



Heart of America Northwest

The Public's Voice for Hanford Cleanup

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A Citizens' Glossary to Environmental Laws & Regulations Affecting Hanford Cleanup

COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSE, COMPENSATION, AND LIABILITY ACT (CERCLA)

This federal statute, enacted by Congress in 1980 and amended in 1986, governs the cleanup of hazardous, toxic, and radioactive substances at abandoned or uncontrolled waste sites. A trust fund (superfund), which taxes polluters, was created to finance the investigation and cleanup of some waste sites. Although CERCLA, administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is not proactive in preventing waste build-up, it has the potential to ensure effective and timely clean-up at Hanford.

MODEL TOXICS CONTROL ACT (MTCA)

Passed in 1994 in Washington State, this human health and environmental protection law establishes the standards to identify, investigate, and clean up facilities where hazardous substances are found. Its provisions may also be applied to potential and ongoing releases of hazardous substances. MTCA is the primary tool used by state agencies at Hanford to manage hazardous waste.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA)

This federal law, passed in 1970, requires the US government to consider the potential environmental impacts from major actions when it makes decisions. NEPA's chief function is that it forces agencies to consider the costs and benefits of policies. This act requires agencies to not only educate themselves regarding waste management procedures, but to increase the transparency of governmental actions by mandating that agencies make their actions public. If you have attended a hearing or submitted comments on an Environmental Impact Statement, for example, you have participated in the NEPA process!

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT (ESA)

This 1973 wildlife protection statute, administered by two federal agencies, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is designed to protect critically imperiled species from extinction as a consequence of economic growth and development. Not only is this act a critical tool for conservation, it is particularly relevant in the Hanford discussion because it provides substantive legal roadblocks that aid in the protection of fish and wildlife around the Columbia River.

Additionally, the ESA can be employed by native tribes that use local animal populations for religious practices.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND RECOVERY ACT (RCRA)

This federal law, enacted in 1976, addresses the treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste. Treatment, storage, and disposal facilities which manage hazardous wastes under RCRA Subtitle C use a permit to operate. Some facilities, such as Hanford, continue to operate under an "interim status." While an "interim status," rather than a permit, could ideally allow facilities time to come into compliance, they can potentially delay present decision-making and hinder long-term goals regarding waste management.

FEDERAL FACILITIES COMPLIANCE ACT (FFCA)

This act amends the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) by requiring all federal agencies to meet the legal requirements of federal, state, and local laws governing waste management and cleanup in the same manner as private industry.

TRI-PARTY AGREEMENT (TPA)

The legally enforceable agreement (formally known as the Hanford Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order) signed by the US Department of Energy, US Environmental Protection Agency, and the Washington State Department of Ecology in 1989 to clean up the Hanford Site.

SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT

A federal law established by Congress in 1974 to protect human health from contaminants in drinking water and to prevent contamination of existing water supplies. Contaminants are defined as any potentially harmful levels of physical, chemical, biological, or radiological substances. Provisions in this act also protect groundwater aquifers from contaminants injected into the ground.

Civic Engagement and Hanford Cleanup

These laws impact the lives of citizens, so how can citizens impact these laws?

- **Stay informed on current Hanford issues:** citizen supervision allows an engaged public to identify and bring attention to violations of legislative acts, such as CERCLA
- **Attend and participate in public hearings about Hanford issues**
- **Write to the Tri-Party Agencies** (U.S. Department of Energy, US Environmental Protection Agency and Washington State Department of Ecology) during public comment periods on Hanford cleanup

Visit www.hoanw.org to learn more about Hanford, to get involved and to sign up for notices of public hearings!