



## US-China Partnership for Environmental Law

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Photo: Mark Washburn

Chinese government officials at an energy law training workshop organized by the US-China Partnership for Environmental law.

### ENVIRONMENTAL RULE OF LAW AS KEY TO CHINA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

China continues to face serious environmental problems resulting from its rapid economic development, and its legal structures and mechanisms remain key in enhancing environmental quality and controlling pollution. Yet, China lacks trained environmental lawyers who are knowledgeable and can competently apply and enforce the law, as well as instructors who can capably train the next generation of environmental advocates to advance China's environmental regulatory system. China's central government recently made environmental law a required subject in all law schools and university law departments, but much further work remains. Developing well-trained legal professionals, law professors, and effective regulatory policies and laws is a critical part of China's pursuit of sustainable development.

### ABOUT THE US-CHINA PARTNERSHIP FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

Vermont Law School (VLS) in collaboration with Sun Yat-sen University (SYSU) launched the Partnership for Environmental Law in 2006 in response to the lack of knowledge, skills, and academic infrastructure needed to address environmental and energy challenges in China through the rule of law. Program objectives include: (1) strengthening the capacity of Chinese educational, governmental, non-profit, and business sectors to solve environmental and energy problems through policy, law, and regulation; (2) improving China's policies, systems, laws, and regulations to advance the development and enforcement of environmental and energy law; and (3) enhancing networks in China to advance best practices in environmental protection and energy regulation.

The program addresses critically important priorities through a broad range of capacity-building activities. In addition to strengthening collaborating partners, the program is working to establish a strong network of environmental law professionals in Guangdong Province and in Beijing and is expanding the collaborative effort to other educational institutions on the national level as well as key government agencies. Through these efforts, the program is giving Chinese legal professionals, government officials, and others the tools to become better environmental problem-solvers.





Photo: Zhong Xinxuan

American and international judges leading an environmental courts workshop at the National Judges College.

## APPROACH

The program develops and prepares China's leaders in environmental and energy law by training legal professionals, regulators, and lawmakers and by helping to build and strengthen environmental institutions and in policy development and research. Funded through a Congressional earmark, a program pursues its objectives in the following areas:

**Training.** The program sponsors workshops and seminars for lawyers, educators, officials, and other influential individuals, including local, regional, and national leaders. The training of law instructors occupies a place of particular importance; enhancing their pedagogical skills and knowledge "trains the trainers" of the next generation of environmental lawyers in China. The program also provides in-depth training in the US for individuals with potential to play significant roles in environmental and energy law in China.

**Institution Building.** The program supports the development, strengthening, and expansion of institutions and associations that advance environmental law in China, including the Environmental Law Society of the China Society for Environmental Sciences, the Guangdong Province Environmental Law Scholars Network, the Center for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims, and environmental law programs at SYSU, China University of Political Science and Law, and Tsinghua University.

**Research and Policy Development.** The program supports a variety of research and policy development projects. Priority focus areas include: environmental impact assessment (EIA) requirements related to natural resource extraction and exploration by Chinese corporations operating in Africa, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere; policy options for reducing China's environmental impact and footprint globally; environmental enforcement; and climate change.

## IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS\*

Vermont Law School, Sun Yat-sen University, China University of Political Science and Law, Center for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims, China Society for Environmental Sciences, Tsinghua University, National Development and Reform Commission Training Center, China Environment Forum at the Woodrow Wilson Center, and Regulatory Assistance Project.

## COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS\*

Institute for Sustainable Communities, Guangdong Judges Association, Guangzhou Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau, National Judges College, State Electric Regulatory Commission, Ministry of Environmental Protection, US Environmental Protection Agency, American Bar Association, and Natural Resources Defense Council.

### Contact: Orestes Anastasia

US Agency for International Development  
Regional Development Mission for Asia  
Athenee Tower, 25<sup>th</sup> floor,  
63 Wireless Road, Pathumwan, Lumpini  
Bangkok 10330 Thailand  
Office: +662-257 3239  
Fax: +662- 257 3099  
E-mail: oanastasia@usaid.gov  
Web: <http://asia.usaid.gov>