



Nicolas D. Chapman Associate

621 Capitol Mall | 18th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

916.520.5466 | Direct
nchapman@downeybrand.com

Practice Areas

Endangered Species | Flood Protection Law | Groundwater Law | Public Trust Doctrine | Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) | Water Law | Water Rights Litigation

Nicolas Chapman's practice focuses primarily on water resources, encompassing surface and groundwater rights litigation, endangered species issues, federal reclamation law, flood protection, and public agency issues.

Nicolas represents private and public clients in complex environmental litigation before federal and state courts, as well as in administrative proceedings before the State Water Resources Control Board. He also assists public clients in securing state and federal funding for flood disaster mitigation and recovery efforts. As a water resources attorney, Nicolas' proficiency extends to navigating the intricacies of federal and state regulatory frameworks, providing clients with precise and practical legal counsel aimed at achieving the best results possible.

Beyond his water resources expertise, Nicolas is well-versed in California's open government, contracting, and ethics laws, including the Ralph M. Brown Act, the Public Records Act, and the Political Reform Act. He frequently conducts state-law-required AB-1234 training for public clients and at conferences held by the Association of California Water Agencies.

Experience

- Counsel large agricultural water suppliers on a variety of complex water rights issues.
- Draft briefs and motions on client's behalf in federal reclamation contracts and Endangered Species action before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.
- Draft briefs and motions in administrative proceedings before the State Water Resources Control Board on the client's behalf.
- Assist with the defense of historic settlement contracts in federal court.
- Assist with representing a large group of senior water rights holders with California water rights regulation, the Endangered Species Act, and federal reclamation law issues.

- Assist with representing a large coalition of landowners in a comprehensive groundwater adjudication.
- Assist clients in responding to emergency flood conditions by assisting with state and federal contracting regulations.

Professional & Community Service

- Sacramento County Bar Association, Environmental Law Section
- California Lawyers Association, Environmental Law Section
- *California Water Law & Policy Reporter*, Contributing Author
- *University of the Pacific Law Review*, Chief Articles & Symposium Editor, 2020-2021
- *University of the Pacific Law Review*, Staff Writer, 2019-2020

Education

- J.D., University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law, with distinction, 2021
- B.A., University of California at Davis, 2016

Honors & Rankings

- Traynor Honor Society, University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law
- Dean's List, University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law, 2018-2021
- Judicial Extern, Honorable Morrison C. England, Eastern District of California, 2021

Speaking Engagements / Events

- *Ethics Training (AB 1234)*, 2023 ACWA Fall Conference & Expo, November 30, 2023
- *Ethics Training (AB 1234)*, Presenter, ACWA Spring Conference, May 11, 2023

Publications

- *United States Army Corps of Engineers Makes Unplanned Releases From Two Tulare Lake Basin Dams*, California Water Law & Policy Reporter, Volume 35, Number 6, March 2025
- *Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority Petitions California Supreme Court for Review of Trial Phasing Order in Comprehensive Groundwater Adjudication*, California Land Use Law & Policy Reporter, Volume 35, Number 4, January 2025
- *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes to List Long Valley Speckled Dace as an Endangered Species*, California Water Law & Policy Reporter, Volume 34, Number 11, August/September 2024
- *State Water Resources Control Board Again Addresses Instream Flow Concerns in Scott and Shasta Rivers Through Emergency Rulemaking*, California Water Law and Policy Reporter, Volume 34, Number 6,

March 2024

- *Environmental Groups Challenge State Water Resources Control Board's Order Modifying Irrigated Lands Program Order for Central Coast Region*, California Water Law & Policy Reporter, Volume 34, Number 3, December 2023
- *District Court Vacates National Marine Fisheries Services' Biological Opinion and Environmental Assessment for Safe Harbor Agreements Regarding Shasta River Coho Salmon*, Environmental, Energy & Climate Change Law and Regulation Reporter, Volume 3, Number 11, August/September 2023
- *California Court of Appeal Upholds State Water Resources Control Board's General Waste Discharge Requirements in WQO 2018-0002*, California Water Law and Policy Reporter, Volume 33, Number 8, May 2023
- *California Tribes and Environmental Organizations File Civil Rights Complaint and Petition for Rulemaking with EPA for Bay-Delta Water Quality Standards*, California Water Law & Policy Reporter, Volume 33, Number 5, February 2023
- *Ninth Circuit Holds That Native Alaskan Tribe has an Implied Right to Fish off the Tribe's Reservation*, Western Water Law & Policy Reporter, Volume 27, Number 1, November 2022
- *Department of Water Resources Begins Preparation of Environmental Impact Report for West False River Drought Salinity Barrier*, California Water Law & Policy Reporter, Volume 32, Number 7, April 2022
- *Water Agencies File Lawsuits Challenging State Water Board's Sacramento-San Joaquin Curtailment Order*, California Water Law & Policy Reporter, Volume 32, Number 2, November 2021

Legal Alerts

- *Ninth Circuit Hands Major Victory to Senior Water Right Holders on the Sacramento River*, May 28, 2024
- *Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Reverses RCRA Citizen Suit Decision Affecting Drinking Water Supply Agencies in California River Watch v. City of Vacaville*, July 7, 2022
- *State Water Board Issues Sweeping Water Right Curtailment Order in 2022 for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Watershed*, June 9, 2022