



## Samuel D. Bacal-Graves Associate

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### Practice Areas

Air Quality & Climate Change | Appellate & Writ Practice | CEQA / NEPA |  
Endangered Species | Energy | Energy Project Development |  
Environmental/Toxics Litigation | Flood Protection Law | Land Use | Public  
Utility Regulation | Real Estate | Real Property & Land Use Litigation

## Sam Bacal-Graves helps public and private clients successfully navigate complex permitting, land use, and environmental issues.

He aids developers and agencies with a wide range of legal issues, utilizing his knowledge of California's land use laws. Specifically, Sam's practice includes entitlement permitting, environmental compliance, and defending project approvals in litigation. Sam has expertise with the [California Environmental Quality Act \(CEQA\)](#), California's constantly changing housing laws, the Subdivision Map Act, the Mitigation Fee Act, and other planning, [land use](#), and environmental laws.

Sam graduated Order of the Coif from UC Davis School of Law. During law school, he worked as a research assistant for Professor Christopher Elmendorf, researching issues related to California housing law and policy and as an individual tutor for first-year law students. He now teaches 3L Analytical and Persuasive Writing as a lecturer at the law school. Sam is a regular contributor to [CEQA Chronicles](#), the industry's leading blog on CEQA law and litigation.

## Experience

- [Entitled the largest housing project](#) ever approved in the Central City of Sacramento in approximately six months.
- Successfully assisted in securing trial court dismissal of all three causes of action on demurrer for lawsuit challenging existing development in Madera County.
- Assisted a municipality on CEQA compliance for electric utility regulatory changes and worked with co-counsel to negotiate settlement with adverse parties.
- Assisting agency in defending several lawsuits filed under CEQA, the Subdivision Map Act, and the Planning and Zoning Law.
- Assisted an affordable housing developer in making effective use of California's housing laws to secure approval for a project in a hostile jurisdiction.

- Advised developers on entitlement and CEQA strategies for multiple large infill developments in Sacramento.
- Contributed to successful defense of a senior memory care facility in CEQA litigation filed by neighboring homeowners.

## Professional & Community Service

- Sacramento County Bar Association, Environmental Law Section
- California Lawyers Association, Environmental Law Section
- UC Davis School of Law, Lecturer, Law 280: Analytical and Persuasive Writing, 2023-present
- UC Davis School of Law, Bar Passage Essay Grader, 2022
- UC Davis School of Law Academic Success Program, Tutor, 2018-2020
- *UC Davis Business Law Journal*, Editor

## Education

- J.D., University of California at Davis School of Law, 2020
- B.A., Philosophy, University of California at Santa Cruz, 2011

## Honors & Rankings

- Order of the Coif
- Witkin Awards for Local Government Law and Contracts
- Dean's Merit Scholarship Recipient, King Hall School of Law
- Dean's Honors List, University of California, Santa Cruz
- Environmental Law Certificate, 2020
- Public Service Certificate, 2020
- Pro Bono Certificate, 2020

## Publications

- *EPA Publishes Final Rule - Requires PFAS Reporting Under TSCA*, California Water Law & Policy Reporter, Volume 34, Number 3, December 2023
- *D.C. Circuit Requires EPA to Regulate Perchlorate Levels Under the Safe Drinking Water Act*, Environmental, Energy & Climate Change Law and Regulation Reporter, Volume 3, Number 9, June 2023
- *Governor's Infrastructure Plan: Legislature Finds Modest CEQA Reforms too Complex for a Vote this Year*, Daily Journal, June 16, 2023

## Legal Alerts

- *California Energy Commission Releases Draft AB 525 Offshore Wind Strategic Plan*, January 25, 2024
- *California Infrastructure Plan Passes; Governor's CEQA and Species Reforms are Narrowed, but Signed into Law*, July 12, 2023

## Blogs

- *HAA does not Mandate Approval of Housing Project Found Inconsistent with Zoning*, January 29, 2024
- *Downey Brand Victory: Filing Multiple NODs does not Restart Statute of Limitations*, January 18, 2024
- *Annual Legislative Update: Important Land Use Laws Taking Effect in 2024*, January 4, 2024
- *Standard of Review Surprise: Fair Argument Applies Despite Prior Program EIR According to Fourth District*, August 18, 2023
- *California Infrastructure Plan Passes; Governor's CEQA and Species Reforms are Narrowed, but Signed into Law*, July 12, 2023
- *AB 1000: Legislative Restrictions on New Warehouse Construction Granted Reconsideration in 2024*, June 7, 2023
- *Oakland and the A's Prevail on All but One Minor Issue in Ballpark EIR Case; Wind Mitigation Found Inadequate*, April 10, 2023
- *Neighbor's General Complaints of Environmental Concerns Insufficient to Exhaust Administrative Remedies as to CEQA Exemption Determination*, March 6, 2023
- *Approval Upheld for Lafayette Affordable Housing Project Delayed for a Decade*, January 17, 2023