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In serving as champions for environmental protection and justice, we serve as champions for the entire world community and the future generations who will inherit our planet—nothing we do matters more.

—RODNEY SMOLLA, President, Vermont Law and Graduate School

VERMONT SCHOOL FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Vermont School for the Environment at Vermont Law and Graduate School trains students to create cutting-edge solutions to environmental and social challenges. VSE degrees provide a strong public policy education grounded in intersectionality between environmental and social challenges.

VSE builds on Vermont Law and Graduate School’s depth of expertise in domestic and international law and policy focused on the environment, clean energy, sustainable food and agriculture, and animal protection. The interdisciplinary graduate curriculum brings climate change and racial and economic justice to the forefront.

VSE courses impart practical skills and provide the rigorous training students need to succeed in the job market—whether in the public, private, or non-profit sectors, students graduate from VSE equipped to have impactful careers in this growing field.

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—RODNEY SMOLLA, President, Vermont Law and Graduate School
Master’s Degrees

Master’s degrees at Vermont School for the Environment incorporate just and sustainable innovations in environmental policy. Students gain skills needed to shape environmental policy and integrate issues of racial and economic justice into policymaking. Our curriculum and robust experiential opportunities prepare students for the job market, giving them the substantive knowledge and skills needed, in addition to their individual passion, to effect positive change through their careers.

Master of Climate and Environmental Policy
The MCEP is a robust applied public policy degree dedicated to the environment. Degree-seekers will receive the tools needed to make change—especially finding and implementing solutions to the greatest challenge of our day: the intersection of climate change and environmental justice. All MCEP students choose between a “research track” to write a thesis, or a “practice track” to pursue an externship or on-campus clinic.

Master of Energy Regulation and Law
The MERL program responds to opportunities presented by the rapid growth of the clean energy sector, as well as the environmental challenges associated with traditional energy production and transmission, by offering intensive training in energy law, regulation, markets, and policy analysis. MERL students may participate in the Institute for Energy and the Environment’s Research Associates Program, working on emerging issues in energy law and policy. The MERL is available residentially and online.

Master of Food and Agriculture Law and Policy
The MFALP is designed for students who want to develop the infrastructure needed to support sustainable food and agricultural systems. Our unique and comprehensive curriculum, developed by the faculty of our Center for Agriculture and Food Systems, develops students' advocacy skills in the growing and dynamic area of food and agriculture policy. The MFALP is available residentially and online.

Master of Animal Protection Policy
The MAPP trains students in the policy advocacy skills needed to effectively advocate for animals. This degree focuses on the interconnection between human, environmental, and animal wellbeing. The MAPP is available residentially and online.

Executive Master of Environmental Policy
The EMEP is a streamlined environmental policy degree for mid-career professionals. It requires a minimum of three years of work experience and fewer credits than our other master's degrees. It is offered online only.
Joint Degrees
Students may combine a master’s degree from VSE with a JD degree from Vermont Law and Graduate School to develop expertise in environmental, energy, food and agriculture, or animal law. These joint degrees may be completed in three years.

Summer Session
Our Summer Session is nationally recognized for its impressive range of courses taught by VLGS professors and leaders from national and international nonprofit environmental groups and research centers, federal and state agencies, academic programs, and the private sector.

Attendees include graduate and JD students; citizen advocates; practicing attorneys; and state and federal agency personnel.

JD students from any other law school may earn a master’s degree from Vermont School for the Environment with one summer of classes, one summer externship, and at least one online course.

Environmental Externships
An integral part of our environmental degree programs is gaining real-world experience through externships. Our students explore environmental advocacy and policy in a wide variety of settings.

Students work closely with our Master’s Externship Program to line up full-time or part-time placements across the country.

Recent Externships
- Advocates for the West
- Connecticut River Conservancy
- Environmental Working Group
- Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division
- Mercy For Animals
- New York Department of Environmental Conservation
- Northeast Wilderness Trust
- Northern Prairies Land Trust
- Nourish Colorado
- San Francisco Bay Keeper
- Small Business Utility Advocates
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Vermont Cannabis Solutions
- Vermont Natural Resources Council

“My externship experience with the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Office of the Solicitor is unparalleled to anything I have done. The topics discussed in my environmental law classes came to life in my work every day. The experience reaffirmed my appreciation for our national parks and my passion for wildlife.”

—MICHELLE R. AMIDZICH
JD/MFALP’22

Skills Modules
Master’s students take the following non-credit skills modules:
- Professional Identity Formation: Trains students in professional communications, as well as how to have respectful conversations about sensitive topics
- Introduction to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: DEI principles, anti-racism, and shared language around DEI issues
- Public Participation: How environmental public policies are influenced by community-led efforts
- Negotiation and Consensus-Building: Negotiation topics from a policy development perspective

Concentrations
Students in the Master of Climate and Environmental Policy program may develop their own concentration or choose to concentrate in one of three areas:
- Climate Change
- Environmental Justice
- Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)
Animal Law and Policy Institute

The Animal Law and Policy Institute trains future leaders in animal advocacy while centering animals in the fight for environmental protections. Students, staff, and faculty in the Institute advance animal protection through education, training, scholarship, and policy development. Engaging with policymakers, journalists, advocacy organizations, and communities, the Institute serves as a resource hub for animal law and policy issues. It also collaborates closely with other campus programs, encouraging the wider legal community to expand protections for animals.

The Animal Law and Policy Institute is dedicated to supporting aspiring advocates through robust course offerings, mentoring, and experiential learning.

Farmed Animal Advocacy Clinic

The Farmed Animal Advocacy Clinic (FAAC) empowers students to become effective advocates for animals while developing skills that can be applied in a variety of arenas throughout their careers through hands-on experience with real-world matters. Students represent clients in litigation as well as legislative, policy, and regulatory matters aimed at improving the treatment and status of farmed animals. With billions of land animals and even more aquatic animals farmed for food annually in the U.S., animals are involved in every legal institution, from local prosecutors to various state and federal agencies with overlapping authority and responsibility, and everything between.

Students in the FAAC learn how to navigate and engage with these institutions and the individuals who comprise them. FAAC students develop a wide range of advocacy skills that are central to farmed animal protection, but that are also transferable to other areas, including navigating ethics issues that arise in the context of impact litigation, building and managing coalitions and clients with divergent interests, client outreach and communication, developing relationships with experts, and navigating the relationship between legal and media strategies.

“The Animal Law and Policy Institute’s classes, practicums, and professors helped me realize my true passion of pursuing animal law. This past year I have honed my advocacy skills in a subject where our clients have no voice. Everything I have learned in the Animal Law and Policy Institute has set me up for success as I make the transition from graduate school to the professional field.”

—VANESSA BEANE ’22
Center for Agriculture and Food Systems

The Center for Agriculture and Food Systems (CAFS) trains law and policy students to develop real-world solutions for a more sustainable and just food system. CAFS offers a comprehensive array of residential, online, and experiential courses. These diverse course offerings, the Food and Agriculture Clinic, and varied degree options give students the opportunity to explore food and agriculture law from a variety of perspectives and experiences. CAFS is also a center for research and advocacy. In partnership with local, regional, national, and international partners, the team addresses food system challenges related to food justice, food security, farmland access, farmworkers’ rights, animal welfare, worker protections, the environment, and public health, among others. CAFS works closely with partners to provide legal services and policy support that respond to their needs and develop resources that empower the communities they serve. Through its Food and Agriculture Clinic and Research Assistant program, students work directly on these projects, engaging in innovative work that spans the food system.

Center Initiatives

- Train law and policy students in one of the first food and agriculture law clinics in the nation to work at the intersection of food, agriculture, and environmental law
- Support the local food economy by connecting small-scale farms and food entrepreneurs with free legal assistance through the Vermont Legal Food Hub
- Advocate for policy reform to protect farmworkers and other food system workers from exploitative labor practices and public health threats
- Empower consumers to understand food labels and make more informed food choices
- Assist farmers, including historically marginalized farmers and heirs’ property owners, with land access and conservation through the Farmland Access Legal Toolkit
- Reduce food waste and address food insecurity through the National Gleaning Project

“I found VLGS’s Master of Food and Agriculture Law and Policy program to be the most rooted in activism, social consciousness, and a land ethic of any of the options I considered.”

—ALYSSA HARTMAN MFALP’19, Executive Director, Artisan Grain Collaborative
Environmental Justice Clinic

Founded in 2019, VLGS’s Environmental Justice Clinic focuses on interdisciplinary practice at the intersection of civil rights and the environment. Student clinicians work in partnership with communities of color and low-income communities on projects to address racial discrimination and improve environmental quality. Students work in small teams on projects to address inequality and discrimination in environmental decision-making as well as procedural inequities experienced by communities as they try to assert their own vision for the future of their neighborhoods, towns, and cities.

Environmental Justice Clinic Projects

- Work with communities of color around the country to fight harmful impacts of landfills and other polluting facilities
- Partner with community-based groups across Vermont and other states to strengthen policies to achieve environmental and climate justice
- Work with environmental justice activists to draft stronger protections through legislation at federal and state levels
- Advocate for state and federal policies to ensure enforcement of civil rights laws that protect environmental justice
- Challenge the disproportionate impacts of industrial animal production on communities of color and low-income communities

“The Environmental Justice Clinic was my first real experience doing any kind of environmental law work at all. And it was one of the most meaningful experiences I’ve had while at VGLS. It gave me a glance, a taste, of the contemporary work attorneys do in environmental law.”

—LUIS GONZALES JD’23
Institute for Energy and the Environment

The Institute for Energy and the Environment (IEE) is a national and world energy policy resource focused on the energy policy of the future. The IEE leads the nation in preparing students for the clean energy transition. Its energy law program has the largest selection of clean energy law and policy courses available, leading clean energy experiential opportunities, and a seamless integration with a world-class environmental law and policy program, including unparalleled climate law course offerings. The institute serves as a center for graduate research on the transition to a clean energy future and maintains a unique and vibrant student-staffed Energy Clinic, which works on developing and implementing legal and business models for community energy resources. In addition, a Research Associate program works more broadly on energy issues ranging from clean transportation policy to cybersecurity of the electric grid.

Institute and Energy Clinic Projects

- Develop legal and business models promoting community renewables ownership with a focus on increasing low-income solar ownership and advocating for climate justice
- Collaborate with the Center for Agriculture and Food Systems on the Farm and Energy Initiative, which unites interests in the economic health of farms and sustainable energy production
- Author books including *The Electric Battery: Charging Forward to a Low Carbon Future; A Smarter, Greener Grid: Forging Environmental Progress from Smart Energy Policies and Technologies; and Global Energy Justice*
- Research reports and publications on climate refugees, community choice aggregation, cybersecurity of the electric grid, smart cities and microgrids, clean transportation policy, and stakeholder governance in Regional Transmission Organizations

“VLGS has empowered me to push for a future where clean energy can be distributed equally throughout the world. The MERL has given me tools to see the bigger field at play and to be able to go where I want. A lot of people in the energy field don’t have such a specialized look at it.”

—CHARLES SPENCE MERL’19

Institute and Energy Clinic Projects

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- Collaborate with the Center for Agriculture and Food Systems on the Farm and Energy Initiative, which unites interests in the economic health of farms and sustainable energy production
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—CHARLES SPENCE MERL’19
U.S.-Asia Partnerships for Environmental Law

The U.S.-Asia Partnerships for Environmental Law (PEL) is a collaborative program to advance environmental and energy law and policy in China and throughout Southeast Asia. The goal of PEL is to strengthen the rule of law in environmental protection and to build capacity among individuals and academic, government, and private-sector institutions to solve environmental problems in Asia. At its inception in 2006, PEL’s goals were to strengthen the capacity of Chinese education, government, and civil society sectors to become effective environmental problem solvers; to improve China’s policies, laws, and regulations to advance the development of environmental law in China; and to enhance municipal, provincial, national, and international networks in China to advance best practices in environmental protection and energy regulation. Building upon the success it has achieved in China, PEL has expanded its geographic scope to respond to the environmental governance needs of the region.

Partnership Projects

- Through an Environmental Mission Scholars program, provide experiential training to young legal professionals from China to become environmental advocates and stewards
- Train stakeholders, including judges and prosecutors, to apply and enforce environmental laws and take steps to increase the role prosecutors could play in civil enforcement of environmental laws
- Conduct practical legal research that promotes public participation in National Park governance
- A collaborative project to engage with Chinese scholars and prosecutors on wildlife protection laws and their enforcement in China and the U.S.
- Provide opportunities for regional dialogues among stakeholders to share experiences and lessons learned in developing an effective environmental governance system in response to local conditions

Transnational Environmental Law Practicum

The Transnational Environmental Law Practicum allows students to team up with organizations in Asia to work on research and consultation projects. Some of the research that students have done includes:

- Environmental governance systems of India, Mongolia, and Nepal, with a focus on legal mechanisms for public participation in providing natural resource safeguards in the development of large-scale linear infrastructure projects
- Policy and legislative frameworks to reduce emission of greenhouse gases (specifically short-lived climate pollutants) in countries throughout Asia
- Legal mechanisms for environmental impact assessment (EIA) of development projects, with a focus on providing policy suggestions for China

Law Laboratory for International Sustainable Development

The Law Laboratory for International Sustainable Development studies innovative law and policy instruments to promote sustainable development on a global scale. Law Lab works internationally with research institutes, NGOs, and development agencies from different countries. In 2022, partnering with World Resources Institute, Law Lab launched a multi-year research program studying policies and regulations safeguarding the social and environmental integrity of global supply chains, focusing on supply chains that are climate-significant and have little to do with sensitive issues such as national security. In a changing and riskier world, crises like trade disputes, the COVID-19 pandemic, and geopolitical conflicts have disrupted global supply chains and underscored the importance of supply chain resilience. Currently, the program focuses on three groups of supply chains: forest products, agricultural soft commodities, and renewable energy. Students may work as research assistants for Law Lab.

“PEL is building a support network and promoting public participation not only in China but also in Southeast Asia—which is amazing! PEL is empowering people to protect their environmental rights.”

—WENFANG LIANG LLM’22
Environmental Tax Policy Institute

The Environmental Tax Policy Institute analyzes the ways in which taxation can be used to address environmental problems. By serving as a resource for the public and private sectors, nongovernmental organizations, the press, and academia, the Institute seeks to better inform the public policy debate about the role of environmental taxes at the federal, state, and local levels.

Institute Initiatives

- Active participant in the Global Conferences on Environmental Taxation; co-organizer of the 21st Global Conference in 2020, a global event
- Analysis of proposals for carbon taxes at the federal and state level, including key design issues, as well as the relationship between carbon taxes and cap-and-trade programs
- Exploration of the ability to earmark carbon tax revenues, published by Professor Janet Milne as “How Durable is a Lockbox for Carbon Tax Revenue?” in the Pittsburgh Tax Review
- Sharing of knowledge about other countries’ use of carbon taxes and other environmental taxes
- Development of The Handbook of Research on Environmental Taxation, edited by Janet E. Milne and Mikael Skou Andersen, and Environmental Taxation and the Law, edited by Professor Milne
- Research on how environmentally related taxes might help finance climate change adaptation, published as “Storms Ahead” in the Vermont Law Review
- U.S. contributor to a European project evaluating tax incentives that preserve cultural heritage
- Investigation of the potential role of environmental pricing in the emerging digital economy and the role of environmental taxation in ESG (environment, social, and governance) factors
VLGS established the Tuholske Institute in 2021 in memory of Jack Tuholske, a beloved faculty member, renowned litigator, and pioneer in field studies for environmental law students. The institute offers students a number of opportunities to study environmental law and policy through hands-on, immersive learning experiences. Our students meet with staff of international NGOs in Southeast Asia and serve as an observer delegation at the UNFCCC in Egypt. They meet with tribal leaders in Utah and hike in the public lands of Montana. They study forestry and ecosystems in our own backyard in Vermont.

### Environmental Field Classes
- Balancing Perspectives in Coastal Resource Management: Maine Field Study
- Comparative U.S.-China Environmental Law
- Conservation Agriculture Policy
- Ecology
- Forest Law and Policy
- Global Sustainability Field Study: Havana, Cuba
- International Climate Change: COP in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt
- Protected Public Lands and Tribal Rights: Utah Field Study
- Public Lands Management: Montana Field Study
International Environmental Law and Policy

Environmental issues are global issues. The unique opportunities at Vermont Law and Graduate School prepare our graduates to be leaders in international environmental law and policy. Our curriculum is enhanced by study opportunities through our partnerships with leading foreign universities. Hands-on learning through experiential courses, externships, and clinics rounds out the academic experience.

International Courses
- Environmental Governance in the Developing World
- Global Energy Law and Policy
- Global Food Security and Social Justice
- International Climate Change
- International and Comparative Environmental Law
- International Environmental Law and Policy
- International Law of Food
- Transnational Environmental Law Practicum

Experiential Learning
- In the International Climate Change course, students serve on VLGS’s observer delegation, attending the Conference of the Parties (COP) and supporting a Least Developed Country state party delegation to engage in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations through a service-learning partnership
- Through our JD Externship Program, students have interned for a variety of international environmental law actors, including the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in Geneva, Refugee Legal Aid Project in Cairo, UN Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development, and the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice
- The Transnational Environmental Law Practicum combines classroom instruction with project implementation, with students teaming up to work on an environmental-related legal or policy research project for partner organizations in China, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, or Laos.

Hothouse Earth Podcast

The school’s podcast, Hothouse Earth, debuted in 2019. Our hosts speak with our faculty and other experts on fast changing environmental law and policy developments like regulatory rollbacks and subsequent lawsuits. Our guests provide concise, accessible conversation on the most pressing issues of our time. Recent episodes include “Quantity Unknown—The Uncertain Future of Vermont’s Surface Waters,” “Plant Patents, Biodiversity, and Public Domain Seeds,” and “Elevate,” a miniseries on women in environmental law and policy. Subscribe at hothouseearthpodcast.com.
Climate Change: The Power of Taxes
How tax systems can be used to reduce greenhouse gases and develop more environmentally compatible technologies

Climate, Extinction, and Adaptation
The ecological, social, and ethical consequences of climate change and various legal and policy options to address it

Climate Justice
How climate change impacts can or should be distributed; and how those impacts can be addressed through collective action at local, national, and global levels

Fundamentals of Climate Change
The science of climate change; its social cause and effect, including its disproportionate impacts; and public policy approaches (and critiques)

International Climate Change Law
A study of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol; students represent VLS at COP as members of its Observer Delegation

ENERGY REGULATION
Energy Efficiency Policy
The reasons for, techniques of, and results from energy efficiency measures around the U.S.

Energy Clinic
Students progressively develop knowledge, skills, and values integral to the field of energy law and policy, while helping clients meet local energy needs with reliable, clean, and affordable resources

Energy Law and Policy
Key issues in American energy policy, and ways to ease the strains that the policy puts upon environmental sustainability

Energy Regulation, Markets, and the Environment
The legal, economic, and structural issues involved in both energy regulation and energy markets, focusing on electricity

Global Energy Law and Policy
Energy policy frameworks, policies implementing global and regional climate commitments, and emerging issues outside of the U.S

Oil and Gas Production and the Environment
The major contracts used to explore for and produce oil and gas in the U.S. and internationally

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC HEALTH
Environmental Health Law
An examination of the field of environmental health, including toxic torts, lead poisoning, food protection, and pesticides

Environmental Justice
Discrimination and justice concerns about the benefits and burdens of environmental protection and natural resource management

Environmental Justice Clinic
Students gain experience working on law and policy issues at the nexus of environment, race, and policy, while also learning essential community lawyering skills

Environmental Restorative Justice
How restorative justice theory and practice can be applied to environmental crimes, conflicts and harms

Fundamentals of Environmental Justice
Examines the history and evolution of environmental justice social movements in the U.S. and internationally, and causes, impacts, and solutions to environmental racism

Land Use and Racial Justice
The legal framework for understanding planning and zoning from the perspective of race

Native Americans and the Law
The constitutional, statutory, and jurisprudential rules of law which make up the field of Federal Indian Law

Structural Inequity
Provides students with an intersectional awareness of structural inequality and systemic racism and their relationships to public policy, law, and environmental movements

Toxic Exposure and Public Health
Looking at federal programs that have allowed disproportionate toxic impacts to persist, from the perspective of community health

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
Cannabis Law
A survey of cannabis regulation and enforcement, and the current and anticipated regulatory landscapes

Conservation Agriculture Policy
State and federal conservation programs to assist farmers in achieving conservation compliance

The Farm Bill
An introduction to the breadth of policies and legal authorities included in the Farm Bill

Farmworkers and the Law
Tools and strategies used by farmworker advocates, including litigation and legislative and administrative advocacy

Federal Regulation of Food and Agriculture
An overview of the Farm Bill and other laws that affect growing policy, animal husbandry, and food production
Environmental Faculty and Teaching Staff

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COURSES:
Climate Change: The Power of Taxes; Land Use Regulation

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