

WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §22-1-1

§22-1-1. Legislative findings; legislative statement of policy and purpose.

(a) The Legislature finds that:

(1) Restoring and protecting the environment is fundamental to the health and welfare of individual citizens, and our government has a duty to provide and maintain a healthful environment for our citizens.

(2) The state has the primary responsibility for protecting the environment; other governmental entities, public and private organizations and our citizens have the primary responsibility of supporting the state in its role as protector of the environment.

(3) Governmental decisions on matters which relate to the use, enhancement, preservation, protection and conservation of the environment should be made after public participation and public hearings.

(4) Efficiency in the wise use, enhancement, preservation, protection and conservation of the environment can best be accomplished by an integrated and interdisciplinary approach in decision making and would benefit from the coordination, consolidation and integration of state programs and agencies which are significantly concerned with the use, enhancement, preservation, protection and conservation of the environment.

(5) Those functions of government which regulate the environment should be consolidated in order to accomplish the purposes set forth in this article, to carry out the environmental functions of government in the most efficient and cost effective manner, to protect human health and safety and, to the greatest degree practicable, to prevent injury to plant, animal and aquatic life, improve and maintain the quality of life of our citizens, and promote economic development consistent with environmental goals and standards.

(b) The Legislature declares that the establishment of a Department of Environmental Protection is in the public interest and will promote the general welfare of the State of West Virginia without sacrificing social and economic development. It is the policy of the State of West Virginia, in cooperation with other governmental agencies, public and private organizations, and the citizens of this state, to use all practicable means and measures to prevent or eliminate harm to the environment and biosphere, to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations. The purposes of this chapter are:

(1) To strengthen the commitment of this state to restore, maintain and protect the environment;

- (2) To consolidate environmental regulatory programs in a single state agency;
- (3) To provide a comprehensive program for the conservation, protection, exploration, development, enjoyment and use of the natural resources of the State of West Virginia;
- (4) To supplement and complement the efforts of the state by coordinating state programs with the efforts of other governmental entities, public and private organizations and the general public; to improve the quality of the environment, the public health and public enjoyment of the environment, and the propagation and protection of animal, aquatic and plant life, in a manner consistent with the benefits to be derived from strong agricultural, manufacturing, tourism and energy-producing industries;
- (5) Insofar as federal environmental programs require state participation, to endeavor to obtain and continue state primacy in the administration of such federally-mandated environmental programs, and to endeavor to maximize federal funds which may be available to accomplish the purposes of the state and federal environmental programs and to cooperate with appropriate federal agencies to meet environmental goals;
- (6) To encourage the increased involvement of all citizens in the development and execution of state environmental programs;
- (7) To promote improvements in the quality of the environment through research, evaluation and sharing of information;
- (8) To improve the management and effectiveness of state environmental protection programs;
- (9) To increase the accountability of state environmental protection programs to the Governor, the Legislature and the public generally; and
- (10) To promote pollution prevention by encouraging reduction or elimination of pollutants at the source through process modification, material substitutions, in-process recycling, reduction of raw material use or other source reduction opportunities.