Bay Planning Coalition

2026

CEQA & REGULATORY UPDATE EVENT



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EVENT AGENDA

8:30 AM | **REGISTRATION & NETWORKING**

9:00 AM | **OPENING REMARKS**

- **Sean Herman,** *Partner* **|** Hanson Bridgett

9:05 AM | **SEGMENT 1: CEQA CASE LAW, REGULATORY AND LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Moderator:

- **Katie Chamberlin,** Principal *Environmental Planner* **|** Anchor QEA

Speakers:

- **Niran Somasundaram,** *Senior Associate* **|** Hanson Bridgett
- **Sam Bacal-Graves,** *Associate* **|** Stoel Rives
- **Katie Chamberlin,** *Principal Environmental Planner* **|** Anchor QEA
- **Devyani Jain,** *Deputy Program Manager* **|** Port of San Francisco

10:15 AM | **COFFEE BREAK**

10:35 AM | **SEGMENT 2: FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATORY UPDATE**

Moderator:

- **Kathryn Oehlschlager,** *Partner* **|** Stoel Rives

Speakers:

- **Scott Birkey,** *Partner* **|** Cox Castle
- **Jennifer Jeffers,** *Partner* **|** Allen Matkins
- **Tom Boer,** *Partner* **|** Hogan Lovells Cadwalader

11:55 AM | **SEGMENT 3: ELECTION RESULTS AND IMPACTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION**

Moderator:

- **Laura Tam,** *CEO* **|** Bay Planning Coalition

Speakers:

- **Cassie Gilson,** *Founder* **|** Axiom Advisors
- **John Whitehurst ,** *Partner* **|** BMWL

12:40 PM | **CLOSING REMARKS**

- **Laura Tam,** *CEO* **|** Bay Planning Coalition

EVENT SPEAKERS



Sam Bacal-Graves

Stoel Rives

Associate

Sam Bacal-Graves assists public and private clients in navigating complex permitting, land use, and environmental matters. He provides legal support to developers and agencies, drawing on his deep understanding of California's land use laws. Sam's practice encompasses entitlement permitting, environmental compliance, and defending project approvals in litigation. He has expertise in the state's constantly evolving housing laws including the Housing Accountability Act, Density Bonus Law, Housing Element Law, as well as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Subdivision Map Act, the Mitigation Fee Act, and various other planning, land use, and environmental laws and regulations.



Scott Birkey

Cox, Castle & Nicholson

Partner

Scott Birkey specializes in land use and natural resources entitlement, compliance, and litigation matters for residential and commercial developers and public agencies throughout the state of California.

His land use practice includes obtaining all forms of land use entitlements, including development agreements, vesting and tentative maps, annexations, general plan amendments, rezoning, site development permits, and other land use approvals for urban infill, large-scale master-planned development, residential and commercial mixed-used development, and renewable energy projects. His natural resources practice includes obtaining permits and approvals under the federal and state Endangered Species Acts, Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, Section 1603 of the California Fish and Game Code (streambed alteration agreements), and the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (water quality certifications and waste discharge requirements) for residential, commercial, and renewable energy developers. He has assisted in establishing mitigation banks and conservation easements to satisfy permit obligations, and he has participated in the review and preparation of large-scale habitat conservation plans and natural community

conservation plans on behalf of both private developers and public agencies. He has extensive experience preparing and reviewing environmental documents prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.



Tom Boer

Hogan Lovells Cadwalader US LLP

Partner

Tom Boer is the global co-chair of Hogan Lovells Cadwalader's environmental practice. He represents clients in high-stakes litigation and regulatory matters, including government enforcement actions, citizen suits, catastrophic environmental incidents, and complex site contamination disputes. Tom also serves on his Firm's Environmental-Social-Governance (ESG) Board, which coordinates ESG-related regulatory developments, enforcement priorities, and greenwashing disputes across practice areas and geographies to best advise clients of developing risks and trends. He formerly served as the Firm's lead for the Chemical and Industrial Products Sector, coordinating cross-border legal strategy for some of the world's largest manufacturers and industrial companies.

His practice focuses on defending and resolving matters under the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, RCRA, Endangered Species Act, and FIFRA, as well as related state law regimes, with a particular emphasis on complex litigation in federal district courts and California superior courts. For example, in January, he represented an international tire manufacturer in a weeklong bench trial alleging that the use of a critical tire component violates the Endangered Species Act and seeking an injunction barring the sales of tires across the west coast.



Katie Chamberlin

Anchor QEA

Principal Environmental Planner

Katie Chamberlin is a principal environmental planner in Anchor QEA's San Francisco office. She has more than 20 years of experience in environmental review and regulatory permitting for waterfront development, port and ferry infrastructure, dredging and sediment management, habitat restoration, and shoreline resilience. Her practice includes CEQA and

NEPA documentation, permitting strategy, mitigation planning, and coordination among project teams and regulatory agencies.

Katie has supported the ports of San Francisco and Stockton; the City and County of San Francisco; Marin and Contra Costa counties; the cities of Richmond, Martinez, Pittsburg, Brisbane, Suisun City, and Stockton; the San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority; East Bay Dischargers Authority; Monterey Peninsula Water Management District; National Park Service; and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, among other public agencies, waterfront property owners, and infrastructure developers.

She brings a practical understanding of how environmental review and permitting affect project design, schedules, construction, and ongoing operations. She helps clients resolve environmental constraints and integrate regulatory requirements into projects from planning through implementation.



Cassie Gilson

Axiom Advisors

Founder

Drawing on an in-depth understanding of California policy and politics, Cassie's combination of government and private sector expertise uniquely equip her to provide strategic guidance for Axiom Advisors' clients on a wide range of state legislative and administrative and local government issues. Recognized repeatedly as one of Capitol Weekly's "Top 100" most powerful influencers in California politics, and one of Comstock's Magazine's 2021 "Ten Extraordinary Women Shaping Our Future" Cassie's influence extends beyond the Capitol to the Sacramento Region and across the state. Having served as Senior Policy Advisor to California Governor Gray Davis and on the legal staff of the Office of Science and Technology Policy in The White House, Cassie easily navigates the Legislature and Administrative agencies and has a sharp understanding of what it takes for organizations to succeed both in California and across the nation.

As a lawyer and lobbyist, Cassie has represented energy, alternative transportation, land development, food and beverage, consumer products, technology, healthcare and other business interests, as well as local, statewide and national environmental and women's advocacy non-profits. She is a recognized policy expert in environmental and land use law, including implementation of the state's evolving body of climate change legislation, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Proposition 65, among other issues.

Cassie has an established practice lobbying on behalf of technology, clean energy, and sharing economy companies. Respected by colleagues and decision makers for her policy intellect and political pragmatism, Cassie is at the forefront of Capitol debates on how to

foster an entrepreneurial culture while addressing concerns over whether new and emerging firms are regulated adequately.

Before she began lobbying full time, Cassie was an attorney at the law firms of Landels Ripley & Diamond and Farella Braun & Martel, where she advised clients on energy, air, water, hazardous waste and materials, and land use laws and regulations. She also provided strategic counsel for large brownfield projects and represented clients in administrative proceedings and negotiations regarding siting, permitting and decommissioning of industrial and energy facilities. Prior to that, Cassie was policy and program director for the California Council for Environmental and Economic Balance.

Cassie holds a bachelor's degree from Wesleyan University and a law degree from Stanford Law School. She is a member of the State Bar of California, the State of California's Lower American River Advisory Committee and past chair of the Board of the Sacramento Valley Conservancy.



Sean Herman

Hanson Bridgett

Partner

BPC Government Affairs Committee Co-Chair

Sean G. Herman advises and litigates on behalf of clients in natural resource and land use matters. His clients include public agencies like water agencies, sanitation districts, reclamation districts, as well as residential and commercial developers, private sector manufacturers, and agricultural companies. Sean's experience includes environmental laws at the Federal, State, and local levels, with a concentration on water quality, water use, water rights, endangered species, property contamination, and environmental review compliance.

Given this focus, clients entrust Sean to advise them on:

- Discharge, dredge, and fill permits under the Clean Water Act and Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act;
- Water rights and implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA);
- Liabilities involving public infrastructure for managing stormwater and floodwater;
- Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA);
- The Endangered Species Act and California Endangered Species Act;
- Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreements with the California Department of Fish & Wildlife; and
- Hazardous waste management and site investigation, remediation, and cost recovery allocation under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), Comprehensive

Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), and the Hazardous Substance Account Act.

Sean often speaks and writes on environmental law matters, and sits on the Environmental Law Section's executive committee for the Bar Association of San Francisco. Sean also taught as an adjunct professor at Golden Gate University School of Law, where he coached its environmental law moot court team and taught courses on administrative law and California environmental & land use law.



Jennifer Jeffers

Allen Matkins

Partner

Jennifer Jeffers is a partner in Allen Matkins' San Francisco office and leads the firm's Natural Resources Practice. She advises private, nonprofit, and public sector clients on land use, entitlement, and natural resources matters for commercial, residential, medical, and mixed-use projects throughout California. Jennifer guides clients through every phase of a project, from acquisition, due diligence, and early design through CEQA/NEPA compliance, entitlement, permitting, and construction.

Jennifer is known for navigating complex natural resource issues, including endangered species and wetlands matters under the federal and California Endangered Species Acts (ESA/CESA), the Clean Water Act (CWA), the California Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, and California Fish and Game Code Section 1603. She regularly manages permitting before federal, state, and regional agencies. She also advises on conservation easements and other mitigation strategies to satisfy permit obligations, as well as tribal consultation and cultural resource issues that arise during development.

In addition, Jennifer advises on state housing legislation and local referenda, helping clients anticipate regulatory change and successfully guiding high-profile projects through California's rigorous approval processes. She holds a graduate degree in environmental science and brings a background in global biodiversity conservation, pairing a strong technical foundation with practical, solutions-oriented counsel. Before joining Allen Matkins, Jennifer led the land use practice at Stice & Block LLP in Oakland and directed regional marine strategies for Conservation International in Washington, D.C.



Devyani Jain

Port of San Francisco

Deputy Program Manager, SF Port Waterfront Resilience Program

Devyani is the environmental lead for the Port of San Francisco's Waterfront Resilience Program, overseeing CEQA/NEPA compliance, environmental site investigation and remediation, regulatory permitting, and the integration of engineering-with-nature approaches into coastal resilience projects. She supported the July 2026 release of the San Francisco Coastal Flood Study Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement, led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in partnership with the Port of San Francisco. The Flood Study recommends a $17.8 billion plan to implement earthquake-safe flood defenses, a new seawall, and nature-based shoreline features to protect 7.5 miles of Port-managed waterfront from coastal flooding and sea-level rise over the next century. In her role, Devyani also leads efforts to incorporate nature-based solutions into flood protection and resilience projects. Additionally, she supports the Port's Blue Economy Initiative, advancing innovations in living shorelines, habitat enhancement, climate education, and workforce development.

With more than 25 years of experience in environmental compliance, climate adaptation, planning, and architecture, Devyani delivers timely, integrated strategies that align ecological health with sustainable socioeconomic outcomes for major infrastructure projects. She has a proven record of managing multidisciplinary teams to address complex environmental issues, including for coastal resilience, large water resources infrastructure, area plans, hospital seismic upgrades, and mixed-use developments. With degrees in architecture and in city and regional planning, she brings a strong technical foundation and practical problem-solving skills. Before joining the Port, Devyani served as Deputy Director of the Environmental Planning Division and Deputy Environmental Review Officer at the San Francisco Planning Department (2016–2023), where she co-managed a 45-person division responsible for CEQA compliance, defended CEQA determinations in local administrative proceedings, and recommended revisions to CEQA Statute, CEQA Guidelines, and related local and state regulatory permitting procedures.



Kathryn Oehlschlager

Stoel Rives

Partner

With more than twenty years of experience, Kathryn Oehlschlager advises private and public clients on compliance with the most challenging aspects of environmental and land use law.

She regularly assists clients throughout the CEQA and NEPA environmental review process for complex, high-stakes endeavors, including renewable energy projects, large-scale infrastructure, local and regional land use plans, and individual development projects. Kathryn specializes in advising clients on projects that involve cutting-edge environmental issues and challenges, including air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, tribal cultural resources, and wildfire risk. Kathryn also has deep expertise in related land use laws, such as federal and state laws related to endangered species, the California Coastal Act, the Planning and Zoning Law, and the public trust doctrine. As an experienced litigator, Kathryn defends cases in state and federal courts challenging critical projects throughout California.



Niran Somasundaram

Hanson Bridgett

Senior Associate

Niran Somasundaram focuses his practice on land use, environmental law, and regulatory compliance. He advises landowners, developers, and public agencies on the full spectrum of land use and environmental regulatory matters, including land use due diligence, entitlement strategy, and complex permitting. Niran has deep experience preparing and processing entitlement applications; ensuring compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and related state and local land use and environmental legislation; and representing clients in administrative proceedings before federal, state, and regional agencies — including the Environmental Protection Agency, State Water Resources Control Board, Regional Water Quality Control Boards, and state environmental agencies.

Clients turn to Niran for his extensive experience designing entitlement strategies for housing projects across California, guiding developers, property owners, and public agencies through the state's rapidly evolving housing laws and streamlining tools. His work includes preparing and advancing complex residential projects under Senate Bill 330, the Builder's Remedy, Density Bonus Law, and other state housing laws.

He regularly advises clients on strategic use of these laws to maximize development potential, reduce discretionary risk, and capitalize on ministerial or accelerated approval pathways. Niran's hands on experience in drafting statewide housing legislation and shaping statutory reforms, including contributing to revisions of AB1893 and other Housing Accountability Act updates, strengthen his ability to help clients interpret and harness new legislative opportunities at the earliest stage.
In addition to housing, Niran frequently leads entitlement efforts for non residential and innovation sector projects throughout California. His experience includes advising clients on the complex land use, zoning, environmental, and infrastructure requirements associated with biotechnology facilities, autonomous vehicle testing and deployment sites, renewable energy and grid resilience infrastructure, and data centers. Across both residential and non residential projects, Niran also has significant experience drafting and negotiating development

agreements, leases, and other supporting contracts with public entities.

Niran also advises both private parties and government agencies on compliance with environmental laws at the local, state, and federal levels, including air quality regulations administered by Local Air Districts and the California Air Resources Board, and water quality requirements enforced by the State and Regional Water Boards and the Environmental Protection Agency. In addition, Niran represents clients in administrative proceedings, and in land use and environmental litigation before state and federal agencies and courts. His litigation experience includes drafting and responding to injunctions, preparing pleadings, managing dispositive and procedural motion practice, conducting written discovery, working with expert witnesses, and performing the trial focused work necessary to defend or advance project approvals.

Niran serves as a deputy practice group leader for the firm's land use practice. In addition, he is the firm liaison for the San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR), sits on the Greenbelt Alliance's Climate SMART Development Endorsement Committee, and is a member of Urban Land Institute (ULI).



Laura Tam

Bay Planning Coalition

Chief Executive Officer

Laura Tam is the Chief Executive Officer of Bay Planning Coalition, a network of over 100 organizations that advocate for effective policy, funding, and regulation for San Francisco Bay. Laura has over 25 years of experience building partnerships to advance natural resources policy, climate resilience, and healthy communities. Prior to joining BPC in November 2024, Laura was a Senior Program Officer at Resources Legacy Fund, where she led philanthropic programs, cross-sector coalitions, and strategic communications to advance wildfire, climate, and community resilience in California.

Earlier in her career, Laura spent over a decade as Sustainable Development Policy Director at the San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR), a leading urban public policy think-tank. She has served on numerous advisory groups to local governments and on nonprofit boards, including those of Smart Growth California; the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority; Resilient by Design; Friends of the Urban Forest; the Business Council on Climate Change; and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

Laura has an BA in Geography from Dartmouth College and a Master of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. She has lived in the Bay Area for over 20 years and currently resides in Berkeley with her family.



John Whitehurst

BMWL

Partner

John has successfully led more than 200 public affairs, communications, and outreach campaigns over the last 30 years. As a chief strategist at BMWL and Partners, he has directed hard-fought victories for a wide range of clients in land use, healthcare, transportation, gaming, public infrastructure and education.

Known for managing programs with discipline and focus, John draws on a range of skills gained from years of public affairs, issue, and political campaigns across the country. He is well-regarded for using high-impact techniques that move people to take action and help his clients win. John has been very successful in helping businesses, labor, and nonprofits achieve their government relations goals and has one of the best win records in the state. Through his work, John has developed relationships with key leaders in local, regional, state and national government.

Before co-founding BMWL, John founded Whitehurst Campaigns in 1990 after working in several capacities in political consulting. His first professional political campaign was for Gary Hart for President in 1984, where he learned to organize in Iowa, Pennsylvania and California.

Bay Planning Coalition

UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER 15

12:00pm - 1:00pm
Virtual

REGISTER HERE



DECEMBER 17

11:00am - 2:30pm
In Person

REGISTER HERE



View All Upcoming Events at: https://bayplanningcoalition.org/events/

RESOURCES

FEDERAL WOTUS RULEMAKING

These articles examine the EPA and Army Corps' evolving WOTUS rulemaking, including the proposed perennial-water standard, potential changes to federal wetlands protections, and what the proposals could mean for Clean Water Act permitting.

Proposed WOTUS Rule After Sackett — View Article

EPA & Army Corp Reopen WOTUS Rulemaking — View Article

CALIFORNIA WETLANDS PERMITTING

This article explains how California may fill gaps in wetlands protection after Sackett, including state permitting under Porter-Cologne and proposed changes in SB 601.

California Wetlands Permitting After Sackett — View Article

ABOUT BPC

Bay Planning Coalition brings together the organizations and leaders who build, manage, regulate, and protect the Bay Area's infrastructure, natural resources, and waterfront economy.

Founded in 1983, BPC is a nonprofit membership organization representing approximately 100 public agencies, businesses, and nonprofit organizations across all nine Bay Area counties. Through advocacy, collaboration, and direct engagement with policymakers and regulatory agencies, BPC works to advance practical solutions that support a thriving regional economy and resilient communities.

Learn more about our Coalition: http://bayplanningcoalition.org/

BPC STAFF



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JOIN OUR COALITION

BPC membership connects your organization to the people and policy discussions shaping the San Francisco Bay Area. Members help guide BPC's advocacy while gaining timely insight and stronger relationships across the region. Committees, events, and other member forums provide ongoing opportunities to engage on the issues most relevant to your organization.

MEMBERSHIP VALUE

The opportunity to influence policy outcomes.

A Stronger Voice Through Advocacy

BPC brings together organizations with shared interests in efficient government processes, resilient infrastructure, environmental sustainability, and economic opportunity.

Direct Access to Decision-Makers

Members engage directly with regulatory agencies, elected officials, policymakers, and regional leaders through BPC committees, workshops, roundtables, and other programs.

HOW TO JOIN

Visit our website or contact BPC staff for more information.

Explore BPC Membership