

ABOUT THE DIVISION



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WHAT WE DO



Environment and Natural Resources Division Recruitment Video

Nearly one-half of the Division's lawyers bring cases against those who violate the nation's civil and criminal pollution-control laws. Others defend environmental challenges to government programs and activities and represent the United States in matters concerning the stewardship of the nation's natural resources and public lands.

The Division is also responsible for the acquisition of real property by eminent domain for the federal government, and brings and defends cases under the wildlife protection laws. In addition, the Division litigates cases concerning Indian rights and claims.

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ORGANIZATION

The Environment and Natural Resources Division of the Department of Justice handles environmental and natural resources litigation on behalf of the United States. The work of the Division arises under approximately 150 federal civil and criminal statutes, including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, CERCLA (Superfund), Safe Drinking Water Act, Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, and Tucker Act.

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HISTORY

The richness and complexity of the Division's history is inseparable from the larger story of the growth and maturation of American society in the 20th Century. In the early 1900s, Americans struggled to balance competing interests stemming from westward expansion, preservation of natural spaces, resource disputes on public and tribal lands, and other such issues. Disagreements soon erupted over these difficult questions.

On November 16, 1909, Attorney General George Wickersham signed a two-page order creating "The Public Lands Division" of the Department of Justice to step into the breach and address the critical litigation that ensued. He assigned all cases concerning "enforcement of the Public Land Law", including Indian rights cases, to the new Division, and transferred a staff of nine -- six attorneys and three stenographers -- to carry out those responsibilities.

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OUR PARTNERS

Collaboration in Civil Cases

As a result of the partnership efforts listed below, ENRD has brought joint civil enforcement cases with nearly every state. We have found that these joint cases are particularly effective in achieving record-setting results for the environment as well as obtaining record-setting financial awards.

Collaboration in Criminal Cases

ENRD routinely cooperates with state and local law enforcement officials in prosecuting pollution and wildlife crimes cases. ENRD regularly provides faculty for state environmental criminal enforcement training, frequently working with the four regional environmental enforcement associations: the Northeast Environmental Project, the Southeast Environmental Enforcement Network, the Midwest Environmental Enforcement Association, and the Western States Project. Working with U.S. Attorneys' Offices and state and local law enforcement agencies, ENRD has promoted the formation of regional environmental crimes task forces. There are now more than 50 such task forces.

Collaboration with Tribes

ENRD's Indian Resources Section represents the United States in its trust capacity for Indian tribes and their members, and routinely files and defends cases for the benefit of tribes. ENRD commonly collaborates with particular tribes as part of this work.

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