

fisheries, and water and soil conservation also serve to protect the environment.

The national laws are supplemented by State Council regulations. There are over 20 such regulations, which generally are more technical and specific than the statutes. These regulations apply to a diverse range of areas, such as noise control, environmental pollution in offshore oil exploration and the prevention of vessel-induced sea pollution. Some of the regulations, for example the Implementing Regulations for the Water Pollution and Control Law, clarify the administration of environmental statutes.

The national laws and State Council regulations are supported by regional implementing regulations. Chinese laws still tend to emphasize basic principles and provide only broad administrative guidelines. It is the responsibility of provincial governments (and in the case of Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin, the municipal governments) to implement regulations that take into account their respective "special circumstances". Consequently, while China has national environmental laws, there are in effect regional variations throughout the country.

Environmental decision-making in China is neither transparent nor easily understood.⁷⁸ The State Environmental Protection Commission (SEPC), which includes the heads of ministries and agencies, is the highest national level consultative body for environmental issues. Other commissions, notably the State Planning Commission (SPC), which coordinates China's economic policies, and the State Science and Technology Commission (SSTC) also actively participate in the formulation of environmental policy.⁷⁹ China's principal environmental organization

⁷⁸Drafting environmental legislation is a painstaking task. The National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) circulates a first draft to all the relevant line ministries. China has a large number of such ministries, as its government structure is still traditionally that of a communist government. These ministries include: the Ministry of Light Industry; the Ministry of Geology and Mineral Resources; the Ministry of Construction; the Ministry of Power Industry; the Ministry of Coal Industry; the Ministry of Machine-Building Industry; the Ministry of Electronic Industry; the Ministry of Metallurgical Industry; the Ministry of Chemical Industry; the Ministry of Water Resources; the Ministry of Forestry; and the Ministry of Agriculture, in addition to SSTC and SPC. Each of these ministries must provide their comments to NEPA and the proposed legislation is revised until there is a basic consensus on the language. Then, it is passed to the SEPC for review. Once the draft legislation has completed this stage, it goes to the State Council for approval. It does not, however, become law until the National People's Congress votes on its acceptance at its annual three-week session (usually in March), although this is, in fact, nothing more than a rubber-stamp of the State Council's decision. This process is cumbersome and slow.

⁷⁹World Resources Institute, World Resources 1994-95, p. 64.