

# An Overview of Electronic Environmental Law Resources

By Lance M. Werner and Jeffrey L. Jocks

**T**he phrase “environmental law” is used to describe the body of law focusing on humanity’s interaction with the air, water, and land. Needless to say, it is a very complex body of law generated from a variety of resources including, but not limited to, statutes, administrative regulations, international treaties, and caselaw. This article is intended as a general overview of some of the electronic resources that are available for conducting basic research on environmental legal issues.

## Research Strategy

Generally speaking, it makes a lot of sense to begin research using broad resources and general ideas. However, if a researcher knows exactly what he or she is seeking, broad research may be unnecessary. This article has been drafted based on the broad-to-narrow research methodology.

## Broad Resources and Blogs

There are several electronic resources that may prove useful to those starting their research using the broad-to-narrow methodology. Perhaps the best known and most popular broad resource is the Google search engine at <http://www.google.com/>. Google can be searched by entering relevant terms or phrases. Putting a phrase in quotation marks will direct the Google search engine to search for the entire phrase rather than the individual terms of the phrase.

Several databases cover environmental law resources. LexisOne, at [http://www.lexisone.com/legalresearch/legalguide/practice\\_areas/environmental\\_law.htm](http://www.lexisone.com/legalresearch/legalguide/practice_areas/environmental_law.htm),

has links to a variety of environmental law topics and resources, including practice resources, codes and statutes, and links to free caselaw. Megalaw, at <http://www.megalaw.com/mi/top/mienvironmental.php>, is another broad offering possessing a variety of information related to environmental law, including links to federal environmental statutes, environmental law reviews and journals, and links to Michigan-specific environmental code provisions and legislation. Findlaw is another great “foot in the door” resource for researching environmental law at <http://www.findlaw.com/01topics/13environmental/index.html>, and includes information about expert witnesses, documents, briefs, articles and books, and investigators. The Environmental Law Reporter website at <http://www.elr.info/index.cfm> has numerous links to extensive environmental-law-related resources.

Blogs are another great source of information and diverse opinions about environmental issues. The *Wall Street Journal* has such a blog at <http://blogs.wsj.com/law/category/environmental-law/>. Brendan Fitzpatrick, Esq., is the editor of The Environmental Law Blog at <http://www.envirolawblog.org/>. Susan L. Smith, a professor at the Willamette University College of Law, is the editor of the Law Professor’s Environmen-

tal Blog, available at [http://lawprofessors.typepad.com/environmental\\_law/](http://lawprofessors.typepad.com/environmental_law/). Also worth checking out are the Environmental Legal Blogs at <http://environmentallegalblogs.com/>. All these blogs contain opinions about various issues concerning environmental law. Of course, caution is always required when using blogs for resources. Be sure that you check statements of law and citations for accuracy.

A number of other useful tools are freely available online to environmental law researchers. Virtual Chase, an electronic offering from Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll, LLP, is an environmental law research guide furnishing links to a variety of information, including Air Trends Reports and Cambridge Environmental Abstracts. The website is available at <http://www.virtualchase.com/topics/environmental.shtml>. New York University School of Law *Environmental Law Journal* is available online at <http://www1.law.nyu.edu/journals/envtlaw/>. The National Environmental Law Center’s website, at <http://www.nelconline.org/>, includes descriptions of cases and lists of awards, as well as links to applicable laws. The website of the American Bar Association’s Standing Committee on Environmental Law, available at <http://www.abanet.org/publicserv/environmental/>, includes policy positions of

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the committee on a variety of environmental legal topics.

Governmental websites can also be valuable sources. They often provide general explanations of statutory and regulatory schemes and links to the relevant statutes and regulations. Examples include [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov), [www.usace.army.mil/](http://www.usace.army.mil/), [www.fws.gov/](http://www.fws.gov/), [www.michigan.gov/deq/](http://www.michigan.gov/deq/), and [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr). In addition, the specific regulatory agencies under these websites often have databases available for the public to view current permits and pending permit applications, which may play a part in your case.

The resources mentioned above are a fraction of what is available electronically that may be useful when researching environmental law issues and legal developments.

### Michigan Specific

It is usually not difficult to find a number of great Michigan resources online when conducting research in a particular area of law. The coverage of Michigan environmental law resources online is not an exception.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) website is a terrific Michigan-centric resource that contains links to a great number of indispensable resources such as Michigan environmental laws and rules, federal laws and rules, and administrative hearing information. The DEQ laws and rules offering is at <http://www.deq.state.mi.us/lawsandrules/>, and additional information can be accessed at [http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3307\\_4132---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3307_4132---,00.html). Environmental statutory and legislative research can be conducted at the Michigan legislature website at [www.legislature.mi.gov](http://www.legislature.mi.gov). It is also possible to research pending legislation at the legislature website. Michigan attorney general opinions about various legal topics, including environmental law, are available at <http://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,1607,7-164-20988---,00.html>.

Another resource is the State Bar of Michigan Environmental Law Section website at <http://www.michbar.org/environmental/>, which offers links to federal cases and a variety of applicable Michigan rules. Megalaw has a Michigan-centric environmental law of-

fering at <http://www.megalaw.com/mi/top/mienvironmental.php>, which has a nice list of laws addressing environmental concerns.

Northwestern Michigan College's website allows you to download "Legal Tools to Protect Coastal Environments," which was funded by The National Sea Grant Law Center and written by Chris Bzdok of Olson, Bzdok & Howard, P.C. It includes discussion on most of the significant Michigan environmental laws and is available at <http://www.nmc.edu/wsi/legal-tools/toolkit/>.

### Conclusion

The resources highlighted here should prove useful when conducting environmental law research, but for many of the complex issues, it may be necessary to seek more information than what is readily available on the Internet. For that purpose, a number of state law libraries are open to the public. Fortunately, the state law library has created a list of law libraries, which is available at [http://www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-17449\\_18639\\_18657-52451--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-17449_18639_18657-52451--,00.html). ■

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*Lance M. Werner is the library law specialist for the Library of Michigan, Michigan Department of History, Arts, and Libraries. He is a member of the Committee on Libraries, Legal Research, and Legal Publications and the State Bar of Michigan. Previously, Lance was a reference librarian at the Michigan State University Law Library. He earned a BA in psychology from the University of Northern Colorado, a JD from Michigan State University, and an MLIS from Wayne State University.*

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*Jeffrey L. Jocks, an associate with Olson, Bzdok & Howard, P.C., concentrates his practice in environmental law, municipal law, land use law, and estate planning. He has clients throughout Michigan that include environmental advocacy groups, citizen groups, municipalities, and individuals. His practice ranges from complex environmental litigation to municipal representation. He attended Michigan State University College of Law where he graduated summa cum laude. He lives in Traverse City, Michigan with his family.*