

The National Council of Bar Examiners has just finished a fascinating [survey](#) of what lawyers do in their first three years of practice. Some of the most interesting findings relate to environmental law. About five percent of new lawyers report that their practice areas are environment or natural resources. As of a couple of years ago, according to the [New York Times](#), there were 26,000 jobs for new lawyers, so apparently there were about 1300 new environmental law jobs.

As it turns out, new environmental and natural resource lawyers mostly do transactional work. For example, they are engaged in drafting and reviewing documents, working with permit authorities, and checking environmental liability issues in real estate sales. Significant numbers also write comments on proposed regulations or else conduct compliance activities. (p. 279 of the report.) Real estate lawyers also spend significant time on environmental liability issues in connection with transactions.

One surprise in the survey was the number of new lawyers who say they practice administrative law (over 20% of new lawyers). It was about equal to the number of lawyers who practice corporate/business law, and together these two areas about equalled the number of civil litigators (the largest practice category). They often worked on permit, license, or benefit issues, but a surprisingly large percentage were also involved in the rule making process. I really doubt that law students are aware of how many of them will end up doing administrative law.

Unfortunately, the report isn't very user-friendly. But there's a lot of interesting information about what new lawyers do, which should be of interest not only to lawyer-to-be but also to those of us who teach them.