



OF COUNSEL

Sarah E. Owsowitz

She/Her

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📍 Walnut Creek



Sarah E. Owsowitz's practice focuses on California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) advice and litigation, with a particular concentration on regional county and city-level planning documents, large-scale commercial, industrial and residential developments, water projects, as well as those projects with significant cultural resource issues. Sarah represents both public and private clients in administrative proceedings and litigation involving CEQA, as well as state and local planning and zoning laws. She is of counsel in Best Best & Krieger LLP's Environmental Law & Natural Resources practice group.

She is the author of multiple CEQA and land use-related articles and lectures regularly on topics that include current trends in CEQA case law, statutes and guidelines, tribal cultural resources, CEQA and vehicular miles traveled, administrative records, and the preparation and defense of water supply analyses in CEQA documents.

Sarah serves on the Association of Environmental Professionals Statewide Legislative Committee advising on CEQA legislation, and the California Special District Association's Legal Advisory Working Group. She is a recipient of the *Daily Journal's* Environmental California Lawyer Attorney of the Year Award in 2017. *Northern California Super Lawyers Magazine* selected her as a "Northern California Super Lawyer" for Land Use Law in 2013–2023. She has also been consistently recognized by The Best Lawyers in America for land use and zoning law since 2020.

Prior to joining BBK, Sarah was with Cox Castle & Nicholson and Morrison & Foerster. Before that, for nearly 7 years, she served as a deputy city attorney for the City and County of San Francisco.

Accolades

- *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Land Use and Zoning Law, 2020–2025
- *Northern California Super Lawyers*, Land Use and Zoning, 2013–2022, 2024–2025
- California Lawyer Attorney of the Year, Environmental, 2017
- Super Lawyers Top Women Attorneys in Northern California, 2014–2016

CORE PRACTICES

Air Quality
California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
Environmental Law & Natural Resources
Environmental Litigation
Land Use, Planning & Zoning
Municipal Law
Special Districts

EDUCATION & ADMISSIONS

Education

University of Minnesota Law School, J.D.
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, M.P.
University of Chicago, B.A.

Bar Admissions

California

- *Northern California Super Lawyers Rising Stars*, Land Use, 2009-2012

Thought Leadership

Publications

- “[PRESENTATION] Planning Legislative Update,” *BBKnowledge*, Aug. 1, 2016
- “CEQA Takes Closer Look at Native American Cultural Resources,” *BBKnowledge*, Aug. 12, 2015
- “New CEQA Requirements Take Effect July 1,” *CSDA Blog*, July 8, 2015
- “OPR Speaks to the Impact of Proposed New CEQA Guidelines,” *BBKnowledge*, Sept. 16, 2014
- “California Reacts to Losing the Tesla Battery Factory Project – Is the Lack of CEQA Reform To Blame?,” *BBKnowledge*, Sept. 8, 2014
- “Governor Changes His Mind on CEQA Reform,” *BBKnowledge*, Aug. 18, 2014
- “Decision: Voter-Sponsored Local Land Use Initiatives Not Subject to Environmental Review,” *BBKnowledge*, Aug. 11, 2014
- “California Economic Development Leaders Urge Peer Review of New CEQA Guidelines,” *BBKnowledge*, July 31, 2014
- “Santa Barbara County Plans for Utility-Scale Solar Projects on Farmland,” *California Energy Markets*, July 25, 2014
- “CEQA to Give Cities More Control Over Transit Projects,” *BBKnowledge*, July 15, 2014
- “State Trying to Use Defeat to Stymie High-Speed Rail Foes,” *Daily Journal*, Oct. 9, 2013

Presentations

- “Understanding CEQA’s Requirements Regarding Tribal Cultural Resources and AB 52,” California Special Districts Association Annual Conference, Aug. 30, 2022
- “Warehouse-A-Ware-Ness,” Association of Environmental Professionals, Orange County Lunch Program, May 12, 2022
- “Warehouse-A-Ware-Ness,” Association of Environmental Professionals California State Conference, Apr. 12, 2022
- “Did Lloyd Wright Sleep Here: Dealing With Potential Historic Resources in CEQA Documents,” Contra Costa County City Attorney’s Association Webinar, Aug. 5, 2021
- “Did Lloyd Wright Sleep Here? Dealing with Potential Historic Resources in CEQA Documents,” Lunch Program, Association of Environmental Professionals Orange County Chapter, Apr. 15, 2021
- “Did Lloyd Wright Sleep Here? Dealing With Potential Historic Resources in CEQA Documents,” Association of Environmental Professionals Virtual Conferemce, Nov. 9, 2020
- “With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility – What is LAFCO’s Role as a Responsible Agency in CEQA Compliance and EIR Review?” California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions’ Staff Workshop, Mar. 26, 2020
- “Health Risk Assessments: When, How, and Whether to do Them,” 15th Annual Advanced Seminar on CEQA, Law Seminars International, Sept. 13, 2019
- “CEQA: Handling the PRA and Administrative Record,” California Lawyers Association’s Open Meetings and Open Records Conference, May 31, 2019
- “AB 52 and Local Jurisdictions- Strategies and Lessons Learned,” Association of Environmental Professionals San Francisco Bay Area Chapter, Nov. 6, 2018

- “Shaping an Effective and Comprehensive Cannabis Policy,” American Planning Associations California Conference, Oct. 9, 2018
- “CEQA and the Wide Wide World of Cannabis – From Growing and Manufacture to Distribution and Sales,” Association of Environmental Professional's State Conference, Mar. 25, 2018
- “The New Tribal Consultation Requirement: AB 52,” Orange County Association of Environmental Professionals/American Planning Association Lunch Program, Mar. 29, 2017
- “Practical Approaches for Defensible Cumulative Impacts Analyses Under CEQA,” Association of Environmental Professionals - San Francisco Chapter, Sept. 28, 2016
- CEQA Workshops, California Special Districts Association, Sept. 21, 2016
- “Legislative Update,” Associate of Environmental Professionals San Francisco Bay Area Chapter's Seminar, July 13, 2016
- “CEQA and Tribal Consultation—Best Practices for Complying with AB 52's Significant New Requirements,” Association of California Water Agency Conference, May 2016
- “Introduction and Overview,” Law Seminar International's Tribes and CEQA: New Rules for Tribal Consultation Under AB 52 Seminar, Jun. 20, 2016
- “Changes Brought About by AB 52,” Law Seminar International's Tribes and CEQA: New Rules for Tribal Consultation Under AB 52 Seminar, Jun. 20, 2016
- “Wrap up Discussion on Laying the Foundation for Productive Consultation: What Developers, Lead Agencies, and Tribes Need to Know About Each Other's Processes, Needs and Objectives,” Law Seminar International's Tribes and CEQA: New Rules for Tribal Consultation Under AB 52 Seminar, Jun. 20, 2016
- “Program Environmental Impact Reports,” CLE International's 11th Annual CEQA Conference, Dec. 2015
- “BB&K Webinar: AB 52: CEQA's New Requirement,” BBK Webinar, Jun. 25, 2015
- “BB&K Attorney Sarah Owsowitz Participates in Land Use Roundtable,” *California Lawyer Magazine*, Sept. 2, 2015
- “Preparing the CEQA Administrative Record,” Administrative & Public Environmental Law Conference, Jun. 12, 2015
- “AB 52's New CEQA Requirement,” State Bar of California Public Law Section Webinar, May 21, 2015
- “Tribal Cultural Resources in CEQA, AB 52 Explained,” Association of Environmental Professionals Conference, Mar. 22, 2015
- “Special Districts and CEQA – CEQA from Your Perspective,” California Special Districts Association's Annual Conference, Oct. 1, 2014
- “All Things Groundwater: From Local Regulation to CEQA,” Northern California County Counsels' Conference, July 24, 2014