



Donald E. Sobelman

Partner

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With more than 25 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, 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 management of 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, metals such as lead and hexavalent chromium, PFAS compounds, pesticides, and PCBs.

Don's practice also routinely involves advising clients on the purchase, sale, and redevelopment of contaminated properties. He manages all aspects of the environmental due diligence process, negotiates indemnities for environmental liabilities, and assists clients with obtaining insurance coverage for environmental risks. In addition, Don helps developers navigate the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and land use entitlements process, including with respect to general plan amendments, zoning revisions, and conditional use permits. He has significant experience as lead counsel in CEQA and land use litigation 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 represented pro bono the South Valley Islamic Center (SVIC) in San Martin, California with respect to the CEQA and permit process for SVIC's 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

- *Lawdragon 500: Leaders in Environmental Law* (2023)
- *Best Lawyers in America*, Litigation-Environmental (2018-2021), Environmental Law (2022-2023)
- Northern California *Super Lawyers* in Environmental Litigation (2014-2022)

Memberships and Affiliations

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

Services

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

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

- Association of Environmental Professionals

Publications

November 28, 2022

Regulatory and Litigation Risks From California's New Recycling Laws

Industry Today

September 22, 2022

How New Climate Change CEQA Thresholds Will Impact Bay Area Development Projects

CJ Higley and Don Sobelman

March 10, 2021

New Proposition 65 Warning Requirements for Cannabis and Hemp-Derived Products

Cannabis Industry Education Series

February 22, 2021

Cannabis and Hemp-Derived Products Subject to New Prop. 65 Warning Requirements in California

Cannabis Business Times

January 20, 2021

Cannabis Industry, Including CBD Products, Subject to New Proposition 65 Warning Requirements

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.