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## Bay Area's First Environmental Law Clinic to Open in January

SAN FRANCISCO — An environmental law clinic focusing on issues of environmental justice that affect people of color and disadvantaged communities will open Jan. 10 at the Golden Gate School of Law here. The clinic is the first of its kind in the Bay Area.

"The clinic is an exciting partnership between a major urban educational institution and the cutting edge of the environmental movement," said Alan Ramo, former legal director for Citizens For A Better Environment and clinic director. He is a member of the Environmental Justice Committee of Cal-EPA's Comparative Risk Project and has, for the past 10 years, specialized in urban environmental issues.

"Studies demonstrate that communities of low-income citizens and people of color suffer disproportionately from pollution," said law professor Clifford Rechtschaffen, director of the school's environmental law program and clinic co-director. "As a result, people in these communities are demanding environmental justice." Environmental justice is defined as the right to be free from ecological destruction, to foster mutual respect and justice for all people, and the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision making, Rechtschaffen said. He is a former deputy attorney general who specialized in environmental enforcement.

The clinic represents the continued commitment to environmental law and issues of social justice by the Golden Gate University School of Law. Rechtschaffen, Ramo and students at the San Francisco-based law school have been meeting with organizations that work with issues of environmental justice to discuss the clinic, which will be operated from offices at the law school, located at 536 Mission St. Start-up funding for the effort comes from the GGU School of Law.

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Environmental Law Clinic  
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"Golden Gate is a very successful urban university with a diverse student body, making a clinic of this kind particularly appropriate," Rechtschaffen said. "At Golden Gate, interest by law students in environmental law is great, and the students have embraced the idea of this clinic with great enthusiasm." The law school also offers courses on environmental justice.

Of the some 800 students enrolled in the law school, 44 percent of this year's entering class are people of color. Approximately 10 percent of the faculty are members of traditionally under-represented groups; 40 percent are women.

Golden Gate University also operates clinics specializing in women's employment rights, which opened this fall, and one on constitutional law, which has been in operation for several years.

The Golden Gate University School of Law is approved by the ABA. Golden Gate University, one of the oldest universities on the West Coast, is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.