



John M. Ugai

Senior Associate

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John Ugai represents clients in a broad range of litigation and environmental permitting, compliance, and administrative enforcement matters.

John regularly advises clean energy and technology companies on litigation and regulatory matters. He recently helped a smart meter technology company secure a victory in a two-week trial, defeating a licensor's claim for over a billion dollars. As a 2022 Clean Energy Leadership Institute Fellow and a secondee at a long-duration energy storage company, John has developed deep industry expertise that he leverages to deliver efficient, strategic results for his clients.

John assists clients in all stages of litigation—from prelitigation negotiations to appeals—and his diverse practice spans complex contractual disputes, multi-party remedial cost recovery actions, and other high-stakes matters.

In addition to representing clients in state and federal court, John advises clients on environmental compliance, air emissions regulations, and renewable energy project development issues. He helps clients navigate the complexities of federal and state environmental laws, including the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, CEQA, NEPA, Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act, CERCLA, and Extended Producer Responsibility laws. In particular, he has experience representing large and small businesses in matters involving liability for cleanup and site remediation and federal citizen suits under the Clean Water Act. John also maintains an active pro bono practice, which includes representing clients in efforts to protect environmental resources and lands.

John served as a law clerk to the Honorable Susan van Keulen of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California. At Stanford Law School, he spent two years helping to represent local environmental groups before state courts as well as state and federal agencies in Stanford's Environmental Law Clinic.

Distinctions

- *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch® in America*, Environmental Law, Litigation—Environmental (2026)
- Northern California Rising Stars by *Super Lawyers*, Environmental Litigation (2023-2025)

Memberships and Affiliations

- Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD) Pathfinder (Class of 2024)
- Member, Emerging Leaders Initiative Cohort, Environmental Law Institute (2022)
- Fellow, Clean Energy Leadership Institute (2022)

Publications

October 24, 2025

Risks Remain for Housing Developers After Recent CEQA Reforms

Services

- Air Quality and Climate Change
- Appellate Litigation
- Business Litigation
- Clean Energy
- Environmental Law
- Environmental Litigation
- Environmental Regulatory / Compliance
- Land Use / Development
- Natural Resource Protection
- Renewable Energy
- Wine
- Wine Industry Litigation

Education

- Stanford Law School (J.D., 2017)
 - Technical Managing Editor, Stanford Journal of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
- Occidental College (B.A., 2014)
 - *magna cum laude*

Bar Admissions

- California

Clerkships

- U.S. District Court (N.D. Cal.), Susan van Keulen

The Recorder

July 28, 2025

Risks Remain For Housing Developers After Recent CEQA Reforms

August 14, 2024

The Supreme Court's Recent Clean Water Act Decision Forces Local Jurisdictions to Tackle Wetlands Issues

April 10, 2024

Where Are We Now, Following Maui County, Sackett, and the Latest EPA Guidance?

American Bar Association

March 25, 2024

More Momentum for Offshore Wind With IRS Expanding the Energy Community Tax Credit

November 28, 2023

Wind Energy Project Approvals and Tax Credits Look To Outpace Macroeconomic and Supply Chain Headwinds in 2024

POWER Magazine

June 5, 2022

AB 525: Laying the Foundation for California's Offshore Wind Industry

Daily Journal

May 28, 2021

New Statewide Winery Order: What Wineries Need to Know

Wine Industry Education Series

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 22, 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

March 31, 2020

Perfluorinated Compounds: No Longer an Emerging Contaminant

Industrial Equipment News

June 1, 2017

Conjunctive Use on the Yuba: Lessons From Drought Management in the Yuba Watershed

Hastings Environmental Law Journal

June 1, 2017

Regulating with Reasonable Use: Lessons From Drought Management in the Russian River Watershed

Hastings Environmental Law Journal

March 1, 2017

California Water Governance for the 21st Century

Outside the Office

In his free time, John enjoys all things food and exploring Bay Area trails with his wife and their two rescue dogs.