

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND INTERNATIONAL TREATIES

The AP Environmental Exam may include multiple-choice questions regarding environmental laws or international treaties. You may also be asked to provide an appropriate environmental law on a free-response question. On the free-response question, be sure you include a law that is applicable to the environmental issue at hand. Don't just select any environmental legislation assuming that it is appropriate for the question you are answering. It is important to remember some international environmental treaties have been ratified by many countries but **not** by the United States. The AP exam will expect you to know which treaties the United States is an active participant in. Below are the main environmental laws or international treaties arranged in the categories similar to the units you have studied in this review book.

INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision-making processes by considering the environmental impacts of their proposed actions; requires agencies to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement detailing impact to the surrounding environment.

CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY

Endangered Species Act: identifies threatened and endangered species in the United States, and puts their protection ahead of economic considerations.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species CITES (international treaty): lists species that cannot be commercially traded as live specimens or wildlife products.

Marine Mammal Protection Act: protects all marine mammals by prohibiting, with certain exceptions, the taking of marine mammals in U.S. waters and by U.S. citizens on the high seas, and the importation of marine mammals and marine mammal products into the United States.

Lacey Act: prohibits interstate transport of wild animals—dead or alive—without federal permit.

AGRICULTURE AND PESTICIDE USE

Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, Rodenticide Act: regulates the effectiveness of pesticides.

Food Quality Protection Act: sets pesticide limits in food, and all active and inactive ingredients must be screened for estrogenic/endocrine effects.

Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Treaty (international treaty not ratified by the United States as of 2009): this treaty originated at the Stockholm convention. It is an international agreement to phase out 12 organic persistent pollutants, also known as the "dirty dozen," such as DDT and PCBs.

ENERGY AND MINING PRACTICES

Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act: regulates coal mining activities in the United States and requires reclaiming of land after use.

Federal Mine Safety and Health Act: sets forth federal health and safety regulations for all coal and non-coal mining operations in the United States.

Energy Policy Act: this U.S. law provides incentives, typically in the form of government subsidies, for various energy resources including fossil fuels, and nuclear and alternative energy sources.

WATER RESOURCES AND POLLUTION

Safe Drinking Water Act: sets maximum contaminant levels for pollutants that may have adverse effects on human health.

Clean Water Act: sets maximum permissible amounts of water pollutants that can be discharged into waterways. Main goals are to reduce surface water pollution into lakes, rivers, and streams.

Water Quality Act: amended the Clean Water Act by addressing storm water pollution issues - requires industrial storm water discharges and municipal sewage discharge facilities to acquire permits.

Ocean Dumping Ban Act: bans dumping of sewage sludge and industrial waste in the ocean.

AIR POLLUTION

Clean Air Act: sets emission standards for cars, addresses requirements for reducing ozone depletion and acid deposition.

Kyoto Protocol (international agreement not signed by the United States as of early 2010): controls global warming by setting greenhouse-gas emissions targets for developed countries.

Montreal Protocol (international agreement signed by the United States): phase-out of ozone-deleting substances such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs).

WASTE DISPOSAL

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act: controls hazardous waste with cradle-to-grave system requirements.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act: identifies superfund sites - designed to identify and clean up abandoned hazardous waste dump sites (CERCLA).

Nuclear Waste Policy Act: encourages development of a U.S. high-level nuclear waste repository site by 2015 (original proposed site was Yucca Mountain, Nevada).

Low-Level Radioactive Policy Act: requires all states to have facilities to handle low-level radioactive wastes.

Basel Convention (international treaty not signed by the United States): treaty drafted as a result of hazardous waste from developed nations being shipped overseas to developing countries. It requires that developing countries must give full permission to accept the hazardous waste. As of early 2010, this treaty has been signed by 172 countries.