

ITP Research Form

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Paper Title: The Saga of Icelandic Environmental Protection

Abstract:

Iceland has gained renown over the past several decades as a pioneer in renewable energy, as a tourism destination for nature lovers, and as a prime example of robust environmental protection. This paper will explore the factors that helped it attain this status. In particular, it will consider the unique aspects of Iceland environmental regulation and examine how Iceland's political mechanisms have contributed to its positive environmental outcomes. It will also probe aspects of Icelandic environmental regulation that differ from the United States and discuss how different regulatory mechanisms have contributed to different environmental outcomes in the two countries.

This paper will analyze three broad categories of Icelandic environmental regulation: the administrative framework underlying Icelandic environmental regulation in general, and comprehensive regulatory frameworks governing the renewable energy sector and nature preservation.

It begins by exploring the administrative framework, identifying aspects that likely contribute substantially to Iceland's progressive environmental policies. It will compare and contrast the rules and principles underlying environmental regulatory decisions in Iceland and the United States. It then examines the production and regulation of renewable energy in Iceland. It will provide historical perspective and describe the Master Plan that has guided Icelandic policy since the 1990s and that is currently beginning work on its fourth phase. The analysis ends with discussing the nature conservation in Iceland, focusing on the 2013 Nature Conservation Act. This act is notable for its emphasis on resolving conflicts on nature conservation early by bringing all interested parties to the table, for its detailed classification of land with different levels of priority, and for its mandate to apply the precautionary principle. Finally, this paper will draw overall conclusions and recommendations from the analysis of all three categories of environmental policy.