deal with environmental issues, go to the "State Web Sites" link at <http://www.michigan.gov/>.

To find environmental law cases from Michigan courts, use the Michigan Appellate

Digest at <http://www.courtsofappeals.mijud.net/resources/digest.htm>, which covers published cases of the Michigan Court of Appeals and Supreme Court since 1992; most cases are in the major topic, Natural Resources. Another source is the case notes, covering administrative as well as court decisions, published in the *Michigan Environmental Law Journal*, <http://www.michbar.org/environmental/lawjournal.cfm>, by the State Bar of Michigan's Environmental Law Section. The *Michigan Environmental Law Journal* also publishes an annual "State of the Law" report, comprehensively covering Michigan environmental law.

Miscellaneous Sites

While not a law site, the EcoGateway at <http://www.ecoiq.com/onlineresources/index.html> is replete with links, organized by topics and subtopics (for example, under Energy, you can find state agencies dealing with Wind Energy or Geothermal Energy), to government agencies and non-government organizations on all levels.

Another non-law site, The National Library for the Environment at <http://www.ncseonline.org/NLE/> is valuable for presenting links to Congressional Research Service reports and briefing books, along with other sources.

ENN, Environmental News Network, <http://www.enn.com/index.html>, is a site for current environmental news. For information on current international developments, try the International Institute for Sustainable Development site at <http://www.iisd.ca/>.

The Web is a vital research tool for environmental law. The sites presented here are only some of the available sites. New ones will certainly be developed, and some of these may fade away or die; it remains the researcher's responsibility to check for accuracy and currency. But the wealth of information on the Web makes it essential for working in environmental law. ◆

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