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Review: *Law and the Environment: A Multidisciplinary Reader*

By Robert Percival and Dorothy C. Alevizatos

Reviewed by [Shalendra D. Sharma](#)
University of San Francisco

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Percival, Robert and Dorothy C. Alevizatos. *Law and the Environment: A Multidisciplinary Reader*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997. 439 p. US \$29.95 paper ISBN: 1-56639-524-0.

Confronted with growing environmental problems, the world has witnessed a political awakening. Transboundary and international conferences and treaties regarding global warming, ozone depletion and habitat-biodiversity loss are but a few signs that the world has entered a new age of environmental diplomacy. In this new age environmental issues will share center stage with the more traditional economic and security concerns. Paralleling these developments, international environmental law has emerged as a distinct academic discipline, with a growing number of institutions of higher learning concentrating on legal responses to transboundary and global environmental problems. The book under review is an excellent addition to this emerging field. The authors' skillful selection and editing of some of the most important writings on environmental law, science, and policy has resulted in a comprehensive multidisciplinary volume enabling readers to explore environmental issues in all their richness and complexity.

The book is divided into four parts, each providing a different focus on the nature and scope of environmental problems and the attempts to use legal instruments to address these concerns. The four chapters in part I introduce alternative perspectives on the nature and sources of environmental problems, including ecological, economic and ethical perspectives and their implications for legal and regulatory policy.

Part II examines how society has sought to use legal instruments to protect the environment. Chapter 5 provides a nuanced early history of environmental regulation with particular reference to how society responded to environmental problems before the emergence of national regulatory programs. Chapter 6 examines the political forces that generated a burst of federal legislative activity to protect the environment during the 1970s and 1980s. Chapter 7 provides a lucid non-technical overview of the structure of current environmental law

and an introduction to the debate over the efficiency and effectiveness of the current regulatory system.

Part III explores how law is translated into regulatory policy. Chapter 9 discusses how citizens groups and the public influence regulatory decisions, while chapter 10 provides a balanced examination of the complexity of forces that have made it extremely difficult for regulatory agencies to implement environmental laws.

Part IV explores the globalization of environmental policy and other important trends that are likely to shape the future of environmental law. Lynton Cladwell's chapter nicely traces the emergence of international environmental law as well as the difficulty countries face in reconciling domestic development goals with international environmental concerns. Chapters 12 and 13 examine the relationship between trade liberalization and the environment.

The article by Gene Grossman and Alan Krueger is a must read because the authors forcefully argue that trade liberalization ultimately will produce environmental benefits by promoting economic growth that will enable citizens in developing countries to demand increased environmental amenities. However, the critical question of how the new World Trade Organization will impact trade and domestic and international environmental legislation is not at all discussed. It is the only gap (and a big one) in an otherwise excellent volume.

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