



Donald E. Sobelman

Partner

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With more than 20 years of experience, Don Sobelman focuses his practice on helping clients navigate the complexities of federal and California environmental law. His multifaceted practice encompasses administrative enforcement defense, civil litigation, compliance with regulatory regimes, and contaminated site cleanup and redevelopment.

Don has tackled a diverse range of environmental law matters, including administrative proceedings and civil litigation in trial and appellate courts involving state and federal statutes (such as CERCLA, RCRA, the Clean Water Act, Proposition 65, and the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act); complex environmental/toxic tort litigation; contractual disputes and claims arising from environmental indemnities; compliance with local, state, and federal regulations pertaining to hazardous materials, hazardous waste, water quality, and wetlands; and remediation, transfer/sale, and redevelopment of brownfields sites requiring investigation, risk assessment, and remediation to address vapor intrusion and soil and groundwater contamination, including from volatile organic compounds (VOCs) such as PCE and TCE, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), metals, and PCBs.

He conducts due diligence regarding environmental liabilities associated with real estate and corporate transactions and navigates developers through the CEQA process, including defending projects in both trial and appellate courts.

Don's clients benefit from his multidisciplinary approach to solving their problems and advancing their goals. By efficiently and effectively collaborating with technical experts and lawyers with relevant specialties, he ensures that his clients obtain the best possible advice when deciding how to address complex environmental issues.

Active in his community, Don has represented pro bono the South Valley Islamic Center in San Martin, California since 2012 in an ongoing California Environmental Quality Act and permit process for its Cordoba Center—a 16-acre project including a mosque, community center, and cemetery. The project was approved by unanimous vote of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors in December 2019.

Distinctions

- *Best Lawyers in America*®, Litigation-Environmental (2018-2021)
- *Northern California Super Lawyers*, Environmental Litigation (2014-2020)

Memberships and Affiliations

- California Bar Association, Section on Environmental Law
- Bar Association of San Francisco, Environmental Law Section
- Association of Environmental Professionals

Services

- Environmental Law
- Environmental Litigation
- Environmental Regulatory / Compliance
- Appellate Litigation
- Consumer Products + Manufacturing
- Energy + Natural Resources
- Hazardous Substances and Wastes
- Land Use / Development
- Natural Resource Protection
- Product Liability and Stewardship
- Proposition 65 Counseling and Defense
- Real Estate

Education

- Harvard Law School (J.D., 1996)
 - . *cum laude*
 - . managing editor, *Harvard Environmental Law Review*
- University of California, Los Angeles (B.A., 1991)
 - . *summa cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa

Bar Admissions

- California

Court Admissions

- U.S. District Court (N.D. Cal.)
- U.S. District Court (C.D. Cal.)
- U.S. District Court (E.D. Cal.)
- U.S. District Court (S.D. Cal.)
- 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals
- U.S. Supreme Court

Publications

June 16, 2020

Key PFAS Regulatory Standards Set in California

Industry Today

June 5, 2020

New Screening Levels for Key PFAS Chemicals Will Spur Regulatory Action at Contaminated Sites

May 21, 2020

Supreme Court Ruling Expands Reach of Clean Water Act NPDES Permitting

California Ag Net

April 23, 2020

Major Supreme Court Ruling Expands Reach of Clean Water Act NPDES Permitting to Certain

Discharges to Groundwater

Outside the Office

Ever since he was an English major at UCLA, Don's favorite downtime activity has been to curl up on the sofa with a novel, play, or book of poetry, preferably while listening to some good music (favorites run from John Coltrane to J.S. Bach to The Smiths). He also spends far too much time indulging his passion for cinema, particularly classic Hollywood movies and foreign films.

Don and his wife live in the Pacific Heights neighborhood of San Francisco, where they enjoy frequenting the many excellent local restaurants and running to the Golden Gate Bridge and back (the latter being necessary due to the frequent meals). They are Medallion Society members with San Francisco Opera, and they always spend one week each year in Paris – the City of Lights being the only place they like as much (okay, maybe more) than the City by the Bay.