

## Environmental policy

Strictly, an environmental policy can be defined as a government's chosen course of action or plan to address issues such as **pollution** , **wildlife** protection, **land use** , energy production and use, waste generation, and waste disposal. In reality, the way a particular government handles environmental problems is most often not a result of a conscious choice from a set of alternatives. More broadly, then, a government's environmental policy may be characterized by examining the overall orientation of its responses to environmental challenges as they occur, or by defining its policy as the sum of plans for, and reactions to, environmental issues made by any number of different arms of government.

A society's environmental policy will be shaped by the actions of its leaders in relation to the five following questions:

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- Should government intervene in the regulation of the **environment** or leave resolution of environmental problems to the legal system or the market?
- If government intervention is desirable, at what level should that intervention take place? In the [United States](#), for example, how should responsibility for resolution of environmental problems be divided between and among federal, state and local governments and who should have *primary* responsibility?

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- If government intervenes at some level, how much protection should it give? How safe should the people be and what are the economic trade-offs necessary to ensure that level of safety?

- Once environmental standards have been set, what are the methods to attain them? How does the system control the sources of environmental destruction so that the environmental goals are met?
- Finally, how does the system monitor the environment for compliance to standards and how does it punish those who violate them?

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