

SCHEDULES

Schedules in the Environmental Protection Act include a List of Hazardous Substances, and a List of Factors, which includes Characteristics and Composition of Substances and Characteristics of Dumping Site and Method of Deposit.

THE NEXT STEPS: FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Department of the Environment updated the EPA in 1998. The **Environmental Protection (Amendment) Act** increased penalties, i.e., higher fines and longer prison sentences for offenders.

The D.O.E. hopes to obtain equipment to set up an environmental laboratory in order to monitor emissions and discharges and keep them within levels as specified in the EPA and its Regulations.

Additionally, in order to improve the effectiveness of existing laws, the D.O.E. has sponsored workshops on Belizean environmental legislation for Judges and Magistrates and training of Enforcement Officers in enforcement methods.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Copies of the Environmental Protection Act are available for purchase at the Department of the Environment. The D.O.E. has also published several booklets detailing

environmental laws and regulations, including Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, Procedures for the Preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment, Guide for Developers, and the Compendium of Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management Legislation in Belize

Contact D.O.E. for more information.



Department of the Environment
10/12 Ambergris Avenue
Belmopan
Phone: 822-2816 / 2542
Fax: 822-2862
Email: envirodept@btl.net
Website: www.doe.gov.bz

**Environmental Protection
is Everybody's Business**

A QUICK LOOK

AT THE

ENVIRONMENTAL

PROTECTION

ACT



*DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND THE ENVIRONMENT*

INTRODUCTION

The **Environmental Protection Act of 1992** (Chapter 328 of the Laws of Belize) is the premier piece of environmental legislation in Belize. The Act establishes the Department of the Environment and specifies the functions of the Department. It also makes specific prohibitions on the control of pollution and dumping, sets out requirements for Environmental Impact Assessments, and describes procedures for the investigation of offences.

The **Environmental Protection Act** is often referred to as the EPA, and the main sections are as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The EPA officially established the Department of the Environment, which is headed by a public officer known as the Chief Environmental Officer, appointed by the Governor General. Additional staff includes Environmental Officers and Environmental Technicians, who are appointed by the Public Services Commission.

The Department, known commonly as D.O.E., is responsible for the protection and rational use of Belize's natural resources, the long-term assessment of our natural resources, and the prevention and control of pollution. The D.O.E. also has a responsibility for educating the public about the environmental issues affecting Belize.

PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF POLLUTION

The EPA gives the Minister the authority to make regulations to specify permitted levels of pollution emissions, waste discharges, and noise into any area of the environment.

To date, the Ministry has made regulations for Effluent Limitations (No. 94 of 1995) under the EPA. Regulations have also been established to address Air, Soil, and Water Pollution, Noise Pollution and Littering Offences. Draft legislation has been prepared for Hazardous Waste and there is a proposed amendment to the Solid Waste Management Authority Act.

PROHIBITIONS ON DUMPING

The EPA states that *"No person shall dump, or dispose of, or deposit any garbage, refuse, toxic substances or hazardous wastes in any place that might directly or indirectly damage or destroy flora or fauna, or pollute water resources or the environment."*

In addition, the dumping of like materials at sea by any ship, other marine vessels, or aircraft is prohibited.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

The **Environmental Protection Act** requires Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) to be prepared by all persons who intend to undertake projects that may significantly affect the environment. Such EIAs are to be submitted to D.O.E. for evaluation. The EPA requires that EIAs identify and evaluate

the effects of a proposed project on human beings, flora and fauna, soil, water, air and climatic factors, material assets including cultural heritage and landscape, natural resources, and the ecological balance.

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations, 1995, a subsidiary to the EPA, also specify what EIAs should address and categorizes projects that should be considered in the EIA process.

NUTRIENTS

This section of the EPA is meant to limit the numbers and amounts of nutrients introduced into the environment (in order to reduce the growth of algae in water resources).

INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS

Complaints about pollution may be made by the public to the D.O.E. The Department is required to investigate these complaints, and where sufficient evidence exists, the Department may begin legal proceedings or refer the matter to the Police for further action.

PROCEDURES AND PENALTIES

This section details the powers of the D.O.E. to enter premises in order to investigate complaints and other powers of enforcement. Also included are details of what constitutes offences under the EPA and the penalties for those offences.