

PARTNER

Eric L. Garner

He/Him

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Los Angeles

Eric Garner was the Managing Partner of Best Best & Krieger LLP (BBK) for 20 years and is recognized for his leadership and knowledge in water law nationally and internationally. He works on surface water and groundwater issues throughout California. For the past two decades, he has worked extensively on groundwater matters. He represented the lead parties in the Santa Maria and Antelope Valley groundwater adjudications, is involved in the Oxnard Pleasant Valley, Cuyama, Indian Wells Valley, Las Posas and Ventura River adjudications and also was involved in the Mojave Groundwater adjudication. He was involved in drafting the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and testified before the state Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Water on adjudication reform legislation. He has drafted water laws in South Africa, Trinidad and Pakistan and worked with the United Nations Environmental Programme on incorporating environmental issues into water laws, the World Bank on groundwater issues in the Middle East and North Africa and was the first American Chair of the International Bar Association's Water Law Committee.

Eric co-authored "California Water," "California Water II" and "California Water Third Edition," and is an adjunct law professor at the University of Southern California Gould School of Law. He has also been chosen as a California Lawyer of the Year by *California Lawyer* magazine, twice as one of the Top 100 Lawyers in California by the *Daily Journal*, twice as the Water Law Lawyer of the Year in Los Angeles by *Best Lawyers* and was one of five lawyers in the United States named MVP of the Year by *Law360*. He is licensed to practice law in the State of California and Oregon.

Water Resource

- Eric represented County of Los Angeles Waterworks District No. 40 in the Antelope Valley Groundwater Adjudication Proceedings — the largest groundwater rights case in California history. The trial court judgment includes approximately 70,000 landowners, including two separate classes. The judgment determines who has the right to pump water from the Antelope Valley groundwater basin and establishes a long-term sustainable management plan. The litigation was complex not only because of the number of parties and the size of the area, but due to the fact that the U.S. government, as the largest landowner in the region, was a party to this State Court proceeding under the McCarran Amendment.

CORE PRACTICES

Environmental Law & Natural Resources

Environmental Litigation

Special Districts

Water

Water Quality

Water Rights

Data Centers & AI Infrastructure

Municipal Law

EDUCATION & ADMISSIONS

Education

University of Michigan Law School, J.D.

Earlham College, B.A., with honors

Bar Admissions

California

Oregon

- In *City of Santa Maria v. Adam, et al*, Eric successfully represented the City of Santa Maria in a large and complex case involving the adjudication of water rights to groundwater, imported water and salvaged water in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties. This case was chosen by the State of California as a pilot project for innovative online case management programs, which has since become standard in many jurisdictions.
- Represents the City of Paso Robles on both surface and groundwater issues, including defending the City's groundwater rights in a lawsuit brought by landowners
- Represents the City of Ventura on surface and groundwater issues, including adjudications of both sources

Law Firm Leadership

Eric was the managing partner of BBK from 2005 to 2025, serving ten terms. Elected by the partnership, the managing partner oversees all aspects of the firm's operations in all offices. Under Eric's leadership, BBK grew substantially and became an industry leader in innovation and culture, all of which earned many accolades from the legal community and the press. These include:

- Mergers of four law firms, including the opening of offices in Washington, D.C. and Bend, Oregon, as well as other substantial geographic and practice area expansions.
- Repeated recognition for workforce culture, including a No. 1 ranking for minority representation at the equity partner level by *American Lawyer Media* and No. 1 for Best Law Firm for Women and Minorities among mid-sized U.S. firms by *Law360*.
- Integration of technological advances into all aspects of firm operations, from marketing and accounting to client-facing applications and websites.
- A holistic focus on staff and attorney wellness through firm-sponsored trainings and seminars that focus on mindfulness, work-life balance and health.

Accolades

- *Lawdragon*, 500 Leading Lawyers in America, 2026
- *Chambers USA* 2025-2026, Water, California
- *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles Executive Leadership Awards, Finalist, 2025
- *Lawdragon*, 100 Managing Partners You Need to Know, 2025
- *Lawdragon*, The Green 500, Leaders in Environmental Law, 2024-2026
- *Southern California Super Lawyers*, Environmental, 2012–2021
- *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Lawyer of the Year, Water Law, 2015, 2020, 2024, 2026
- *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Litigation - Environmental Litigation and Water Law, 2012–2027
- MVP of the Year - Environmental, *Law360*, 2019
- *Los Angeles Business Journal* Law Leader of the Year Finalist, 2016
- *Super Lawyers* Business Edition, Construction, Real Estate and Environmental, 2015
- Top 100 Lawyers in California, *The Daily Journal*, 2009, 2015
- Top 20 Municipal Lawyers, *The Daily Journal*, 2013
- California Lawyer of the Year, California Lawyer magazine, 2006

Professional & Community Involvement

- International Bar Association, Water Law Advisory Board, 2025-present

- International Water Resources Association, Executive Board, Treasurer, 2025-present

Thought Leadership

Publications

- “Comparison of Groundwater Ownership Regimes in Ten Jurisdictions Across Five Continents, Transnational Environmental Law,” *Cambridge University Press*, Jan. 29, 2026
- “In a Remote, Dry Patch of California, a Battle is Raging Over Carrots,” *Associated Press*, Oct. 2, 2023
- “Water Rights Law for Real Property Owners,” Lexis/Nexis Practical Guidance, Aug. 2021
- “The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and the Common Law of Groundwater Rights – Finding a Consistent Path Forward for Groundwater Allocation,” University of California, Los Angeles Journal of Environmental Law & Policy, vol. 38, no. 2, 2020
- “Factors Identifying Aquifers With a High Probability of Management Success,” *Water International*, Feb. 2019
- “Adapting Water Laws to Increasing Demand and a Changing Climate,” Water International, 2016
- “The Impact of the California Drought on Water Agencies and Treatment Districts,” *BBKnowledge*, July 1, 2015
- “Groundwater Legislation: History in the Making or Another Dead End? (Video),” *BBKnowledge*, Jan. 29, 2015
- “Dealing in Drought: Development, Legislation and Litigation,” *BBKnowledge*, Nov. 26, 2014
- “Eric Garner Provides Antelope Valley Groundwater Basin Adjudication as Case Study to Senate Committee,” *BBKnowledge*, Nov. 21, 2014
- “Historic Groundwater Legislation Bills Awaiting Governor Approval,” *BBKnowledge*, Sept. 8, 2014
- “Water Bond Only a Part of California’s Water Problem Solution,” *BBKnowledge*, Aug. 25, 2014
- “Now is the Time to Fix Groundwater Issues,” Daily Journal, June 10, 2014
- “A Role for Reasonableness and Physical Solution in Water Law in an Era of Climate Change,” *Bloomberg BNA Water Law & Policy Monitor*, Mar. 12, 2014
- “California’s New Basic Human Right to Water Will Frame Future Policy Debates,” *Bloomberg BNA Water Law & Policy Monitor*, Mar. 28, 2013
- “Why Californians Should Care About Water Rights,” *PublicCEO.com*, June 2012
- “Harnessing The Sun’s Power Can Negatively Impact Another Natural Resource,” *North American Clean Energy Magazine*, Dec. 2010
- “Navigating the Desert Terrain and Legal Landscape,” *Solar Industry*, July 2010
- “California Water II,” *Solano Press*, co-author, 2007 edition
- “California Water,” *Solano Press*, co-author

Presentations

- "Water in Mining: A Critical Asset and a Paramount Liability," International Bar Association Annual Conference, Oct. 6, 2026
- "Can Local Groundwater Management Really Work?" AIDA World Water Law Congress 2026, June 25, 2026
- “Water Rights 101 and Bring Back the Kern Case That is Pending Before the California Supreme Court,” The Seminar Group, Water Law in California Conference, March 5, 2026
- “Sustainable Yield and Safe Yield: Comparable Terms or Distinctly Different?” GRACast, Jan. 14, 2026

- “Groundwater Management in Arid Regions: From Overuse to Resilience.” IWRA, XIX World Water Congress, Morocco, Dec. 2, 2025
- “Governing Groundwater Resources Under Uncertainty: Comparative National Groundwater Governance and Regulations.” IWRA, XIX World Water Congress, Morocco, Dec. 1, 2025
- “SGMA and Groundwater Basin Adjudication Update,” California Water Law & Policy Conference, Oct. 1, 2024
- “SGMA Endpoints - GSP Implementation, Adjudication, or Both,” Groundwater Resources Association SGMA Summit, June 6, 2024
- “SGMA: A Decade in Review,” University of San Francisco School of Law California Water Law Symposium, Feb. 24, 2024
- “Do We Really Need An Adjudication?”, United Water Conservation District, 2023 Water Sustainability Summit, Oct. 26, 2023
- “SGMA Through the Lens of Recent Groundwater Adjudications,” ACWA CLE Virtual Workshop Series, Oct. 13, 2021
- “How Courts Will View Water Rights and Groundwater Allocations Under SGMA,” Groundwater Committee, Association of California Water Agencies, Dec. 8, 2020
- “Navigating SGMA Groundwater Allocations & Minimizing Legal Risk,” Environmental Defense Fund Webinar, Oct. 20, 2020
- “Demonstrations and the Changing Face of Public Speech in the United States: A View from the End of Apartheid in South Africa,” BBK Webinar, Oct. 8, 2020
- “Reasonable Use or Waste: A Developing Dichotomy,” CA Water Policy Conference 28, Apr. 4, 2019
- Panel Speaker, 15th Annual California Water Law Symposium, UC Hastings College of the Law, Feb. 2, 2019
- “The Future of Water Supplies in Africa: Addressing the Water Scarcity, Ground Water Pollution, and Sanitation Challenges”, IBA African Regional Environmental Law Conference, Nov. 29, 2018
- “Damned if You Do, Damned if You Don’t: Allocating Available Water in a Shortfall – A Look at Conflicting Rights and the Establishment of Priorities Between Competing Demands for Water,” International Bar Association's Annual Conference, Oct. 8, 2018
- Opening and Closing Remarks, BBK's The Bill is Due: Now What? Infrastructure, Pensions and the Environment Premier Event, Apr. 24, 2018
- “Now Comes the Hard Part… Implementing Groundwater Management Under SGMA,” UCLA IoES Water Resources Group and UCLA School of Law's Emmett Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, Apr. 17, 2018
- “Climate Change Impacts on Water Demands and Development,” moderator, 2017 National Water Law Forum, Sept. 8, 2017
- “Identifying Aquifers for Successful Management,” IWRA XVIth World Water Congress, May 30, 2017
- “Building a Green Infrastructure Agenda for the Latin American Water Sector,” IWRA XVIth World Water Congress, May 30, 2017
- “Water Rights in an Era of "Permanent" Conservation Madness,” California Water Policy Conference, Apr. 7, 2017
- “Local Arrangements to Manage Groundwater Demand and Lessons for WB Operations,” World Bank Water Week, March 15, 2017
- “Successes and Challenges in Groundwater Governance in California,” World Bank Water Global Practice Group/Center for Mediterranean Integration Workshop, Mar. 9, 2017
- “All Hands on Deck! Collaborative Approaches to Water Sustainability and Resiliency,” Coro 2016 Innovate x Water Conference, Nov. 15, 2016
- Welcome and Opening Remarks, BBK's Reimagining the Cadillac Desert Inaugural Premier Event. Sept. 15, 2016

- “Managing Groundwater in a Time of Increasing Demand and Changing Climate,” Water Education Foundation's Toward Sustainable Groundwater in Agriculture: 2nd International Conference Linking Science & Policy, June 30, 2016
- “Water Rights in Adjudicated and Unadjudicated Basins in the Los Angeles County: History, Current Status, Implications for Stormwater Capture and Storage, and Legal Solutions,” UCLA Water Resource Group's LA's Future Workshop, June 15, 2016
- “Increasing Conjunctive Use and Storage through More Stormwater Capture: Panel and Audience Discussions,” UCLA Water Resource Group's LA's Future Workshop, June 15, 2016
- “Constraints and Successes for Groundwater Governance and Enforcement in California,” World Bank Water Global Practice: Groundwater Law and Challenges in Enforcement: Experiences from California and Development Perspectives, June 2, 2016
- “Groundwater: Legislation in California and Elsewhere; Overdraft; State and Local Management; Legal Treatment of Connection to Surface Water,” National Water Law Forum, May 12, 2016
- “State Groundwater Management Act and the Changing Course of California Groundwater Management,” American Groundwater Trust Groundwater Law Conference, Apr. 26, 2016
- “Resolving Groundwater Disputes: Options When Informal Methods, such as Mediation, Fail,” Law Seminars International’s Groundwater Regulation in California Seminar, Oct. 30, 2015
- “The Next Wave Series: Who Owns Water?” UCLA Hammer Museum Lecture Series, Oct. 29, 2015
- “Drought in California - Disaster and Opportunity,” 2015 Dr. Bruce J. Nelson ’74 Distinguished Speaker Series - Water, Oct. 22, 2015
- “Legislation Roundup: Clean-up, Adjudication, Recharge,” Association of California Water Agencies' Regulatory Summit, Oct. 14, 2015
- “Workshop Introduction and Overview and “Preparing to Participate in the Groundwater Sustainability Planning and Adjudication Processes,” Law Seminar International's The Science and Law of Water in California Workshop, Sept. 17, 2015
- “Water Rights -- Legal and Valuation Issues,” Appraisal Institute's Summer Conference, July 14, 2015
- “The Effects of California's Drought on Public Entities,” Administrative & Public Environmental Law Conference, June 12, 2015
- “Adapting Water Laws to Increasing Demand and a Changing Climate," International Water Resource Association World Water Congress XV, May 26, 2015
- “Where Do You Stand? Complying with New Groundwater Regulations and Preparing for More Legislation," The Seminar Group California’s Water: Drought, Finding Water, The Water Bond and Interpreting New Groundwater Regulation Seminar, May 15, 2015
- “Global Perspectives on Water and Society," Water Technology Hub’s Water Technology & Funding Summit, May 14, 2015
- “Water Issues: 2015 Edition," USC Gould School of Law Real Estate Law and Business Forum, Mar. 12, 2015
- “Sustainable Groundwater Management: What the Hell Just Happened?" California Water Policy Conference, Mar. 9, 2015
- “To Adjudicate or Not to Adjudicate? That is the Question!" Association of California Water Agencies’ Legislative Symposium, Mar. 4, 2015
- “Resolving Groundwater Disputes: Options When Informal Methods, such as Mediation, Fail," Law Seminars International’s Groundwater Regulation and Management in California: Updates on Legal and Policy Developments; Practical Tips and Strategies Conference, Mar. 3, 2015
- “Groundwater Legislation: History in the Making or Another Dead End?" Association of California Water Agencies’ Fall Conference, Dec. 4, 2014
- “Adapting Water Laws to a World of Water Scarcity,” United Nations Environment for Development, Nov. 26, 2014

- “The Groundwater Conundrum," The Seminar Group, Oct. 30, 2014
- “The Business of Water: Key Issues in Investing in and Financing of Water and Wastewater Projects," International Bar Association’s Annual Conference, Oct. 20, 2014
- “The Practical Application of Science to New Groundwater Regulation," Law Seminars International Hydrology and the Law: Effective Tools for Resolving Water Rights and Damages Issues Seminar, Oct. 7, 2014
- “Introduction and Overview: Surface and Groundwater Law and Relevant Legal Concepts," Law Seminars International Hydrology and the Law: Effective Tools for Resolving Water Rights and Damages Issues Seminar, Oct. 7, 2014
- “Summary of California Water Rights Systems,” Water Education Foundation’s Water 101 Workshop, Oct. 2, 2014
- “Lessons from the Santa Maria Groundwater Adjudication,” ACWA 2013 Spring Conference & Exhibition Rethinking California Water, May 9, 2013
- “An Overview of California’s Water Law and Trends in Water Pricing,” Investing in California’s Water, The Seminar Group, Feb. 5, 2013

Additional News

- “California’s New Groundwater Law Seeks to Guide Planning Without Adjudication,” *Bloomberg BNA*, Dec. 11, 2014
- “In Response to Drought, California Takes Historic Step to Regulate Groundwater,” *Daily Journal*, Sept. 22, 2014
- “Water Shortage Threatens Global Security,” *IBA Global Insight*, Aug. 3, 2014
- “California Powerhouse: Best Best & Krieger,” *Law360*, July 7, 2014
- “U.S. Supreme Court Denies Review of Challenge to Santa Maria Groundwater Plan,” BBK Press Release, Oct. 14, 2013