**Environmental Law: A Brief, Non-Comprehensive Timeline:**  
1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act  
1934 Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act  
1940 Bald Eagle Protection Act  
1948 Federal Water Pollution Control Act  
1963 Land and Water Conservation Fund  
1964 Wilderness Act  
1969 National Environmental Policy Act  
1973 Endangered Species Act  
1977 Clean Air Act  
1980 Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act   
1989 North American Wetlands Conservation Act  
  
**1. Clean Air Act of 1970**   
In 1970, the United States Congress passed the Clean Air Act (CAA) to establish air quality standards designed to minimize the air pollution found most harmful to human health. Six pollutants were specifically targeted--particulate matter, sulfur dioxide (SO2), carbon monoxide (CO), ozone (O3), nitrogen dioxide (NOx), and lead (Pb). The standards set by the Clean Air Act were called the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS - pronounced "nax"). The NAAQS were aimed at large "stationary sources" of the targeted pollutants, such as power plants and large factories. The 1970 Act required that pollution control devices be installed on all new facilities (or sources), and mandated that each state comply with the new standards by 1975.  
In a fateful move, the Act exempted existing plants from this requirement, reasoning that (1) retrofitting these plants with the new devices would be too costly for both electricity producers and customers; (2) it would be more efficient to install these devices on new facilities; and (3) the old plants would be retired soon anyway, paving the way for new facilities in which the pollution control technology could be readily installed. This exemption, however, was the first of several facets of the law that seemed to offer large polluters incentives to take actions that actually resulted in more pollution. Faced with a choice between keeping their older, mostly coal-fired plants running and building new plants with the required anti-pollution technology, many companies found it more economical to keep the old plants running. Instead of building new plants, companies simply chose to modify and upgrade the older, pre-existing plants.  
Most air quality regulations in the United States are promulgated and enforced by three federal agencies: the Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration, and the Mining Safety and Health Administration. The EPA is primarily focused on pollution to the environment, whereas the second two agencies are concerned with occupational air pollutants. State and local government agencies have their own laws and regulations that are often similar to those of the federal government. For a better understanding of the regulatory enforcement relationship between federal and state governments, see this explanation by the U.S. EPA.  
Although the first Clean Air Act was passed in 1963, the current national air pollution program is based on the 1970 version of the law. The 1963 Clean Air Act relied on states to issue and enforce regulations regarding air pollution. Concerned that states were not doing enough, and that air pollution is an interstate problem because wind carries pollutants across borders, Congress amended the Clean Air Act in 1970. The 1970 Act required the newly established Environmental Protection Agency to set and enforce national standards for air pollution.  
The Clean Air Act has been amended several times. The 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments, on which current regulations are based, were the most far-reaching. The Clean Air Act authorizes the Environmental Protection Agency to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) which establish acceptable concentrations of six criteria pollutants: ozone (O3), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO2), lead (Pb), nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and particulate matter (PM2.5).  
Levels of pollutants are measured by state and local environmental agencies at air monitoring sites in cities and towns across the U.S. Every major metropolitan area has at least one monitoring site. Currently 150 areas are classified as nonattainment areas for one or more of the criteria pollutants. States and local governments that are not in compliance with EPA air quality standards may be forced to take costly measures to reduce pollutants, including imposing stricter standards for emissions from motor vehicles, requiring the use of alternative clean fuels, and placing additional controls on industries and business.  
In November 1996, the EPA issued a proposal to tighten standards for particulate matter and ozone under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The proposed changes immediately became controversial and questions were raised about the costs of the standards and their potential benefits. After much debate, the regulations were issued in July 1997, although enforcement measures have been postponed.  
Outcomes-

* Sharply reduced direct pollutant discharges into waterways
* Financed municipal wastewater treatment facilities, and manages polluted runoff
* Achieved the broader goal of restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters
* Supported the protection and propagation of fish, shellfish, and wildlife, and recreation in and on the water

**Bottom Line- Set emission standards for cars, and limits for release of air pollutants of all other industry**  
  
**2. Clean Water Act**   
The Clean Water Act (U.S. Code: Title 33, Chapter 26) establishes and maintains goals and standards for U.S. water quality and purity. The goal of the Act was to eliminate the discharge of pollutants into rivers, lakes, streams and other waterways, and to attain, wherever possible, waters deemed "fishable and swimmable." It has been amended several times, most prominently in 1987 to increase controls on toxic pollutants, and in 1990, to more effectively address the hazard of oil spills.  
**Bottom Line-** set maximum permissible amounts of water pollutants that can be discharged into waterways. The goal was to make ALL surface waters swimmable and fishable  
  
**3. Soil and Water Conservation Act of 1977**  
Soil and water conservation programs to aid landowners and users. Set up conditions to continue to evaluate the condition of US Soil, water, and resources.  
  
**4. Food Security Act of 1985**  
Nicknamed "Swampbuster", discouraged converting wetlands into nonwetlands. 1990 legislation denies federal farm supplements and subsidies to those who converted wetlands to agriculture, and provided a restoration of benefits to those who unknowingly converted lands to wetlands.   
Also set pesticide limits in food, & all active and inactive ingredients must be screened for estrogenic/endocrine (hormonal) effects  
  
**5. Marine Mammals Protection Act of 1972**  
This act protected marine mammals from falling below their optimum sustainable population levels.  
 **6. Endangered Species Act of 1973**Prohibits the commerce of those species considered to be endangered or threatened. Identifies threatened and endangered species in the US, and puts their protection ahead of economic considerations. "Threatened" species are those that are at-risk because of reduced habitats or falling numbers. "Endangered" species are those that will go extinct if attempts are not made to aid in reproduction and replace lost habitat.  
  
**7. CITES- Convention On International Trade In Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (1973)**  
The same year as the ESA, this agreement bans the capture, exportation, and sale of any endangered or threatened species. No species on these lists may be transported to, from, or through the United States. Other countries also agreed to this Act. This helped ensure the survival of threatened species that were previously used in trade (ie ivory from tusks). No living specimen or "wildlife product" could be traded if it came from an endangered or threatened species.

**8. Wilderness Act of 1964**  
Establishes a review of road-free areas of 5000 acres or more and islands within the National Wildlife Refuge or the National Park System for inclusion in the National Preservation System. This act restricts activity in these areas. This means that areas (in 1964) of 5000+ acres that did not have roads built on them were reviewed for possible inclusion within the National Park System.  
  
**9. Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968**  
Established a National Wild and Scenic Rivers System for the protection of rivers with important scenic, recreational, fish, wildlife, and other values.  
  
**10. Anadromous Fish Conservation Act of 1965**  
Protected fish that live in the sea but grow up and breed in fresh water (ie limits salmon catches as they use freshwater streams to breed)  
  
**11. Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976**  
Governs the conservation and management of ocean fishing and fisheries (works in tandem with the Marine Mammals Protection Act- although that act just covers OCEANIC MAMMALS)  
  
**12. United Nations Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982)**  
Sets out principles for conservation and management of certain types of fish (International agreement)  
  
**13. Mining Act of 1872**  
Governs prospecting and mining of minerals on publicly owned land  
  
**14. Mineral Leasing Act of 1920**  
Permits the Bureau of Land Management to grant leases for development of deposits of coal, phosphate, potash, sodium, sulfur, and other leasable minerals on public domain lands (affects Mining Act)  
  
**15. Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) of 1980**  
Also known as the "Superfund" Act. This regulates mineral processing wastes. Hazardous wastes dumped somewhere can also be cleaned up through government funding because of this Act (provides funding to clean up abandoned hazardous wastes). A trust fund is established to help provide compensation for cleaning up these sites.  
 **16. Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977**  
Established a program for regulating surface coal mining and reclamation activities. It established mandatory standards for these activities on state and federal lands, including a requirement that adverse impacts on fish wildlife, and related environmental values be minimized. Requires coal strip mines to reclaim the land after mining is completed.

**17. Resource Conservation and Recovery Acts of 1976 (RCRA)**  
To date, the RCRA is probably the most significant waste management legislation in American history. Among other things, the RCRA delegated administrative authority to the EPA to provide technical and financial assistance to state waste management systems. The act primarily focuses on municipal and industrial non-hazardous wastes. It also helps with some mineral processing wastes. This act also controls Hazardous wastes with a "cradle to grave" system. Meaning, hazardous wastes must be transported and disposed of correctly regardless of whose responsibility they might be.

* Amendments in 1984- required states to issue landfill permits to ensure that human health and the environment are protected from hazardous waste. The Amendment requires the EPA to review the adequacy of state permit programs and make revisions within the state if necessary.
* Amendment in 1991-The amendments required all municipal solid waste landfills to have liners, leachate collection facilities, and methods for monitoring emissions from gases.

**18. Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974 and 1996**  
Establishes a federal program to monitor and increase the safety of the drinking water supply. It does not apply to wells that supply less than 25 people. Sets maximum pollution and contamination levels for drinking water meant for public use.   
  
**19. Ocean Dumping Act of 1972**  
Made it unlawful for any person to dump, or transport for the purpose of dumping, sewage sludge or industrial waste into ocean waters. This is limited to ocean waters within a certain distance of the US coast.  
  
**20. Oil Spill Prevention and Liability Act of 1990**  
Strengthened EPA's ability to prevent and respond to catastrophic oil spills. Established a trust fund (financed by tax and oil) which is available to clean up spills.  
  
**21. The Toxic Substances Control Act (TOSCA) of 1976**  
Gave the EPA the ability to track the 75,000 industrial chemicals currently produced or imported into the United States. EPA repeatedly screens these chemicals and can require reporting or testing of those that may pose and environmental or human-health hazard. Allows the EPA to ban the manufacture and import of those chemicals that pose an unreasonable risk.  
  
**22. Nuclear Waste Policy Act or 1982**  
Established both the Federal government's responsibility to provide a place for the permanent disposal of high-level radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel, and the generators' responsibility to bear the costs of permanent storage and disposal of high-level radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel, and the generators' responsibility to bear the costs of permanent disposal. The US Federal government must set aside a location for long-term hazardous waste disposal- YUCCA MOUNTAIN.  
  
**23. National Environmental Policy Act of 1970**  
Creates the Council on Environmental Quality that resulted in the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from the consolidation of various environmental agencies.  
Also provides that federal agencies create and prepare environmental impact statements about any changes to infrastructure or roadways that will affect any parts of the federally protected environment.  
  
**24. Pollution Prevention Act of 1990**  
Designed to promote source reduction of pollution. Requires minimal standards for air pollution and water pollution leaving factories.

**25. International Environmental Protection Act of 1983**  
The President of the United States is authorized to assist countries in protecting and maintaining wildlife habitats and in developing sound wildlife management and plant conservation programs. Special efforts should be made to establish and maintain wildlife sanctuaries, reserves,and parks, enact and enforce anti-poaching measures, and identify, study, and catalog animal and plant species, especially in tropical environments.  
  
**26. Environmental Education Act of 1990**  
Established the Office of Environmental Education within the Environmental Protection Agency to develop and administer a federal environmental education program.  
  
**27. Montreal Accord/Protocol of 1978**  
An international agreement to cut the emissions of CFCs (and other materials) that damage the ozone layer. Amended in Copenhagen in 1992 to include other key ozone-depleting chemicals.

**28. Basel Convention on the Control of the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes in 1992**  
169 parties aimed to protect human health and the environment against the adverse effects resulting from the generation, management, transboundary (across border) movements and disposal of hazardous and other wastes.  
  
**29. Kyoto Protocol of 1997**  
Requires the participating 38 developed countries to cut their greenhouse gas emissions back to 5% below 1990 levels.

* Has not yet been accomplished by the United States

**30. Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act of 1986**   
Also known as Title III of SARA , this legislation was enacted by Congress to help local communities protect public health, safety, and the environment from chemical hazards. Under the law, the Environmental Protection Agency requires annual reports of toxic chemical releases to the environment.  
 **31. Solid Waste Disposal Act of 1965**  
From the early part of this century, solid waste management in American had traditionally been the responsibility of local governments. The federal government's role in waste management has been gradually expanding since the environmental movement of the 1960s when, in the Solid Waste Disposal Act of 1965, Congress financed a statewide survey of dumps and landfills to better understand the scope of waste disposal problems in the U.S. The Act also provided more waste management safeguards.  
  
**32. Madrid Protocol**  
Does not allow any mineral exploration of Antarctica for 50 years (ends in 2040).  
  
**33. Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants**  
Seeks to protect human health from the 12 most toxic chemicals (includes 8 chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticides). **Still allows for DDT to be used for control of mosquitoes that spread malaria.**  
  
**34. Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918**  
Allocates funds for the study of migrating birds and limits the number of migrating birds that may be caught, captured, and killed along their migration routes. Also restricts citizens from harboring eggs of migratory birds and attempting to prevent nest-building of migratory birds.