



IUCN – The World Conservation Union

Water Law Series – Issue 12

IUCN Environmental Law Programme: Our Capability

What is the IUCN Environmental Law Programme?

It is an integrated programme of activities to achieve the IUCN vision and mission: 'a just world that values and conserves nature'. The Programme includes the collective efforts of the:

- IUCN Commission on Environmental Law – a volunteer network of over 800 lawyers in more than 130 countries;
- IUCN Environmental Law Centre – a professional office established in Bonn, Germany in 1970 with over 15 highly skilled legal and information specialists;
- IUCN lawyers in regional and country offices around the world.

Head of the Environmental Law Programme, John Scanlon, is a former Commissioner on the Murray Darling Basin Commission (MDBC), Member of the Australian High Level Steering Group on National Water Reform and the National Competition Policy Water Reform Task Force, and was an Advisor to the World Commission on Dams.

What is the IUCN Commission on Environmental Law?

The Commission is a volunteer network, the origins of which go back to the 1950's. It is led by a Chair who is elected by the IUCN membership at the World Conservation Congress, which is held every 3-4 years. The Chair reports to the IUCN Council and Congress. The Commission is managed by a regionally representative Steering Committee and obtains financial and administrative support from the IUCN.

The Commission has a professional and mutually supportive relationship with the IUCN Environmental Law Centre, from which it also obtains its administrative support. The Commission has established a series of Specialist Groups, including the ***Water and Wetlands Specialists Group*** – being a network of some of the world's leading water law experts Chaired by Megan Dyson, legal consultant to the MDBC and principal adviser on the drafting of the Water Resources Act 1997 (South Australia) – to support and contribute to the activities of the IUCN.

What is the IUCN Environmental Law Centre?

The Centre is a part of the IUCN Secretariat and is the global focal point for co-ordinating the development and delivery of the IUCN Environmental Law Programme. The Centre has enjoyed the strong support of the German Government and many other donors, including Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and the EC, since its establishment in Bonn in 1970.



The Centre includes Water and Wetlands as one of its focal areas of work, led by Dr Alejandro Iza, and works very closely with the IUCN Water and Nature Initiative and the Commission's Water and Wetlands Specialists Group.

The Centre hosts the ECOLEX Management Unit, a joint initiative of IUCN, UNEP and FAO, which provides access to the data bases of the three organisations covering national legislation, treaties, soft law, EU legal instruments and literature. Visit: www.ecolex.org

The Centre hosts many research fellows and interns from across the globe.

Does the IUCN ELP work with other partners?

IUCN is a partnership of members and the IUCN Environmental Law Programme has been built up on the basis of working in genuine partnership with others. IUCN has 79 State members and 112 government agency members. The 735 IUCN non government members *include* the following leading environmental law organisations:

Environmental Law Institute (USA), Environmental Law Society (Peru), Law for a Green Planet Institute (Brazil), Foundation for Environment and Natural Resources (Argentina), Asia Pacific Centre for Environmental Law (Singapore), Centre for International Environmental Law (USA) and FIELD (UK)

These organisations have a long history of collaboration with the IUCN Environmental Law Programme as do a number of other organisations including the Ramsar Secretariat.

The IUCN has also entered into Memoranda of Understanding with UNEP and FAO in relation to the operation and expansion of ECOLEX, with UNEP and the Regional Environment Centre for Central and Eastern Europe regarding joint activities in Eastern Europe, with SPREP regarding activities in the South Pacific region and with UNITAR.

The focus of IUCN Environmental Law Programme

Our focus is on the most constructive role the law can play in addressing water and wetlands issues. This *includes* the role of the law in relation to:

- Taking an ecosystem approach – including environmental flows,
- *Applied* governance – including basin management and devolution of authority;
- Integrated water resource management;
- Property rights, trade and pricing – including related equity issues;
- Adapting to climate change;
- Environmental impact assessment;
- Community participation – including conflict resolution;
- Indigenous peoples perspectives; and
- Ethics and Human rights issues.

IUCN also actively contributes its expertise to the development and ongoing implementation of international instruments, including the Ramsar Convention.

IUCN Environmental Law Centre for the IUCN Environmental Law Programme

Contact the IUCN Environmental Law Centre at: waterlaw@elc.iucn.org

Visit the IUCN Environmental Law Programme Website at: www.iucn.org/themes/law

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