



Bangkok Traffic

I'm writing this post from Thailand, where I've been attending a conference of the Thai judiciary. My presentation was on developments in U.S. climate law. It's been a very interesting trip.

Thailand faces some serious environmental issues, which you can't help noticing just from breathing the air in Bangkok. The traffic jams, as seen on the left, are world famous. Environmental protection has not yet caught up with growth. As the [World Bank](#) says:

Rapid industrial expansion and population growth have outpaced environmental management, resulting in sharply increased pollution levels (e.g. solid and hazardous waste, air, noise, and water). For example, fine particles in Bangkok's air exceed WHO standards by 2.5 times, and other air pollutants are also causing major health impacts. Overall, it is estimated that air and water pollution costs the country 1.6 - 2.6 percent of GDP per year. . . .

Volumes of untreated domestic sewage, industrial wastewater and solid hazardous wastes have risen dramatically in recent years. The result is that roughly one third of Thailand's surface water bodies are considered to be of poor quality.

Nevertheless, there are signs of progress such as the phase-out of lead gasoline, projected increases in the use of natural gas, and growing interest in eco-tourism. Hopefully, these trends will continue, so that Thailand will have an environment worthy of its people.