

Finding Research Topics Online

While there is nothing wrong either with searching google with very broad search terms or with consulting online encyclopedic sources such as Wikipedia, these methods are relatively inefficient unless you already have some pretty specific ideas about places or topics in which you might be interested. And even if you have such ideas, you still usually need to find some kind of debate, conflict, or legal case that concerns your place or topic.

What follows here are a few suggestions focused on using the online resources that have been compiled for this class and that are available on my website at UW's Legal Studies Program.

Class Webpages: There are currently three webpages specifically for this class: the first is the main [Law and Environment](#) page, which focuses on web resources of both general and U.S. federal interest. Two other (so far less developed) pages focus on: [Local, Wisconsin, and Midwest](#) law and environment resources; and on [Foreign, International, and Global](#) web resources. Finally, your research will probably also benefit from consulting with web resources on law even when these are not specifically focused on the environment; for this, see a fourth page on [American Law](#).

Current Issues: One of the best ways to identify current issues in environmental law and governance is to consult the websites of agencies or advocacy groups that list issues or legal battles of current concern. For an example linked on the local page above, click on the link for the [Midwest Environmental Advocates](#), and then go to their "Issues and Actions" tab. Clicking through the topic areas (Water, Air, etc.), you'll get substantial lists of ongoing conflicts or action items complete with the names of places, resources, or the parties involved. Once you have these proper names, other kinds of searches will be much more efficient!

Similar lists of issues can be found on the websites of national and international advocacy groups, government agencies, and business and industry organizations, many of which I have linked on the pages noted above. For example, the website for the [EPA's Region 5](#) (which covers WI and other Great Lake states) provides several pertinent lists, of clean-up sites by state, items in the news, etc. Wisconsin's most important business advocacy group is [WI Manufacturers and Commerce](#), and it too has a list of environmental issues.

The EPA's website is great, as already suggested above for Region 5. At the national level it provides quick summaries both of the [issues](#) and of how the [regulatory system](#) works.

Legal Cases: Perhaps most useful of all for the purposes of this class is information about legal cases (usually resolved cases are more accessible). Finding good lists of cases for a particular court or judicial district is not always easy, and may require consultation with law librarians (for example at UW's [Law Library](#)). Online, the EPA website provides lists of legal cases in which it was involved, both [civil](#) and [criminal](#) cases. Similarly, the [U.S. Department of Justice's Environmental Division](#) has information about its recent litigation, under its tab for Publications.