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## Golden Gate University Environmental Law & Justice Clinic Receives EPA Environmental Award

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**Golden Gate University Environmental Law & Justice Clinic  
Receives EPA Environmental Award**

*EPA Award One of Many Successes Celebrated for Earth Day 2009*

**Environmental Law & Justice Clinic Receives EPA Achievement Award**

The US Environmental Protection Agency's Pacific Southwest Region (Region 9) has awarded the 2009 Environmental Award to the Environmental Law & Justice Clinic (ELJC) at Golden Gate University School of Law.

"The Environmental Law & Justice Clinic at Golden Gate University School of Law is an inspiring model of collaborative work with community partners," the EPA notes in a press release issued today. "The clinic combines social justice advocacy, direct service in legal and technical areas, and student education to address environmental problems in low-income communities, communities of color and those facing language-access barriers, [and] has participated in important legal advocacy for underserved communities in areas such as greenhouse gas regulation, renewable energy projects, and the disproportionate and cumulative impacts of air pollution."

The Environmental Law and Justice Clinic is one of 40 recipients selected from more than 200 nominees of this year's Pacific Southwest Region Environmental Award. The awards recognizes commitment and contributions to the environment in California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii, Pacific Islands and tribal lands and are being presented today at the EPA Region 9 offices in San Francisco.

"We are very proud that the EPA has recognized our clinic for its service to the community," says School of Law Acting Dean Alan Ramo, co-founder of the clinic and co-director of the Law School's environmental law program. "The Environmental Law & Justice Clinic exemplifies our commitment to train lawyers who are talented practitioners and seek justice for their clients."

"It is a great pleasure and honor that we can recognize the innovative and important environmental work achieved by this year's impressive group of organizations and individuals, and the example they set for all of us to follow," says Laura Yoshii, the EPA's acting administrator for the Pacific Southwest Region. "This year's winners and nominees have made superb efforts to protect and preserve our air, water and land, and increased awareness of the environmental challenges we all face."

### *Other Earth Day News from Golden Gate Law School:*

#### **Environmental Law & Justice Clinic Convinces City Planning Dept. To Set Aside Decision Exempting Biodiesel Plant from Review**

Golden Gate University's Environmental Law and Justice Clinic, working on behalf of Bayview Hunters Point Community Advocates, has convinced the San Francisco Planning Department to set aside its decision to exempt a 10-million gallon biodiesel facility from environmental review. The clinic argued that the decision to exempt the plant from environmental review should not have been made without notice to residents and community organizations in San Francisco's Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood, which is already negatively impacted by environmental toxins. The plant, which will be the city's first biodiesel facility, will be operated by Darling International Inc.

Under the leadership of Visiting Assistant Professor Deborah Behles, the clinic convinced the Planning Department to evaluate the project to assure that the potential environmental impacts are disclosed and mitigated as required under the California Environmental Quality Act. Student clinicians Seth Mansergh, Stephanie Rexing, Cheryl Tang, Ethan Wimert, Caroline Koch and Ken Blackwood worked on the case, helping with the investigation, drafting the complaint, and filing the brief that convinced the city to set aside its decision.

"Darling was a multi-faceted, difficult case," says second-year law student Stephanie Rexing. "Ultimately we were able to bring about an outcome that we feel will be best for the surrounding community and the City of San Francisco as a whole." Third-year law student Ethan Wimert adds, "Biofuels are a promising tool in the effort to meet the demands of a rapidly changing energy market. A thorough review of this project will ensure that San Francisco meets its commitment to safeguarding the health of its citizens while retaining its standing as the country's environmental policy leader."

"I am so proud of our staff—particularly Deborah Behles—and our students," says Associate Professor Helen Kang, director of the Environmental Law & Justice Clinic. "They investigated and brought the San Planning Department to the realization that it had made a grave error in approving the biodiesel plant at Pier 92 without looking at what it would do to the neighborhood. Many biodiesel plants have had industrial accidents with highly flammable methanol, and the cities hosting them have routinely reviewed them under our environmental review laws. Notably, when the city approved this plant, it did it so quietly that our clients wouldn't have known about it, but for Professor Behles and our students. The city called to tell us that it would initiate environmental review two days after Professor Behles and the students filed the brief."

#### **Law School Finishes in Top 10 at State Bar Environmental Negotiation Competition**

Golden Gate Law student competitors finished in the Top 10 at the State Bar of California 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Student Environmental Negotiations Competition, held at the Law School on March 10. Pamela Epstein, a student in the LLM in Environmental Law Program, and Derek Hoye, a third-year student in the JD program, tied for 9<sup>th</sup> Place in the annual competition. The students were coached by alumna Robin Salsburg, senior staff attorney at the Technical Assistance Legal Center, a public health law and policy organization based in Oakland. Golden Gate Law students have placed first and second in previous State Bar Environmental Negotiations competitions.

#### **Environmental Law & Justice Clinic Receives Two New Grants for 2009**

The School of Law's Environmental Law & Justice Clinic has received two new grants to support its mission in 2009. The San Francisco Foundation has granted \$25,000 to support the clinic in

providing legal and environmental science consulting services to Bay Area groups working to reduce pollution in low-income communities. In addition, the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund has awarded the clinic \$20,000 to support its efforts this year. The clinic also has a multi-year grant from The California Wellness Foundation for this year's work.

### ***Golden Gate University Environmental Law Journal Announces Alumni Advisory Board***

The *Golden Gate University Environmental Law Journal*, a biannual, student-run scholarly publication exploring contemporary and emerging issues in environmental law and policy, is pleased to announce the founding of the ELJ Alumni Advisory Board. Comprising ELJ founders and former board members, the board will help the journal continue to grow and will provide practical support and guidance to the *ELJ* student editorial board. The Alumni Advisory Board also will assist with networking and outreach activities.

Each edition of the *ELJ* includes lead articles written by academics and professionals, as well as student notes, comments, and summaries. The "Pacific Region Edition," published each winter, focuses on environmental law and policy issues in the Pacific Region, including the North American Pacific Coast and the Asian Pacific Rim and Basin. The summer "Symposium Edition" is published in conjunction with the Environmental Law Symposium hosted by the Law School in the fall. The 2009 Pacific Region Edition, to be published shortly, includes an article analyzing the impact of a Ninth Circuit decision, *Lands Council v. McNair*, and a look at recent efforts to pave the way for visitors to national parks to carry loaded, concealed weapons. The summer Symposium Edition, now in progress, will focus on farming and food, with the title "How We Grow What We Eat"—the theme of the fall Environmental Law Symposium. For more information about the journal, email [elj@ggu.edu](mailto:elj@ggu.edu).

### **About Golden Gate University School of Law's Environmental Law Program**

Golden Gate University School of Law's Environmental Law Program offers a rich curriculum in US and international environmental law and hands-on training experiences for a highly integrated, practical education. The Law School offers several innovative environmental law courses, including Global Warming & the Courts, Global Warming & Renewable Energy, and Climate Change & International Law.

Students in the JD program can focus on environmental law by pursuing a Certificate of Specialization in Environmental Law, and practicing attorneys can advance their environmental law expertise by obtaining an LLM in Environmental Law at the Law School.

In 1994 the Law School was one of the first in the US, and the first in California, to establish an environmental justice clinic. Today, the Environmental Law & Justice Clinic is California's only in-house law school clinic with an emphasis on environmental justice.

The Law School also produces the *Golden Gate University Environmental Law Journal*; hosts an annual Environmental Law Symposium; competes each year in state, local, and national environmental law student competitions; coordinates the City Parks Project, and has a highly active student chapter of the Environmental Law Society.

For more about the School of Law's Environmental Law Programs, visit [www.ggu.edu/law](http://www.ggu.edu/law) or contact Jill Goetz at 415-442-6636 or [jgoetz@ggu.edu](mailto:jgoetz@ggu.edu).

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