The Asia-Pacific Centre for Environmental Law (APCEL)

APCEL was established on 1 July 1996 by the NUS Law Faculty in collaboration with the World Conservation Union-Commission on Environmental Law (IUCN-CEL) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). The establishment of APCEL was in response to the call in Agenda 21 to build capacity in environmental law and promote environmental consciousness. APCEL has since established itself as a centre of excellence in the region for research-based capacity building with a strong commitment to advancing innovative scholarship.

Our Focus Areas

- Climate Change Law and Policy in Singapore

Singapore has declared 2018 to be the Year of Climate Action and will be taking action on all fronts to help individuals and companies implement measures to address climate change. A national carbon tax scheme will be implemented in 2019. APCEL is helping to advance this national effort by focusing on regulatory strategies, policy outreach and teaching.

- International Climate Change Law

The 2015 Paris Agreement marked a breakthrough but a lot of work lies ahead to move towards a low-carbon future. APCEL works to promote the implementation of the Paris Agreement through our teaching and research.

- Biodiversity Protection Law

Human activities pose serious threats to biodiversity. The main threats are human population growth, urbanisation, and the over-exploitation of natural resources. APCEL is part of local and global solutions to protect floral and fauna species through our collaboration, research and teaching.

- Illegal Wildlife Trade

The illegal trade in wildlife is a serious problem in Southeast Asia that threatens biodiversity as well as human security. APCEL works with Freeland, an NGO based in Bangkok, to strengthen law enforcement capacity and develop regulatory strategies.
APCEL supports a wide-ranging programme of teaching, research and outreach on domestic, regional and global environmental issues.

We have organised conferences and workshops on cutting-edge issues including marine sustainable development in Southeast Asia, the interface between trade and the environment, the REDD plus regime, climate change adaptation in Southeast Asia, and tackling the illegal wildlife trade in this region.

In addition, APCEL’s members are leading experts in their fields and have published widely on a range of topics including Singapore pollution laws, marine environmental law, the environmental dimensions of zoonotic diseases, climate change and ASEAN environmental law. APCEL members are globally recognised for their expertise and contribute actively to the work of international organisations including IUCN CEL and Asian Development Bank. APCEL also actively engages in research collaboration with other leading law schools including Yale Law School and Melbourne Law School. The APCEL Seminar Series brings internationally renowned scholars to our home at the Bukit Timah Campus to share the latest thinking on environmental law and policy.

In its quest to promote the teaching of environmental law, APCEL connects and collaborates with other institutions globally. Our members have been visiting professors at the University of Mexico, the University of British Columbia, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, and University of Hawaii. APCEL also actively works with the IUCN Academy of Law to develop environmental law capacity-building initiatives including the “Training the Trainers” programme for environmental law professors in Southeast Asia. Within NUS, APCEL plays a leading role in the multi-disciplinary Masters in Environmental Management programme.

In Singapore, APCEL regularly conducts environmental law training for policy-makers, the judiciary and the legal profession. We have conducted courses for the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore Environment Institute, and the Singapore Judicial College.

Selected Publications

Charles R McManis & Burton Ong (eds), Routledge Handbook of Biodiversity and the Law (Routledge, 2018)

Jolene Lin, Governing Climate Change: Global Cities and Transnational Lawmakings (Cambridge University Press, 2018)


Burton Ong, Ly Lin-Heng, Joseph Chua “Regulating International Trade in Endangered Species - Transhipments of CITES-listed Species via Singapore” (2016) SJLS 1


Jolene Lin “Litigating Climate Change in Asia” (2014) Volume 4 Climate Law 140


Jolene Lin, “Climate Change and the Courts” (2012) 32(1) Legal Studies 35
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