

Public Environment Attitudes in China: Some Early Empirical Evidence

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Abstract

Researchers in the People's Republic have only recently begun to unveil the complexities of China's collective environmental consciousness. With "environmental protection" being gradually placed near the top of the central authorities' agenda, two pertinent questions immediately spring to mind. First, to what extent, and how, has long-term, large-scale destruction of the country's natural resource base and a general decline in living environmental quality influenced the public's attitudes toward major environmental issues? Secondly, to what extent, and how, have the public's environmental values and attitudes influenced their behavior toward the environment? The accumulated evidence are full of conflicting views on the public's environmental perceptions, attitudes, and values. Contradictory survey data have effectively prevented us from reaching any conclusion with a high degree of confidence. Nevertheless, a sufficient amount of evidence have revealed that the general public's immediate attention has always been captured by issues other than the environment.