



## Nicole E. Granquist

### Partner / Chair, Natural Resources Group

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Nicole Granquist is among an elite group of attorneys whose practice is devoted entirely to water quality regulatory compliance, enforcement defense, and litigation.

Described by clients as a “powerhouse,” who has a “tremendous grasp of the complex scientific, legal, and political issues” involved in California water quality regulation and litigation, her tenacious, creative, and pragmatic approach has garnered exceptional results for her statewide municipal and industrial clients. Her approach has also earned respect and credibility with regulatory agency staff and opposing counsel alike.

Nicole routinely negotiates NPDES Permits, WDRs, and water reclamation requirements with the State Board and Regional Water Boards for municipal wastewater, industrial process water, and all types of storm water discharges, as well as reclamation projects, and her involvement consistently results in more favorable and reasonable permit provisions. She is also heavily involved in the development of TMDLS and all aspects of Basin Planning, and has positively contributed to and influenced important statewide policies, a recent example involving her testimony that beneficially influenced the terms of the State Board's compliance schedule policy.

When unsatisfactory permits or enforcement actions (ACLs) are issued or undertaken by the State and Regional Boards, and all other avenues for conflict resolution have been exhausted, Nicole prosecutes administrative and judicial appeals before the State Water Board and all state courts. In doing so, she successfully invalidates or refines the interpretation of particularly problematic provisions, and reduces or eliminates the severity of penalties and excessive or unnecessary compliance requirements.

#### Industries

Public Agencies/Municipalities  
Construction  
Water Rights & Resources

#### Practices

Water Quality Law  
Environmental Enforcement Defense  
Environmental/Toxics Litigation  
Public Trust Doctrine  
Proposition 65  
Regulatory Law & Business Permitting  
Appellate & Writ Practice  
Recycled Water

#### Education

J.D., University of Oregon School of Law, Specialized Certificate in Environmental Law, 1998

B.A., *magna cum laude*, University of California at San Diego, 1995

Given Nicole's extensive knowledge of the complex regulatory schemes created by the federal Clean Water Act and California Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, she is frequently retained to defend public and private entities against third-party citizen suits filed by Baykeeper, Sierra Club, NRDC, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, California River Watch, and other similar groups in federal court, and she has successfully litigated or resolved over fifty such cases in the last fifteen years involving wastewater, process water, and storm water discharges.

## Experience

### **Represent California's largest sanitation district in regulatory, enforcement, and legislative matters**

- Nicole represents California's largest sanitation district located in Southern California in a variety of matters before the Regional and State Water Boards pertaining to regulatory compliance, permitting, basin planning, TMDLs, enforcement, and water quality policies. Nicole also assists with legislative matters, resulting in the successful passage of several statutes benefiting the sanitation district.

### **Represent large construction materials company in regulatory compliance, enforcement, and third party citizen suit issues**

- Nicole represents one of the largest construction materials companies in North America at several facilities in California, assisting with regulatory compliance, agency enforcement, and third party citizen suits filed under the Clean Water Act. One facility was under high profile and immense regulatory and community scrutiny, was facing enforcement by federal and state regulators, and was the recipient of a Clean Water Act citizen suit. Nicole fashioned a comprehensive compliance and enforcement strategy, and due to its implementation, the regulatory issues are being resolved, enforcement exposure has been significantly minimized, and the third party lawsuit was settled for actions the company already planned to implement.

### **Represent Central Valley municipality on brink of bankruptcy due to third party citizen suit and regulatory compliance pressures; successfully resolved the water quality issues and mitigated financial strains**

- A South Placer County city initially retained Nicole to handle a third party citizen suit filed under the Clean Water Act, which was ultimately settled. Due to a variety of circumstances, and exceptionally difficult economic issues, the City found itself in an extended controversy over implementation of settlement terms, including infrastructure improvements and operational changes. Nicole was instrumental in continuing to defend the City in federal court post-settlement, and after several years of controversial battles, convinced the Magistrate to issue reasonable requirements, which were fully implemented. Nicole also provided assistance with negotiating the City's NPDES permits and related orders that allowed feasible implementation of activities, regularly appearing before the Central Valley Regional Water Board to ensure the City received fair treatment. A City that was once on the brink of bankruptcy is no longer contemplating such drastic measures, and is compliant with regulatory requirements.

### **Represent forest products company in regulatory compliance, enforcement, and third party citizen suit issues**

- Nicole successfully defended a forest products company against a state enforcement matter involving water and solid waste claims. The State initially administratively sought fines worth millions of dollars; however, the action was ultimately abandoned by the State due to a series of strategic actions she crafted and implemented. She also successfully negotiated reasonable regulatory requirements for future activities at the facility. Nicole has also defended this company in federal court against claims related to industrial stormwater discharges at several facilities.

### **Represent North Coast municipality before the Regional and State Water Boards and Superior Court in relation to compliance with novel nutrient offset program**

- When the North Coast Regional Water Board imposed novel and unfounded "no net loading" nutrient requirements on a municipality, Nicole was retained to challenge those requirements. After administrative

and judicial challenges were filed, Nicole assisted in the negotiation of a nutrient offset program to settle the dispute. Since that time, challenges have arisen with respect to the imposition and implementation of the nutrient offset program, and Nicole has worked diligently to secure reasonable regulatory requirements and pursue alternative relief.

## **Represent Central Valley municipality to navigate regulatory and litigation-related issues in connection with regional recycled water project**

- Nicole has represented a municipality in the Central Valley for almost fifteen years, routinely assisting with regulatory, agency enforcement, and third party citizen suit issues related to the City's collection system, wastewater treatment plant, and discharge infrastructure. Most recently, she has been working on the City's behalf to navigate through the regulatory issues involved with a ground-breaking regional recycled water project that could revolutionize how recycled water is used in water-starved agricultural areas.

## **Represent variety of public agencies and industries in defense of third party citizen suits filed by Baykeeper, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, California River Watch, and others for alleged violation of the Clean Water Act or the General Industrial Stormwater NPDES Permit for stormwater discharges associated with industrial activity**

- The sheer number of third party citizen suit actions filed by groups like Baykeeper, CSPA, River Watch, and others for alleged violations of the Clean Water Act and/or the General Industrial Stormwater NPDES Permit for stormwater discharges associated with industrial activity is staggering. Nicole has successfully handled many of these cases on behalf of public agencies and private industry, and is extremely familiar with the groups who sue and their counsel, as well as the type of relief sought and the tactics used. She can assist with identifying whether the third party action can be defeated by actions taken prior to expiration of the 60-day notice period, whether any legal defenses exist to thwart the claim, or whether settlement discussions may be warranted. Nicole is well-versed in the regulatory requirements, and can provide counsel on compliance issues and assist with implementing regulatory activities.

## **Represent variety of municipalities and sanitation districts in defense of third party citizen suits or agency enforcement for alleged violation of the Clean Water Act, a NPDES Permit, or the State's SSO WDR for Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs) and provides compliance counseling**

- Nicole successfully represents municipalities in Northern California who receive third party citizen suit actions or administrative orders for alleged violations of the Clean Water Act, a facility-specific NPDES Permit, and/or the SSO WDR for sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) or single-spill events. Nicole is very adept at reasonably resolving such matters, and providing prospective guidance to achieve and maintain compliance. By participating in the development of policies and permits addressing SSOs, Nicole has unique insight as to the legal requirements and practical implementation issues involved in these matters.

## **Wastewater and Industrial Process Water Permitting**

- Successfully negotiate appropriate terms of individual and general NPDES permits and WDRs with Regional Water Board staff and legal counsel.
- Provide detailed legal comments to Regional and State Water Boards on individual and general federal Clean Water Act NPDES permits and state waste discharge requirements (WDRs) for wastewater and industrial process water discharges from publicly owned treatment works and industrial facilities.
- Work collaboratively with engineering and other water quality-related consultants to provide technical comments to NPDES permits and WDRs for wastewater and industrial process water discharges.
- Appear before California Regional Water Boards and the State Water Board in public hearings related to permit adoption.
- Counsel public agencies and industry regarding method and manner of compliance with NPDES permits, WDRs, and associated monitoring and reporting programs.

## **Municipal, Industrial, and Construction Storm Water Permitting**

- Provide detailed technical and legal comments to Regional and State Water Boards on individual and general NPDES permits for municipal, industrial, and construction related storm water discharges.
- Successfully negotiate appropriate terms of individual and general NPDES permits for municipal, industrial, and construction related storm water discharges with Regional and State Water Board staff and legal counsel.
- Appear before California Regional Water Boards and the State Water Board in public hearings related to permit adoption.
- Counsel public agencies and private parties regarding methods and manner of compliance with the State Water Boards' general NPDES permits for municipal, industrial, and construction storm water discharges.
- Secured favorable decision from the San Francisco County Superior Court in case involving third party challenge to two municipal storm water permits.

## **Reclamation Projects/Beneficial Reuse of Recycled Water**

- Successfully negotiate appropriate terms of Master Reclamation Permits and Water Reclamation Requirements with Regional Water Board staff and legal counsel.
- Assist with reclamation project planning, including evaluation of site location and appropriate beneficial reuse of recycled water.
- Provide detailed comments to Regional and State Water Boards on appropriate requirements to include in Master Reclamation Permits, Water Reclamation Requirements, and General Permits.
- Appeared before San Diego, Los Angeles, Lahontan, and Central Valley Regional Water Boards in public hearings related to adoption of Master Reclamation Permits and Water Reclamation Requirements.
- Work collaboratively with Regional and State Water Boards' staff regarding reclamation/recycled water policies to encourage the beneficial reuse of recycled water in California.
- Counsel public agencies regarding method and manner of compliance with recycled water requirements.

## **303(d) Listings/Total Maximum Daily Loads/Basin Planning**

- Provide detailed comments to Regional and State Water Boards on behalf of public agencies and private parties in connection with listing of water bodies on the State's 303(d) list of impaired water bodies.
- Represent public agencies in stakeholder-led preparation of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs).
- Provide detailed comments to Regional and State Water Boards on behalf of public agencies and private parties California in connection with the preparation and issuance of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs).
- Appear before California Regional Water Boards and the State Water Board in public hearings related to 303(d) listings and TMDL adoption.
- Provide detailed comments to Regional and State Water Boards on behalf of public agencies and private parties California in connection with Basin Plan amendments and associated triennial review processes. Negotiate and draft Basin Plan amendments.
- Counsel public agencies regarding method and manner of compliance with TMDLs and Basin Plan provisions.

## **Enforcement Orders**

- Successfully negotiate appropriate terms of administrative enforcement orders, including Time Schedule Orders, Cease and Desist Orders, Cleanup and Abatement Orders, and Administrative Civil Liability

Complaints (discretionary and mandatory minimum penalties), with Regional Water Board staff and legal counsel on behalf of public agencies and private parties.

- Provide detailed legal comments to Regional and State Water Boards regarding appropriate terms of administrative enforcement orders.
- Appear before California Regional Water Boards and the State Water Board in public hearings challenging the issuance of administrative enforcement orders.

## **Administrative Appeals**

- Lead litigation counsel involved in numerous administrative appeals of NPDES permits, WDRs, reclamation requirements, and enforcement orders before the State Water Resources Control Board.
- Secured favorable decisions from the State Water Resources Control Board regarding variety of permitting issues involving calculation of effluent limitations, compliance schedules, anti-backsliding, and receiving water provisions.

## **Judicial Challenges to Permits and Enforcement Orders**

- Lead litigation counsel involved in multiple judicial appeals of NPDES permits, WDRs, and enforcement orders before all California courts.
- Secured favorable decision from the California Supreme Court regarding the Regional Board's duty to consider economics when imposing discharge limitations in NPDES permits.
- Draft amicus briefs to California Court of Appeal on behalf of Bay Area trade association in *Communities for a Better Environment v. State Water Resources Control Board*, et al.

## **Judicial Challenges to TMDLs and Basin Plan Provisions**

- Lead litigation counsel involved in judicial appeals of TMDLs and Basin Plan provisions involving water quality objectives, implementation plans, and compliance schedules.

## **Defense of Third Party Citizen Suits Filed Under the Clean Water Act**

- Represent public agencies and private parties in defense of third party citizen suits filed in federal court under the Clean Water Act involving alleged violation of the Act and/or NPDES permits for wastewater and industrial process water discharges, including sanitary sewer overflows.
- Represent industry in defense of third party citizen suits filed in federal court under the Clean Water Act involving industrial storm water discharges.
- Represent municipalities in defense of third party citizen suits filed in federal court under the Clean Water Act involving municipal storm water discharges.
- Represent construction/developer interests in defense of third party citizen suits filed in federal court under the Clean Water Act involving construction storm water discharges.
- Draft amicus brief to 9th Circuit Court of Appeal on behalf of state and national trade associations in *Northern California River Watch v. City of Healdsburg* case.

## **Judicial Challenges to U.S. EPA Action**

- Successfully challenged U.S. EPA Region IX's approval of unlawful provisions contained in the Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles Region in federal court.

## **401 Certification**

- Assist with negotiating and securing 401 Certification from the Regional Water Boards and State Water Board for variety of infrastructure, restoration, and compliance projects.

- Secure 401 Certification from the State Water Board for utilities district in connection with FERC re-licensing.

## CEQA/NEPA

- Advise public agencies and private parties regarding water quality impacts of proposed projects.
- Draft water quality-related provisions of Environmental Impact Reports and Environmental Impact Statements for proposed projects.
- Successfully completed EIR processes without challenge for high profile expansions of municipal wastewater treatment facilities in the San Francisco Bay Area and Central Valley.

## Other Environmental Experience

- Common counsel to a multi-party Trust conducting multi-million dollar cleanup of abandoned used oil recycling facility under the supervision of EPA Region IX.

## Professional & Community Service

- Attorneys Committee, California Association of Sanitation Agencies, Associate Member
- Central Valley Clean Water Association
- Legal Affairs Committee, National Association of Clean Water Agencies
- California Stormwater Quality Association, Member and Counsel
- Association of Women in Water, Energy and the Environment
- Bay Planning Coalition
- Federal Bar Association, Sacramento Chapter
- State Bar of California , Environmental Law Section
- Sacramento County Bar Association, Environmental Law Section

## Honors & Rankings

- Best Lawyers in America®, Environmental Law, 2018-2019
- *Sacramento Magazine*, Top Lawyer, Environmental, Energy & Natural Resources, 2015-2019
- Specialized Certificate in Environmental Law, University of Oregon, 1998
- Judicial Clerkship, Contra Costa Superior Court, 1997
- Magna cum laude honors, University of California, San Diego, 1995
- Provost Honor List, University of California, San Diego, 1993-1995

## Legal Alerts

- *Joint Powers Authority Comprised of Irrigation Districts and the City and County of San Francisco Challenge Recently Adopted State Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredge or Fill Material to Waters of the State* , May 9, 2019
- *After Years of Handwringing and Lengthy Stakeholder Negotiations, California Water Board Adopts State Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredge or Fill Material to Waters of the State*, April 4, 2019

- *State Water Resources Control Board Issues Draft Toxicity Policy – What You Need to Know*, November 21, 2018
- *U.S. District Court Holds USEPA Must Regulate Previously Exempted Stormwater Runoff from Specified Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional Sources in Los Angeles*, August 31, 2018
- *Local California Governments Sue Fossil Fuel Companies for Rising Sea Levels*, July 26, 2017
- *DOJ Issues Policy Memo Limiting the Use of Supplemental Environmental Projects in Federal Settlements*, June 12, 2017
- *Water Board Adopts Revisions to Enforcement Policy That Are Expected to Generally Increase Penalties*, April 4, 2017
- *Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Strategy Outlines a Role for POTWs in Organic Waste Diversion*, March 31, 2017
- *NRDC/WaterKeeper Challenge to 2012 Los Angeles Municipal Storm Water Permit Denied*, February 9, 2017
- *WARNING: Proposed Revisions to Water Boards' Enforcement Policy Will Likely Lead to Higher Penalties*, August 16, 2016
- *U.S. Supreme Court Upholds Hawkes Ruling that Wetland "Jurisdictional Determinations" Are Subject to Judicial Review*, June 13, 2016
- *EPA's Water Rule Blocked Nationwide*, October 9, 2015
- *ESWR Update: WOTUS Rule Blocked by Federal Judge in North Dakota*, September 1, 2015
- *State Water Board Adopts Industrial Storm Water General Permit: Prepare!*, April 1, 2014
- *State Water Board Solicits Comments on "Final Draft" Industrial Storm Water General Permit*, August 2013
- *Ninth Circuit Issues New Ruling in LA County Flood Control Case Contradictory To Its Own Earlier Rulings, Resulting in Compliance Uncertainty*, August 2013
- *U.S. Supreme Court Reverses Ninth Circuit and Reaffirms Water Transfer Precedent in Los Angeles County MS4 Clean Water Act Case*, January 9, 2013
- *U.S. Supreme Court Rules That EPA Cannot Issue "NPDES" For Discharges Requiring a Section 404 Dredge and Fill Permit From the Corps of Engineers*, June 2009
- *The Ninth Circuit Expands Already Broad "Waters of the United States" Definition*, August 2007
- *The Ninth Circuit is First to Apply the Recent United States Supreme Court Decision Defining "Waters of the United States"*, August 2006

## Publications

- *Environmental Regulation Update*, California Grocers Magazine, December 2013

## Speaking Engagements / Events

- *Innovations in Stormwater Project Implementation & Advancing Public-Private Partnerships*, Presenter, Southern California Water Coalition Stormwater Workshop, September 27, 2018
- *Performance Based Metrics for Stormwater Quality and Water Resources*, Panelist, The P3 Water Summit, April 3-4, 2018

- *What To Know For The Next Wet Season And Beyond*, Presenter, Storm Water Awareness Week Webcasts, September 28-29, 2016
- *Water Quality Considerations for Water Reuse Projects*, Speaker, Water Reuse Association, 2011
- *Calculation of Economic Benefit in Agency Enforcement Actions, Money You Never Knew You Had*, Speaker, California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) Conference, 2010