

The Pennsylvania Environmental Education Act

ACT 24 OF 1993, P.L. 105

Pennsylvania's Environmental Education Act was signed into law on June 22, 1993. The Act provides for environmental education programs within the Commonwealth, creates an Environmental Education Fund and authorizes the establishment of an Environmental Education Grants Program.

This Act charges the Departments of Education (DOE) and Environmental Protection (DEP) with specific responsibilities to promote and support environmental education throughout the Commonwealth. The Act also authorizes the Secretary of DEP to use pollution fines and penalties for the grants and other environmental education purposes, and also creates an Advisory Council for Environmental Education.

Note: This Act does not mandate what is taught in the classroom. That mandate is found in Chapter 5 of the Pennsylvania School Code. The Environmental Education Act is a companion piece to that effort and is aimed at ensuring state agency support to schools, organizations and the general public.

OUTLINE OF MAJOR LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS

1. **Establishes a Commonwealth policy that environmental education is critically important in encouraging a citizenry which has:**
 - the ability to help promote a healthy environment;
 - an understanding of the functioning of the natural world; and
 - an understanding of the necessity for environmental protection and sound resource management.

2. **Empowers and requires the DOE to:**
 - evaluate school-based environmental education;
 - provide support and resource information to educators and public and private education agencies and organizations;
 - recognize exemplary environmental education curricula developed in Pennsylvania schools; and
 - prepare a periodic report of school-based environmental education in the Commonwealth.

3. **Empowers and requires the DEP to:**
 - evaluate environmental education taking place outside of the classroom in the Commonwealth;
 - maintain an inventory of environmental education materials, programs and resources available in Commonwealth agencies;
 - prepare a periodic report on environmental education taking place in the

- nonformal sector of the Commonwealth;
 - provide environmental education grants.
4. **Empowers and Requires both the DOE and DEP to prepare periodic reports to the Governor and the General Assembly outlining environmental education programs, achievements, and initiatives, and to recommend future program needs.**
 5. **Creates the Environmental Education Fund, generated from five percent of the money collected each year from environmental fines and penalties. The fund will be used to assist DEP in carrying out the purposes of this Act.**
 6. **Creates the Advisory Council on Environmental Education to advise and assist DOE and DEP in carrying out their respective programs.**
 - The Council consists of 13 members:
 - The Secretaries of DEP, DOE and Agriculture, or their designees
 - Three members appointed by the Secretary of DEP
 - Three members appointed by the Secretary of DOE
 - Two members appointed by the Secretary of Commerce
 - One member appointed by the Chancellor of the State System of Higher Education
 - One member appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture

7. Environmental Education Grants Program

(a) Administering State Agency: Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Parks and Forestry, Program Planning and Development.

(b) Program Purpose: To stimulate environmental education in Pennsylvania through direct student instruction or through teacher training. Funds can be used to develop new programs or to improve the quality of existing programs. Proposed projects may be large, comprehensive endeavors affecting many teachers and/or students; or projects may be small, focused efforts to help an individual teacher or school implement a program.

(c) Participants Eligible For Grant Funds:

- Public and Private Schools-for youth environmental education (elementary and secondary levels)
- Conservation and Education Organizations and Institutions-for teacher training in environmental education
- County Conservation Districts-for youth education, teacher training, or community education

(d) Program Funding Source:

- Funding is provided by a special nonlapsing fund in the State Treasury to be known as the Environmental Education Fund.
- An amount equal to 5% of the money collected annually from fines and penalties deposited in special funds or restricted revenue accounts administered by DEP are deposited in this fund. The annual allocation amount is based upon the amounts collected in the previous fiscal year. All money placed in the fund and the interest it accrues are appropriated, upon authorization by the Governor, to DEP to accomplish the purposes of the Act. Beginning in fiscal year 1992-1993, and each year thereafter, money appropriated shall not affect, and are in addition to, funding for environmental education programs administered by DEP and DOE that are in existence prior to passage of the Act. A direct allocation from this fund is made to the Bureau of State Park's Environmental Education Program.

(e) Authorized Level of Funding:

- Estimated at \$620,000 per year.

(f) DEP Grant Application Provisions:

- Cost share provision 75% state/25% recipient
- Maximum grant allowed \$10,000

Questions regarding this Act can be directed to: Relating to DEP's Duties:

Environmental Education Grants Program
PA Dept. of Environmental Protection
Office of Parks and Forestry
Program Planning and Development
P.O. Box 8475
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8475
(717) 772-1828

Relating to DOE's Duties:
Office of Environmental Education
PA Dept. of Education
333 Market Street, 8th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
(717) 783-6994

