

**Slide 3: A Brief Overview**

In your work with the Endangered Species Act, you'll hear terms such as law, statute, regulations, rules, policy, and guidance. Sometimes they're used interchangeably, but there are distinct and crucial differences. These differences include the level of legal authority encompassed by a document ... differences in the consequences for acting inconsistent with the directives of a document ... and differences in the discretion agencies like the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service have in making their decisions.

**Slide 4: Why Does It Matter?**

Why do these distinctions matter? As administrators of the Act, your recommendations and decisions will be based on law and policy. You also may help write legislation, rules, or agency policy. Understanding the hierarchy of laws – and the role of law versus policy – will make for better decisions. It will also help you apply science in a manner that avoids legal challenges to those decisions.