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The Legal Politics of Natural Resource Management in Indonesia: State Control, Social Justice, Environmental Sustainability, and Legal Awareness Education

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Abstract:
Natural resource management in Indonesia involves fundamental legal and constitutional challenges concerning state authority, social justice, environmental sustainability, and public legal awareness. This article examines the legal politics of natural resource management, focusing on the relationship between state control, the equitable distribution of natural resource benefits, environmental protection, and legal awareness education. The study employs a normative legal research method using statutory and conceptual approaches to analyse the legal framework governing natural resource management in relation to constitutional principles, public welfare, and ecological responsibility. Particular attention is given to the state's role in ensuring that natural resource utilisation serves the public interest while safeguarding environmental integrity. Furthermore, legal awareness education is examined as an instrument for enhancing public understanding of legal rights and obligations, encouraging civic participation, and strengthening compliance with environmental regulations. This article highlights the importance of aligning legal policy with distributive justice, environmental protection, and public accountability. It argues that effective natural resource governance requires a coherent legal framework, consistent implementation, equitable resource distribution, and meaningful public participation. Integrating legal awareness education into natural resource governance can further support accountable, socially just, and environmentally sustainable management for present and future generations.

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Introduction (مقدمة)

Natural resources constitute a fundamental component of Indonesia's economic development, social welfare, and environmental sustainability(Gandhi, 2026). As a resource-rich country, Indonesia faces the continuing challenge of ensuring that the utilisation of its natural wealth generates equitable benefits while preserving ecological integrity for future generations(Nugroho & Muhyiddin, 2026). In this context, natural resource management cannot be understood merely as an economic or administrative undertaking; rather, it represents a constitutional and legal concern shaped by the relationship between state authority, public welfare, environmental protection, and social justice. Consequently, the legal framework governing natural resources must be examined not only in terms of its regulatory structure but also in relation to the underlying political choices, institutional priorities, and normative principles that determine how resources are controlled, distributed, and utilised(Mata, 2026).

The constitutional foundation of natural resource management in Indonesia is established in Article 33(3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which stipulates that the earth, water, and natural resources contained therein shall be controlled by the state and utilised for the greatest prosperity of the people. This provision embodies a constitutional mandate that extends beyond the formal exercise of governmental authority, requiring the state to ensure that natural resource governance serves the public interest(Suparto, 2020). The concept of state control therefore raises essential questions concerning the scope of governmental responsibility, the allocation of management authority, the protection of public interests, and the equitable distribution of economic benefits(Asriadi et al., 2023). Different interpretations of the constitutional concept of state control over natural resources may influence the substance and direction of sectoral legislation. Therefore, the fulfilment of the constitutional mandate largely depends on how legal policies translate the principle of state control into accountable governance that promotes social welfare and serves the public interest.(Irwansyah et al., 2026).

Nevertheless, the existence of a constitutional mandate does not, in itself, guarantee that natural resource management will produce equitable social outcomes or adequate environmental protection. The formulation and implementation of natural resource policies may involve competing interests among the state, business entities, local communities, and Indigenous peoples(Ogbe et al., 2026). Such competing interests raise concerns regarding access to resources, the distribution of economic benefits, the recognition of community rights, and the allocation of environmental risks. From the perspective of legal politics, these issues demonstrate that legislation is not merely a technical instrument for regulating resource utilization(da Rosa et al., 2026), it also reflects the priorities and choices through which the state determines whose interests are protected and how competing claims are reconciled(Wahyuni & Kartika, 2026). The challenge, therefore, lies in ensuring that the exercise of state authority remains consistent with constitutional objectives, distributive justice, and the protection of communities affected by resource exploitation. These considerations underscore the importance of examining the relationship between legal norms and their practical implications for social welfare(Nazar et al., 2026).

Environmental sustainability constitutes another indispensable dimension of this relationship. Natural resource utilisation that prioritises short-term economic gains without adequately accounting for ecological consequences may undermine the environmental foundations upon which long-term prosperity depends(Schader et al., 2026). Indonesian environmental law recognises the importance of environmental protection, public participation, and sustainable development, yet the effectiveness of these principles depends on their implementation within decision-making and regulatory processes. The examination of public participation in environmental matters in Indonesia, emphasise the continuing importance of

strengthening legal institutions, public awareness, and community participation in environmental protection. From a legal-political perspective, environmental sustainability should therefore be understood not simply as a supplementary policy objective but as a substantive consideration in the formulation, interpretation, and implementation of natural resource legislation. Integrating ecological responsibility with social justice is essential to ensuring that resource management does not compromise the rights and interests of present and future generations.

In addition to institutional and regulatory considerations, legal awareness education deserves greater attention as a complementary instrument of natural resource governance. Public understanding of legal rights, obligations, and available mechanisms for participation can influence the extent to which communities engage with resource management decisions, seek legal protection, and contribute to environmental compliance(Arowosegbe et al., 2026). Legal awareness education is thus relevant not only to the dissemination of legal information but also to the development of informed civic participation and a stronger culture of legality. Research on community legal awareness in natural resource utilisation similarly identifies the importance of strengthening public understanding of mining regulations and environmental protection requirements. Nevertheless, education should not be regarded as a substitute for effective law enforcement or institutional accountability(Wiyanto & Hardiman, 2026). Rather, it should complement sound legal frameworks, accessible remedies, transparent decision-making, and meaningful opportunities for public participation. Within this framework, legal awareness education may help bridge the gap between formal legal provisions and their practical application in society.

Against this background, this article examines the legal politics of natural resource management in Indonesia through four interrelated dimensions: state control, social justice, environmental sustainability, and legal awareness education. It seeks to analyse how the direction of legal policy can reconcile the constitutional authority of the state with the requirements of equitable resource distribution, ecological protection, and informed public participation. Employing a normative legal research approach through statutory and conceptual analyses, the study considers the extent to which the legal framework governing natural resource management reflects these interconnected principles. By integrating legal awareness education into the broader analysis of natural resource governance, this article seeks to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between legal policy, institutional responsibility, and public participation. Ultimately, it argues for a coherent and accountable approach to natural resource management in which state control is exercised in accordance with constitutional objectives, social justice is treated as a substantive governance principle, environmental sustainability informs legal decision-making, and public legal awareness supports the effective realisation of these objectives.

Method (منهج)

This study employs a normative legal research method to examine the legal politics of natural resource management in Indonesia, with particular emphasis on state control, social justice, environmental sustainability, and legal awareness education. This method is appropriate because the research focuses on the examination of legal norms, constitutional principles, statutory provisions, and underlying legal concepts governing natural resource management.

The study adopts two principal approaches: the statutory approach and the conceptual

approach. The statutory approach is used to examine relevant legal instruments, particularly the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and legislation concerning natural resource management, environmental protection, and public participation. The conceptual approach is employed to analyse the theoretical foundations of state control, distributive justice, environmental sustainability, and legal awareness education within the broader framework of legal politics.

The research relies on secondary legal materials, comprising primary legal materials in the form of legislation, secondary legal materials including scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and relevant legal commentaries, as well as tertiary materials where necessary to clarify legal terminology and concepts(Arjunah et al., 2026). These materials are collected through documentary research and a systematic review of relevant legal and academic literature.

The collected materials are analysed qualitatively using descriptive and prescriptive legal analysis. The descriptive analysis identifies and interprets the applicable legal framework, while the prescriptive analysis evaluates its normative coherence with constitutional objectives, social justice, environmental protection, and public welfare(Wulandari, 2026). Particular attention is given to the relationship between formal legal provisions and the role of legal awareness education in promoting public participation and compliance with environmental regulations. Through this analytical process, the study seeks to formulate a coherent understanding of how legal policy can support accountable, equitable, and environmentally sustainable natural resource governance in Indonesia.

Result (نتائج)

1. The Constitutional Framework of State Control over Natural Resources

The analysis of the constitutional and statutory framework demonstrates that state control constitutes the fundamental legal principle governing natural resource management in Indonesia. Article 33(3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia establishes that the earth, water, and natural resources contained therein shall be controlled by the state and utilised for the greatest prosperity of the people. This provision provides the constitutional basis for governmental authority over natural resources while simultaneously establishing a substantive objective that must guide the exercise of such authority(Ong & Tan, 2026). Accordingly, state control cannot be interpreted exclusively as an expression of sovereign power but must also be understood as a constitutional responsibility to ensure that natural resources contribute to public welfare.

The concept of state control requires the state to perform regulatory, administrative, management, and supervisory functions in accordance with constitutional objectives. These functions are reflected in the authority to formulate legislation, establish resource utilisation policies, grant and supervise permits, and ensure that natural resource exploitation complies with applicable legal requirements. The constitutional mandate therefore places the state in a position of responsibility to balance economic utilisation with public interests, environmental protection, and the rights of communities affected by resource development.

The analysis further indicates that the constitutional principle of state control must be distinguished from the unrestricted ownership of natural resources by the state. State authority is constitutionally directed towards public prosperity and must therefore be exercised within the limits established by law. Governmental decisions concerning natural resource allocation, licensing, and exploitation should be assessed in terms of their contribution to public welfare, legal certainty, transparency, and accountability. Consequently, the legitimacy of state intervention depends not merely on the formal existence of governmental authority but also on

whether its exercise is consistent with the constitutional objectives of natural resource governance.

The statutory framework governing natural resources is distributed across various sectoral legal instruments, including legislation concerning mineral and coal mining, forestry, plantations, and environmental protection. Although these instruments regulate different aspects of resource utilisation, their implementation must remain consistent with the constitutional mandate established by Article 33(3). This requirement highlights the importance of legal coherence and coordination between sectoral regulations, particularly where economic development objectives intersect with environmental obligations and community interests.

The findings of the normative analysis establish that effective state control requires more than the formal enactment of legislation. It also requires consistent implementation, effective supervision, transparent decision-making, and legal mechanisms capable of preventing the misuse of authority. State control should therefore function as an instrument for achieving public prosperity rather than merely facilitating the exploitation of natural resources for economic purposes.

2. Social Justice and the Equitable Distribution of Natural Resource Benefits

The examination of natural resource legislation demonstrates that social justice constitutes an essential consideration in determining whether the constitutional objective of public prosperity can be realised. The benefits generated by natural resource utilisation should not be assessed solely through economic indicators, such as investment growth, production levels, or state revenue. They must also be evaluated in terms of the distribution of benefits, the protection of community interests, and the allocation of the social and environmental costs associated with resource exploitation.

From a constitutional perspective, the requirement that natural resources be utilised for the greatest prosperity of the people implies that resource governance should produce benefits extending beyond the interests of the state and private economic actors. Natural resource policies must therefore consider the interests of local communities, Indigenous peoples, workers, and other groups whose livelihoods and access to land or natural resources may be affected by development activities. The principle of public prosperity requires the state to consider how economic benefits are distributed and whether affected communities receive adequate protection under the applicable legal framework(Das, 2026).

The analysis identifies several normative considerations relevant to the realisation of distributive justice. First, legal policies must provide a clear and legitimate basis for allocating access to natural resources. Second, decision-making procedures should ensure that affected communities have meaningful opportunities to express their interests and participate in decisions that may affect their livelihoods. Third, the legal framework should provide adequate protection against arbitrary restrictions on access to resources and against the disproportionate allocation of environmental burdens to vulnerable communities. Fourth, mechanisms for resolving disputes and obtaining legal remedies must be accessible and effective.

Social justice also requires attention to the relationship between economic development and the recognition of community rights. Natural resource development may generate employment, infrastructure, and public revenue, but these potential benefits do not automatically eliminate concerns regarding land conflicts, livelihood disruption, or unequal access to decision-making processes. Consequently, the legal assessment of natural resource policies must consider both the economic benefits produced by resource utilisation and the distribution of its associated risks.

The normative framework further indicates that legal certainty and substantive fairness should operate together. Clear legal rules are necessary to regulate resource allocation and protect legitimate interests, while substantive justice requires that those rules be implemented in a manner consistent with equality, public welfare, and constitutional protection. A formally valid

policy may remain insufficient from the perspective of social justice if its implementation fails to account for the interests of communities affected by resource exploitation.

These findings demonstrate that equitable natural resource governance requires the integration of distributive justice, procedural fairness, and effective legal protection. The state's constitutional responsibility is therefore not fulfilled merely by generating economic value from natural resources. It also requires the establishment of legal and institutional arrangements that promote fair benefit distribution, protect affected communities, and ensure that natural resource utilisation serves the broader public interest.

3. Environmental Sustainability as a Principle of Natural Resource Governance

The normative examination of environmental legislation demonstrates that environmental sustainability constitutes an integral element of the legal framework governing natural resource management in Indonesia. Article 28H(1) of the 1945 Constitution recognises the right of every person to a good and healthy environment, while Article 33(4) establishes principles of sustainability and environmental awareness within the national economic framework. Read together with Article 33(3), these constitutional provisions indicate that natural resource utilisation must be understood in conjunction with environmental protection and the long-term interests of society.

At the statutory level, Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management, as amended, provides an important legal foundation for integrating environmental considerations into development and resource utilisation. The legislation establishes a framework for environmental protection and management, including environmental assessment, supervision, administrative measures, public participation, and legal accountability. These instruments are relevant to ensuring that decisions concerning natural resources take account of potential ecological consequences rather than focusing exclusively on immediate economic returns.

The analysis identifies the importance of incorporating environmental considerations throughout the decision-making process. Environmental protection should inform the formulation of natural resource policies, the assessment of proposed activities, the issuance and supervision of relevant approvals, and the evaluation of compliance with environmental obligations. Such an approach is necessary because environmental degradation may create long-term social and economic consequences that cannot be adequately addressed through short-term financial assessments alone.

Environmental sustainability is also closely connected to intergenerational justice. The exploitation of natural resources may generate immediate economic benefits, but excessive or poorly regulated utilisation can diminish the availability and quality of environmental resources for future generations. Accordingly, the constitutional and statutory framework should be interpreted in a manner that recognises the importance of ecological protection, responsible resource utilisation, and the prevention of environmental harm.

The normative analysis further reveals the relationship between environmental protection and social justice. Environmental damage may disproportionately affect communities whose livelihoods depend directly on forests, water, agricultural land, coastal areas, or other natural resources. Where environmental risks are inadequately assessed or regulated, the resulting burdens may fall on communities that receive only a limited share of the economic benefits generated by resource exploitation. Environmental sustainability must therefore be considered alongside distributive fairness and the protection of community rights.

Public participation represents another important component of environmentally responsible governance. Access to relevant environmental information and opportunities to participate in decision-making can strengthen transparency and improve the identification of potential ecological and social consequences. Nevertheless, participation must be supported by accessible

information, appropriate institutional procedures, and mechanisms through which public concerns can be considered in governmental decisions.

The findings indicate that environmental sustainability should not be treated as a supplementary objective that may be disregarded when economic interests are prioritised. Rather, it constitutes a substantive legal consideration that must inform the interpretation and implementation of natural resource legislation. Effective environmental governance consequently requires coherent regulations, preventive measures, consistent supervision, enforceable obligations, and meaningful public participation.

4. Legal Awareness Education and Public Participation in Natural Resource Management

The analysis identifies legal awareness education as an important complementary instrument for strengthening the implementation of natural resource and environmental legislation. Although statutory provisions establish rights, obligations, and regulatory mechanisms, their practical significance depends partly on whether individuals and communities understand the legal framework and are able to use the mechanisms available to them. Legal awareness education can help connect formal legal rules with public understanding and participation(Trisno et al., 2026).

In the context of natural resource management, legal awareness education encompasses the dissemination and explanation of legal rights, environmental obligations, administrative procedures, participation mechanisms, and available remedies for legal violations. Its relevance extends to communities affected by mining, forestry, plantation development, and other activities involving the utilisation of natural resources. Through accessible legal information, community members can become better equipped to understand relevant decisions, identify potential violations, and seek appropriate legal assistance.

The normative framework indicates that legal awareness education can support natural resource governance through several related functions. First, it can improve public understanding of the constitutional and statutory principles governing natural resources. Second, it can strengthen the ability of communities to participate meaningfully in consultations and environmental decision-making procedures. Third, it can encourage compliance with environmental obligations by clarifying the legal consequences of prohibited or harmful activities. Fourth, it can improve public understanding of complaint procedures, administrative remedies, and other mechanisms for obtaining legal protection.

Legal awareness education is particularly relevant to public participation because participation requires more than the formal availability of opportunities to express opinions. Meaningful participation depends on whether individuals have access to understandable information, recognise the relevance of proposed decisions to their interests, and know how to communicate their concerns through lawful procedures. Legal education can therefore help reduce informational barriers that may otherwise limit the involvement of affected communities in natural resource governance.

The analysis also indicates that legal awareness education should be understood as a continuing process rather than a one-time dissemination of legal information. Effective programmes may involve cooperation among government institutions, educational institutions, legal aid organisations, civil society organisations, and community representatives. Educational materials should be accessible, contextually appropriate, and responsive to the legal issues encountered by particular communities. Where relevant, the use of local languages and community-based educational methods may help improve the accessibility of legal information.

However, legal awareness education has important limitations. Greater public knowledge cannot, by itself, resolve institutional weaknesses, eliminate conflicts of interest, or guarantee effective law enforcement. Communities may understand their legal rights but still encounter obstacles in obtaining information, accessing legal assistance, or challenging decisions made by more powerful actors. Legal education must therefore be accompanied by transparent

governance, accessible complaint mechanisms, institutional accountability, and consistent enforcement of applicable law.

These findings establish that legal awareness education can strengthen the relationship between the legal framework and its implementation in society. Its contribution lies in supporting informed participation, improving public understanding of legal responsibilities, and facilitating access to existing mechanisms of legal protection. When integrated with effective institutions and enforceable legal standards, legal awareness education can become an important component of accountable and participatory natural resource governance.

5. The Integration of State Control, Social Justice, Environmental Sustainability, and Legal Awareness Education

The overall analysis demonstrates that state control, social justice, environmental sustainability, and legal awareness education are interconnected dimensions of natural resource management rather than independent legal and policy concerns. Each dimension addresses a different aspect of governance, but their effectiveness depends on their integration within a coherent constitutional and statutory framework(Albadrani & Saddallah, 2026).

State control provides the constitutional and institutional basis for regulating natural resource utilisation. Nevertheless, the exercise of state authority must be directed towards public prosperity and constrained by legal obligations. Social justice provides a normative standard for evaluating how the benefits and burdens of resource utilisation are distributed. Environmental sustainability establishes the requirement that resource development respect ecological limits and the interests of future generations. Legal awareness education, meanwhile, supports public understanding, participation, and the practical exercise of rights and obligations.

The relationship among these dimensions demonstrates that weaknesses in one area may undermine the effectiveness of the others. State control that is not accompanied by transparency and accountability may fail to protect public interests adequately. Economic development policies that neglect distributive justice may generate unequal outcomes despite producing substantial financial benefits. Resource utilisation that disregards environmental obligations may undermine long-term public welfare. Similarly, legal provisions concerning public participation may have limited practical effect where communities lack accessible legal information or opportunities to influence decisions.

The findings therefore point to the need for an integrated approach to legal policy. First, sectoral legislation and administrative decisions should be interpreted consistently with constitutional principles of public prosperity, social welfare, and environmental responsibility. Second, legal and institutional arrangements should promote transparent resource allocation, fair consideration of community interests, and effective protection of environmental rights. Third, environmental obligations should be incorporated into the assessment, implementation, and supervision of natural resource activities. Fourth, legal awareness education should be strengthened as a complementary mechanism for enabling public participation and improving understanding of legal procedures.

An integrated approach also requires clear institutional responsibilities and effective coordination among the authorities involved in natural resource governance. The distribution of regulatory powers across different sectors and levels of government should not result in uncertainty regarding accountability or weaken the enforcement of environmental and social obligations. Coherent legal arrangements are therefore necessary to ensure that economic development objectives remain consistent with constitutional requirements.

Public participation provides an important link among the four dimensions. Through accessible information and meaningful opportunities for engagement, communities can contribute to the identification of environmental risks, the evaluation of resource allocation decisions, and the monitoring of compliance with applicable legal requirements. Such participation can support

public accountability, although it cannot replace the state's responsibility to enforce the law or guarantee the protection of constitutional rights.

Overall, the normative findings indicate that effective natural resource governance requires a combination of constitutional fidelity, equitable distribution, ecological responsibility, and informed civic participation. Legal awareness education strengthens this framework by helping translate formal legal principles into greater public understanding and engagement. However, its contribution depends on the existence of responsive institutions, accessible remedies, and consistent implementation of the law.

The results consequently support the proposition that the legal politics of natural resource management in Indonesia should be directed towards a model of governance in which state authority is exercised for public prosperity, social justice informs the distribution of benefits and burdens, environmental sustainability guides resource utilisation, and legal awareness education supports meaningful public participation. Such an integrated framework provides a normative basis for evaluating the coherence and effectiveness of legal policies governing natural resources for present and future generations.

Discussion (مناقشة)

1. The Legal Politics of State Control over Natural Resources in Indonesia

The findings of this study demonstrate that state control over natural resources in Indonesia must be understood as a constitutional responsibility rather than merely an expression of governmental authority. Article 33(3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia establishes the principle that natural resources must be utilised for the greatest prosperity of the people. This constitutional provision provides the normative foundation for evaluating the direction of legislation, the allocation of management authority, and the implementation of natural resource policies(Lewiandy et al., 2026). Accordingly, the legal politics of natural resource management concerns not only the substance of applicable legal provisions but also the political and institutional choices that determine how constitutional objectives are translated into governance practices(Efata & Deny, 2026).

The interpretation of state control is particularly significant because natural resources occupy a strategic position in Indonesia's economic development and social structure. The state exercises regulatory and supervisory authority over natural resource utilisation, but the legitimacy of such authority depends on whether it serves the public interest. In this respect, state control should not be equated with unrestricted governmental discretion. Rather, it must be exercised within constitutional boundaries and directed towards public welfare, legal certainty, and the protection of affected communities(Agustinus, 2025).

This interpretation is consistent with the constitutional understanding of state control developed in Indonesian constitutional law(Totelis, 2026). In Decision Number 001-021-022/PUU-I/2003, the Constitutional Court examined the meaning of state control in relation to electricity legislation. The Court's reasoning is relevant to the broader understanding of Article 33 because it identifies state control as encompassing policy-making, administration, regulation, management, and supervision. Although the decision concerned the electricity sector, its constitutional reasoning provides an important analytical reference for assessing the exercise of state authority in other strategic sectors, including natural resource management(Nugraha, 2026).

The significance of this constitutional interpretation lies in its emphasis on the substantive purpose of state authority. Governmental involvement in natural resource governance cannot

be considered sufficient merely because licensing procedures, administrative institutions, and sectoral regulations formally exist. The exercise of authority must also be evaluated in relation to the constitutional objective of public prosperity. Consequently, the legal politics of natural resource management should be assessed according to whether the applicable legal framework enables the state to protect public interests, supervise private economic activities, and prevent the concentration of resource benefits in the hands of a limited number of actors.

However, the relationship between constitutional principles and sectoral legislation may generate legal and institutional challenges. Natural resource governance involves different sectors, regulatory arrangements, and governmental responsibilities. Where sectoral policies prioritise investment and production without adequate integration of social and environmental obligations, the implementation of Article 33(3) may become detached from its constitutional purpose. This concern does not necessarily imply that economic development objectives are inconsistent with constitutional requirements. Rather, it demonstrates that economic development must operate within a legal framework that recognises public welfare, environmental protection, and distributive justice as substantive governance objectives.

From the perspective of legal politics, the central issue is therefore how the state establishes priorities among competing interests. The formulation of natural resource legislation inevitably involves decisions concerning access to resources, investment opportunities, environmental obligations, and community protection. These decisions reflect the political direction of the state and influence the distribution of economic and social benefits. A constitutional approach requires that such choices remain accountable to the public interest rather than being determined exclusively by administrative convenience or short-term economic considerations.

The discussion consequently reinforces the proposition that effective state control requires constitutional consistency, institutional accountability, and substantive evaluation of policy outcomes. Article 33(3) should function as a guiding principle for the formulation and implementation of natural resource legislation, ensuring that state authority remains directed towards public prosperity while respecting social and ecological responsibilities.

2. Social Justice, Distributive Equity, and the Protection of Community Interests

The findings concerning social justice indicate that the constitutional objective of public prosperity cannot be assessed solely through the economic value generated by natural resource exploitation. Although natural resource development may contribute to state revenue, employment, infrastructure, and investment, these benefits do not automatically establish that the resulting distribution is equitable(Resch, 2026). The legal politics of natural resource management must therefore consider who receives the benefits(Vomáčka, 2026), who bears the associated risks(Bayer, 2026), and whether affected communities possess meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions concerning their living environments and livelihoods(Tunç, 2026).

The principle of distributive justice provides a useful conceptual framework for examining these questions. In the context of natural resource governance, distributive justice concerns the fair allocation of economic benefits, access to natural resources, environmental burdens, and opportunities for participation. It requires the legal framework to consider the circumstances of communities that may be disproportionately affected by resource exploitation, particularly where their livelihoods depend on land, forests, water, and other natural resources.

This perspective also highlights the distinction between formal equality and substantive justice. The existence of uniform legal procedures does not necessarily ensure equitable outcomes when communities have unequal access to information, legal assistance, economic

resources, or decision-making institutions. Consequently, legal policies should not be evaluated exclusively by whether the same regulatory requirements formally apply to all parties. They should also be examined in terms of whether the relevant arrangements provide adequate protection for affected communities and enable them to defend their legitimate interests.

The recognition and protection of Indigenous peoples' rights are particularly relevant to this analysis. Article 18B(2) of the 1945 Constitution recognises and respects customary law communities and their traditional rights, subject to the constitutional and statutory conditions specified in that provision. Article 28I(3) also recognises cultural identities and the rights of traditional communities in accordance with the development of the times and the principles of civilisation. These constitutional provisions must be considered alongside the legal framework governing land, forests, and natural resource utilisation.

The relevance of these guarantees becomes apparent where resource development intersects with customary territories, traditional livelihoods, or established community relationships with the environment. In such circumstances, the legality of administrative decisions cannot be evaluated solely by reference to licensing requirements. Consideration must also be given to the applicable legal status of customary communities, their recognised rights, and the procedural safeguards governing decisions that may affect them. The precise scope of protection depends on the relevant legislation, the circumstances of the community concerned, and the applicable constitutional and judicial interpretations.

Furthermore, social justice requires attention to the distribution of environmental costs. Communities that receive limited economic benefits from natural resource development may nevertheless experience pollution, restricted access to land, or disruption of traditional livelihoods. Such circumstances raise questions regarding the fairness of the underlying policy and the adequacy of legal protection. A governance framework directed towards public prosperity should therefore seek to prevent situations in which economic gains are concentrated while social and environmental costs are disproportionately borne by affected communities.

These considerations demonstrate that distributive justice must be complemented by procedural justice. Public participation, access to relevant information, transparent administrative procedures, and effective mechanisms for resolving disputes are essential to ensuring that community interests are considered before decisions are finalised. Participation is not meaningful if communities are merely informed of decisions without having a reasonable opportunity to express concerns or access appropriate remedies.

Nevertheless, the realisation of social justice cannot depend exclusively on procedural participation. Even where consultation procedures are formally available, substantive protection may remain inadequate if administrative institutions fail to consider legitimate community interests or enforce applicable legal obligations. Accordingly, procedural guarantees should be accompanied by clear substantive standards, effective supervision, and accessible remedies.

The discussion establishes that distributive justice should function as a substantive criterion for evaluating natural resource policies. In accordance with Article 33(3) of the Constitution, public prosperity should be understood in terms of the broader distribution of benefits and the protection of community welfare, rather than merely the aggregate economic value generated by resource exploitation. This approach strengthens the constitutional basis for natural resource governance that is socially inclusive, legally accountable, and responsive to the interests of affected communities.

3. Environmental Sustainability and the Constitutional Limits of Resource Exploitation

Environmental sustainability represents a fundamental consideration in determining the

legitimacy and long-term effectiveness of natural resource policies. The findings demonstrate that environmental protection cannot be separated from the constitutional objective of public prosperity because the continued availability and quality of natural resources are essential to social welfare and economic development. Consequently, the legal politics of natural resource management must address the relationship between resource utilisation, ecological protection, and the interests of present and future generations.

Article 28H(1) of the 1945 Constitution recognises the right to a good and healthy environment, while Article 33(4) identifies sustainability and environmental awareness as principles of the national economy(Ma'ruf et al., 2026). These constitutional provisions support an interpretation of natural resource management in which economic activities must be reconciled with environmental responsibilities(Baharuddin et al., 2025). The constitutional mandate to utilise natural resources for public prosperity should therefore not be interpreted as authorising exploitation without regard to ecological consequences(Efata & Deny, 2026).

At the statutory level, Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management, as amended, provides a central legal framework for environmental governance(Ningrum, 2023). Its principles and regulatory mechanisms support preventive environmental protection, public participation, supervision, and accountability(Sudrajat et al., 2026). The framework is particularly relevant to natural resource activities because environmental harm may have consequences that extend beyond the immediate location or duration of an economic project(Simanjuntak et al., 2026).

From a legal-political perspective, the challenge is not simply whether environmental regulations exist but whether environmental considerations are integrated into decisions concerning resource allocation and exploitation. Economic policies may place considerable emphasis on investment, production, and revenue generation. However, when environmental obligations are treated as secondary administrative requirements, the resulting governance arrangements may fail to account adequately for ecological risks and long-term social costs.

This tension illustrates the importance of integrating environmental considerations into the formulation, authorisation, implementation, and supervision of natural resource activities. Environmental assessment and regulatory supervision should provide substantive safeguards for identifying potential harm, evaluating preventive measures, and ensuring compliance with applicable obligations. Their effectiveness depends on the quality of the relevant information, the independence and capacity of supervisory institutions, and the availability of legal consequences for violations.

The preventive dimension of environmental governance is especially important because some forms of environmental damage may be difficult or costly to reverse. A regulatory approach that relies predominantly on sanctions after harm has occurred may be insufficient where ecological degradation affects public health, biodiversity, water resources, or community livelihoods over an extended period. Accordingly, the legal framework should support preventive decision-making and ensure that environmental risks are properly considered before resource exploitation proceeds.

Environmental sustainability is also closely associated with intergenerational justice. The benefits obtained from present resource utilisation must be considered alongside the environmental conditions inherited by future generations. This consideration does not require the elimination of resource-based economic development. Rather, it requires that development decisions account for ecological limitations and avoid transferring disproportionate environmental costs to those who have not participated in, or benefited from, the relevant economic activities.

Moreover, environmental justice provides a connection between ecological protection and social equality. Environmental harm may affect communities differently depending on their geographical location, economic resources, access to public services, and dependence on natural resources. Consequently, a legally adequate environmental policy must consider both the prevention of ecological damage and the fair distribution of environmental risks. Environmental protection should not be limited to preserving natural systems in the abstract; it should also address the consequences of environmental degradation for human welfare and legally protected community interests.

Public participation further strengthens environmental governance by enabling communities to contribute local knowledge, identify potential risks, and scrutinise decisions affecting their surroundings. However, participation cannot replace the state's responsibility to establish and enforce environmental standards. Public involvement is most effective when supported by transparent procedures, accessible information, institutional responsiveness, and clear accountability.

The discussion therefore indicates that environmental sustainability must operate as a substantive legal constraint on natural resource exploitation. Its integration into constitutional interpretation, sectoral legislation, administrative decision-making, and enforcement is essential to ensuring that economic development remains consistent with ecological responsibility and the long-term public interest.

4. Legal Awareness Education as a Mechanism for Strengthening Legal Compliance and Public Participation

The findings concerning legal awareness education reveal an important relationship between the existence of legal norms and their practical accessibility to the public. Legislation may establish environmental rights, participation procedures, and legal obligations, but these provisions cannot fully support public accountability when individuals and communities lack sufficient information about their content or the mechanisms available for their implementation. Legal awareness education should therefore be considered a complementary component of natural resource governance(Badaruddin et al., 2026).

The relevance of legal awareness education can be understood through the distinction between the formal validity of law and its practical effectiveness. Formal validity concerns the existence of legally recognised rules(Arianda, 2026), whereas practical effectiveness concerns the extent to which those rules guide conduct, inform institutional decisions, and provide meaningful protection in society. Although legal awareness alone cannot guarantee compliance, it may help individuals and communities understand the significance of applicable legal requirements and identify appropriate responses to potential violations(Kulakova, 2026).

In natural resource management, legal awareness education should extend beyond the general dissemination of statutory provisions. It should enable the public to understand relevant rights and obligations, the procedures governing resource utilisation, the significance of environmental assessments, and the available mechanisms for submitting objections or complaints. Such information is particularly important for communities whose livelihoods or customary interests may be affected by mining, forestry, plantations, and other resource-related activities(Duc et al., 2026).

Legal awareness education also has implications for environmental compliance. Public understanding of environmental obligations may encourage more responsible conduct and improve the ability of communities to recognise activities that require regulatory scrutiny(Hussain & Mohima, 2026). At the same time, legal awareness can support monitoring by helping citizens understand how to communicate concerns to relevant authorities and how

to seek legal assistance where necessary. These functions can contribute to a more participatory model of environmental governance.

Nevertheless, legal awareness education should not be understood solely as a mechanism for encouraging obedience to state regulations. A comprehensive approach must also strengthen public understanding of legal rights and the accountability of public institutions. Citizens should be able to understand both their responsibilities under environmental law and the legal obligations imposed on governmental authorities and private actors. Otherwise, legal education risks becoming a one-directional process that emphasises compliance without adequately addressing the protection of rights.

This distinction is particularly significant in situations involving competing interests between communities, businesses, and government institutions. Public awareness of legal rights may support informed participation, improve the identification of procedural deficiencies, and facilitate access to dispute-resolution mechanisms. However, such awareness is meaningful only when the legal system provides genuine opportunities for concerns to be considered and appropriate remedies to be obtained.

Legal awareness education should therefore be supported by accessible and context-sensitive educational methods. Cooperation among educational institutions, government agencies, legal aid providers, civil society organisations, and community representatives may help make legal information more understandable and relevant to local circumstances. Educational initiatives should also take account of differences in literacy, language, geographical access, and familiarity with formal administrative procedures.

Importantly, legal education cannot substitute for effective law enforcement or institutional reform. Communities may understand their rights yet remain unable to protect them because of financial constraints, inadequate legal assistance, limited access to information, or institutional barriers. Therefore, the effectiveness of legal awareness initiatives depends on their integration with accessible complaint procedures, responsive administrative institutions, transparent decision-making, and enforceable legal obligations.

The discussion establishes that legal awareness education should be positioned as an enabling mechanism within a broader framework of accountable governance. Its principal contribution is to improve public understanding, strengthen informed participation, and facilitate the practical exercise of legal rights and responsibilities. When combined with institutional accountability and consistent enforcement, legal awareness education can help reduce the distance between formal legal provisions and their implementation in natural resource management.

5. Integrating Legal Politics, Social Justice, Environmental Sustainability, and Legal Awareness Education

The preceding analysis demonstrates that state control, social justice, environmental sustainability, and legal awareness education are mutually reinforcing elements of natural resource governance. Their relationship provides a broader framework for understanding how legal politics shapes the allocation, utilisation, and protection of natural resources in Indonesia.

State control establishes the constitutional and institutional basis for governmental intervention(Kong, 2026). However, the exercise of this authority requires substantive criteria to ensure that resource utilisation serves public welfare. Social justice provides such criteria by directing attention to the distribution of economic benefits, the protection of affected communities, and the fair allocation of environmental costs(Chowbe & Thool, 2026). Environmental sustainability establishes the ecological conditions within which resource utilisation should occur, while legal awareness education supports the capacity of citizens to

understand and participate in the implementation of relevant legal requirements(Akbar et al., 2026).

The integration of these dimensions is necessary because the effectiveness of one may be limited by weaknesses in another. Regulatory authority that lacks accountability may fail to protect community interests. Economic policies that neglect distributive justice may generate benefits without ensuring that affected populations are adequately protected(Dai et al., 2026). Environmental legislation that is weakly enforced may fail to prevent ecological harm(Silitonga et al., 2026). Likewise, participation mechanisms may remain largely formal when communities do not have access to relevant information or an adequate understanding of their legal rights(Morelle-Hungría, 2026).

These interrelationships indicate that the central challenge of natural resource governance lies not merely in the number of applicable legal instruments but in the coherence of the overall regulatory framework. Constitutional principles must guide sectoral legislation, administrative decisions, and enforcement practices. Where regulatory responsibilities are divided across institutions, coordination is necessary to reduce uncertainty and ensure that economic, social, and environmental objectives are addressed consistently.

A coherent approach also requires attention to institutional accountability. Decisions concerning resource allocation and exploitation should be based on applicable legal standards, supported by relevant information, and subject to appropriate supervision and review. Transparency can help identify inconsistencies between formal policy objectives and administrative practice, while effective legal remedies can provide protection where rights or legal obligations have been violated.

Within this framework, legal awareness education serves as a link between legal institutions and the communities affected by their decisions. Public understanding of legal rules can facilitate participation, improve the communication of concerns, and strengthen awareness of institutional responsibilities. However, participation should be regarded as one component of accountable governance rather than a means of transferring the state's regulatory responsibilities to the public.

The integrated framework also reveals the importance of balancing economic development with long-term public welfare. Natural resources can support national development, but their contribution to prosperity depends on the legal and institutional arrangements through which they are managed. Policies that generate immediate economic benefits while undermining environmental quality or imposing disproportionate burdens on vulnerable communities may conflict with the broader constitutional objective of public prosperity. Accordingly, economic performance should be evaluated alongside distributive fairness, ecological responsibility, and the protection of legally recognised rights.

The contribution of this integrated perspective lies in treating legal politics as a process that connects constitutional authority with substantive governance objectives and public participation. Rather than examining state control, social justice, environmental sustainability, and legal awareness education as separate subjects, this approach considers how they interact in determining the legitimacy and effectiveness of natural resource policies.

The analysis therefore provides a conceptual basis for evaluating natural resource governance through four interrelated questions: whether state authority is exercised consistently with constitutional objectives; whether benefits and burdens are distributed fairly; whether environmental obligations are incorporated into resource utilisation; and whether the public possesses meaningful opportunities to understand and participate in legal decision-making. These questions can guide the interpretation of existing legal instruments and the

assessment of future legal-policy reforms.

Ultimately, the discussion underscores the importance of a coherent legal and institutional framework that combines constitutional accountability, distributive justice, environmental protection, and informed public participation. The integration of these principles offers a normative direction for natural resource governance in Indonesia, in which economic utilisation is assessed not only by its immediate financial benefits but also by its contribution to public welfare, social equity, and environmental sustainability.

Conclusion (خاتمة)

This study concludes that the legal politics of natural resource management in Indonesia must be grounded in the constitutional relationship between state control, social justice, environmental sustainability, and legal awareness education. Article 33(3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia establishes that natural resources must be utilised for the greatest prosperity of the people. This constitutional mandate requires the state not only to exercise regulatory authority but also to ensure that natural resource governance serves the public interest, promotes equitable distribution of benefits, and protects the rights and welfare of affected communities.

The normative analysis demonstrates that state control cannot be separated from the principles of distributive justice and environmental responsibility. The legitimacy of natural resource policies depends on their consistency with constitutional objectives, the fairness of resource allocation, and the effectiveness of legal mechanisms for protecting community interests. Environmental sustainability must likewise constitute an integral consideration in resource-related decision-making to ensure that economic development does not undermine ecological integrity or the interests of future generations.

Furthermore, legal awareness education represents an important complementary instrument for strengthening public participation, understanding of legal rights and obligations, and compliance with environmental regulations. However, its effectiveness depends on the availability of accessible legal information, responsive institutions, transparent decision-making, effective law enforcement, and meaningful mechanisms for obtaining legal protection. Public awareness alone cannot compensate for weaknesses in regulatory implementation or institutional accountability.

Accordingly, the study emphasises the need for a coherent and accountable legal framework that integrates constitutional principles, equitable resource distribution, environmental protection, and informed public participation. By positioning legal awareness education within a broader system of responsible governance, natural resource management in Indonesia can be directed towards the realisation of public prosperity, social justice, and environmental sustainability for present and future generations.

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