

### **Toxic Substance Control Act (1976)**

The TSCA regulates toxic substances. Under it, the EPA can track the approximately 75,000 industrial chemicals currently produced in or imported into the United States. Periodically, the EPA reviews the composition and effects of these chemicals. The EPA can require manufacturers to conduct further tests on substances it considers potentially harmful dangerous. It can also require companies producing substances it considers potentially harmful to the natural environment or human health to file regular reports on those chemicals. Manufacturers must also list and report any new substances they produce and must report to the EPA on their toxicity. Although the EPA rarely uses this power, it can stop the production of any substance it considers too dangerous or for which there is not enough information to determine its effects. Under the TSCA, the EPA can also ban a substance already in use if it considers the substance a threat to human health and the environment.

### **Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (*Superfund Act*) (1980, amended 1986, 1990)**

CERCLA deals with hazardous waste that was produced and disposed of in the past-often illegally and always unsafely. Sites that come under the CERCLA jurisdiction are those that threaten the natural environment or the health of the public. The sites that pose the greatest risk are placed on the National Priorities List (NPL). The federal government usually begins cleanup of these sites and then tries to locate the party responsible to "make the polluter pay." The law also created a tax on the chemical and petroleum industries. The money became part of a trust fund- the Superfund- that is used to clean up hazardous waste sites when the site is abandoned or the party responsible or the damage cannot be determined. Pennsylvania has about 93 NPL sites, but that number changes as old sites are cleaned up and new ones are added.

**Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (1976, amended 1984, 1986)**

The RCRA deals primarily with the production, transportation, treatment, storage, and disposal of any waste considered hazardous. Under the RCRA, generators of hazardous waste must keep strict track of how much they produce, where it is shipped, and where it is sent for disposal. Hazardous waste can only be disposed of in specially designated hazardous waste facilities that are constructed to prevent release of the waste into the environment. The RCRA also strictly regulates the transportation of hazardous wastes, requiring specially permitted trucks to operate along specific routes.

**Water Quality Act (1987)**

This amendment to the Clean Water Act established additional controls on toxic pollutant discharges in "hot spot" areas where pollution problems are especially severe. The act requires states to develop measures to control nonpoint water pollution sources, such as runoff from farm fields and mine and construction sites, as well as developed urban areas. The legislation also continues assistance to local and state government for the building of wastewater treatment plants.

**Food Security Act (1985)**

This legislation, also called the "Farm Bill," includes provisions that deal with preserving the natural environment on farmlands. Among other provisions, the act provides increased protection for wetlands and encourages soil conservation on soils subject to high levels of erosion.

### **Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (1972)**

Under this law the federal government was granted the authority to control the distribution, sale, and use of pesticides. The FIFRA requires farmers, utility companies, and other large-scale users of hazardous pesticides to register when purchasing the chemicals. The law also requires people who handle and apply these pesticides to take tests and receive certification stating that they know how to handle the pesticides safely. The FIFRA requires companies that make pesticides to register them with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA then monitors the products to make sure that they are properly labeled when sold and will not cause excessive harm to the environment, wildlife, or people.

### **Clean Water Act (1972, amended 1977, 1981, 1987)**

The goal of the Clean Water Act was to improve the quality of the nation's rivers, streams, lakes, and bays, making them suitable for swimming and fishing. Two main targets of the CWA were sewage and industrial pollutants. Under the law, billions of dollars were given to state and local governments to build sewage treatment plants (also called wastewater treatment plants) all over the country. These plants greatly decreased the amount of untreated waste pouring into surface waters from sewer systems. The CWA also required each facility releasing substances into U.S. waters to get a permit that would set limits for specific pollutants, depending on the industry involved. The facilities were required for the first time to keep strict records of all releases of pollution into surface waters. The law specified that these records would be open to the public and that citizens could sue facilities that violated their permits. The CWA's citizen suit provision has often been used to stop the release of pollution into surface waters and to punish violators responsible for such releases.

### **Lacey Act (1900, amended 1935, 1945, 1981)**

The first federal law to address wildlife conservation on a nationwide scale, this act prohibited interstate shipment of wildlife killed illegally according to state or territorial law. It also banned the import into the United States of exotic species that could interfere with the growth and healthy development of native plant species and crop plants. The act authorized the federal government to create and implement plans to preserve and restore populations of game birds. The 1981 amendments to the Lacey Act extended protection to rare plant species. They also extended government protection to fish species, which had previously been covered under other laws. Today, the Lacey Act prohibits the import, export, transport, sale, or purchase of wildlife taken or sold in violation of any law, whether that law is state, tribal, federal, or foreign. The act also makes it illegal to mislabel wildlife shipments, bring harmful species into the United States, or import animals under inhumane conditions

### **Endangered Species Act (1973)**

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) authorized the government to identify endangered and threatened plant and animal species and place them under protection to prevent their extinction. It also required the government's lead agencies in this area, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service, to create plans to protect the habitats of threatened or endangered species and plans to help species recover.

### **Safe Drinking Water Act (1974, amended 1977, 1986)**

The SDWA protects drinking water supplies by requiring public drinking water systems to test regularly for several dozen contaminants that can harm human health. The U.S. government has set what are called "maximum contaminant levels" for these pollutants. Drinking water is not considered safe if pollutants exceed these levels. If testing reveals contamination, the water utility must notify the public of the problem, and steps must be taken to correct it.

### **Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (1977)**

This law attempts to minimize the negative effects of mining, such as scarring of Earth's surface and leaching of pollution from abandoned mines or mine wastes. Because mining has been an important activity in Pennsylvania for hundreds of years, the state has a number of mining laws that predate this act.

### **National Environmental Policy Act (1969)**

The NEPA is considered one of the most important of all environmental laws. It requires federal agencies to consider the environmental effects of any of their actions when they undertake, finance, or issue permits for a project. The list of possible environmental effects of a project must be written up in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS includes details of the specific project and its probable impact on air, water, soil, and living organisms. If the project is expected to have an adverse ecological impact, the EIS must also include alternatives that would have less negative environmental impacts. For example, engineers may plan to build a federal highway over a section of wetland. The EIS must show alternative routes and designs that may have less of an environmental impact. In this case, the EIS would include routes that would not disturb the wetland. The NEPA does not apply to the actions of state or local governments or private parties, but many states have passed their own versions of the NEPA, often

called "baby NEPAs." Some of these state laws are stricter than the federal law, requiring an EIS for any project, regardless of its source.

### **Occupational Safety and Health Act (1970)**

This act created the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). OSHA is concerned with making sure that people are safe at work, whether they work in an office or a factory. The act protects workers from safety and health hazards such as excess heat or cold, chemical hazards, unsanitary conditions, high noise levels, and dangers from faulty or poorly designed equipment. The act created the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), which does research that helps OSHA set standards for workplace safety. OSHA is part of the US. Department of Labor.

### **Wilderness Act (1964)**

This law established the National Wilderness System to protect undeveloped public land from mining, oil drilling, logging, grazing, and other similar activities. Today, about 4 percent of U.S. land is contained in national wilderness areas. An overwhelming majority of this acreage is in Alaska. A huge area of the United States (by some estimates, about 150,000 square miles) that could be included in the wilderness system is not part of it because of pressure from mining, lumber, ranching, and other interests that want these areas to stay open for development.

### **Clean Air Act (1970, amended 1977, 1990)**

The CAA regulates air emissions from a number of sources in an attempt to ensure that people in the United States breathe air that is not harmful to their health. Under the CAA, the EPA has established "national ambient air quality standards," or **NAAQS**, for several atmospheric pollutants known to be potential health hazards. Six of these pollutants, called criteria pollutants, are in the table on the facing page. The pollutants are carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen oxides, ozone, particulates, and sulfur

dioxide. The NAAQS set the maximum amount of these pollutants that can be in the outdoor air. If areas of a state have levels of these **pollutants that** exceed the NAAQS, the state must come up with a State Implementation Plan (SIP) specifying air pollution control measures that will be followed to bring the air pollution levels down so that they comply **with** the CAA standards. The CAA also establishes emissions standards that specify the maximum amount of certain harmful pollutants that sources such as factories, cars, and buses can release into the air. . The 1990 CAA amendments require the sale of "cleaner burning gasoline or other fuels" in several cities with serious ozone problems, including Philadelphia.

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