

Federal Environmental Laws that Govern U.S. Mining



More than three dozen federal environmental laws and regulations cover all aspects of mining. The following list includes some of those major laws. In addition, each state has laws and regulations that mining companies must follow.

- National Environmental Policy Act - requires an interdisciplinary approach to environmental decision making.
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act - prevents undue and unnecessary degradation of federal lands.
- Clean Air Act - sets air quality standards.
- Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act) - directs standards for surface water quality and controlling discharges to surface water.
- Safe Drinking Water Act - directs standards for quality of drinking water supplied to the public (states are primary authorities) and regulating underground injection operations.
- Solid Waste Disposal Act - regulates generation, storage and disposal of hazardous waste and manages solid, non-hazardous waste (states).
- Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act requires reporting of hazardous substance releases and inventory of chemicals handled.
- Toxic Substance Control Act - requires regulation of chemicals that present risk to health or environment.
- Endangered Species Act - lists threatened plants and animals; protection plans mandated.
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act - protects nearly all bird species.
- Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act - regulates coal mining operations and reclamation.

Other laws that impact mining include:

- the Rivers and Harbors Act,
- the Federal Mining Law,
- the National Historic Preservation Act,
- the Law Authorizing Treasury's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to Regulate Sale, Transport and Storage of Explosives, and
- the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act.