



Stephen J. Meyer Of Counsel

621 Capitol Mall | 18th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

916.520.5437 | Direct
smeyer@downeybrand.com

Practice Areas

Complex Business Litigation | Environmental Enforcement Defense |
Environmental/Toxics Litigation | Financial Institutions | Food & Agriculture
| Food & Agriculture Litigation

Stephen Meyer has more than 40 years of experience in complex business litigation with a particular focus in the last several years on food and agriculture.

Stephen advises some of California's largest agricultural producers on **environmental**, **finance**, and **business** disputes. He has handled matters involving dairies, cattle feeding, fertilizer and pesticide distribution and regulation, egg production, animal welfare, crop damage, food processing, and agricultural finance. More recently, he organized the firm's **food & agriculture practice**, a rapidly growing interdisciplinary group that emphasizes collaboration and cooperation across the broad spectrum of specialty practices at the firm with a focus on food and agriculture in California.

He has represented clients in other areas including banking, oil and gas, pipeline distribution, and real estate development—he has also represented public entities. In recent years, he has expanded his practice to include alternative dispute resolution, bringing his experience as litigator and mediator, to helping parties resolve business, commercial, and environmental disputes.

Experience

Food and Agricultural Litigation

- Represented a major egg producer in matters regarding Proposition 2, including litigation as well as negotiation regarding legislation and regulation at both the Federal and State level.
- Represented a major cattle feeding operation in litigation where feeding practices and accounting issues were disputed.
- Represented parties in disputes regarding milk pricing including litigation with private parties and disputes with State regulatory agencies.
- Represented large grocery chain regarding disputes with the Department of Pesticide Regulation regarding claims that certain products were subject to DPR jurisdiction because of alleged pesticidal representations.

- Represented large fertilizer manufacturer regarding false claims by competitors that their fertilizer products were organic when in fact that proved clearly not to be true.
- Outside General Counsel for the largest organic fertilizer manufacturer in the western states advising regarding State and Federal organic rules and regulations permitting, product safety issues, and business issues. In this regard expertise developed on the general laws and rules regarding organic agriculture and has testified to legislative committees on these issues.

Environmental Litigation

- Represented as Chief Co-Liaison Counsel for 150 defendants, as well as counsel for the target defendant, in the Lodi groundwater contamination case. This was a highly complex and notorious lawsuit that involved multiple agencies, bizarre financial structures, and incentives for obstruction that almost ruined the City of Lodi financially, and, if written, about would read more like a novel. This case was successfully settled after more than five years for no more than what would have been offered at the beginning of the lawsuit.
- Represented several Clean Water Act cases involving various businesses including lumber mills, parking lots, mining operations, and waste treatment plants, all of which were favorably resolved.
- Represented on a RCRA/CERCLA/nuisance case with the owner of a landfill in Imperial County where alleged hazardous waste was hauled from the client's geothermal power plant, which was settled on favorable terms involving minimal financial contribution.

Business Litigation

- Represented a number of financial institutions, principally community banks over a 30 year period in wide range of lawsuits, which included lender liability claims, RICO actions, class actions, as well as work out negotiations by and between the Banks and their commercial/business customers. A number of these matters involved multiple institutions and complex financing arrangements involving large financial commitments and major projects. On all of these matters I have been the Lead Counsel and they have been resolved by trial, court order, or settlement on terms the clients viewed as favorable.
- Outside General Counsel for several years for a large Sacramento community bank (which eventually was sold to a large national bank), advising the Board, advising on regulatory matters, and conducting the Bank's litigation. And Stephen Meyer has also represented several other community banks on a variety of matters including litigation
- Represented several businesses including accounting firms in business and partnership dissolution and disputes by and between members/ partners/shareholders, all of which were favorably resolved by Order or settlement.
- Represented landowners in various disputes involving their real property, including partition claims, trespass claims and nuisance claims. Recently successfully represented through trial verdict large landowner facing adverse possession claims for significant acreage bordering a private golf course.

Professional & Community Service

- American Bar Association, Alternative Dispute Resolution Section
- Sacramento County Bar Association, Alternative Dispute Resolution Section

- University of California at Davis, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Dean's Advisory Council
- California Lawyers Association, Executive Committee of the Agribusiness Committee, Business Law Section
- California Lawyers Association, Litigation Section, Past Co-Chair Sacramento Program Committee; Past Member Executive Committee
- California Lawyers Association, Business Law Section
- American Agricultural Law Association
- Sacramento County Farm Bureau
- Cal Aggie Alumni Association, Former Board Member
- Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts, Former Board Member
- Valley Vision, Former Board Member
- Diogenes House, Former Board Member
- Milton L. Schwartz Inn of Court, Former Member
- American Bar Association, Environmental Litigation Committee Newsletter, Former Reporter
- Legal Services of Northern California, Volunteer Work on Housing Issues

Education

- J.D., University of Michigan Law School, 1975
- M.U.P., University of Michigan School of Architecture and Urban Planning, 1975
- B.S., Agricultural Economics, University of California at Davis, 1971

Honors & Rankings

- AV Preeminent® Rating by Martindale-Hubbell®, 1985-present
- Best Lawyers in America®, *Bet-the-Company Litigation, Commercial Litigation, Litigation-Environmental, 2009-2024*
- Best Lawyers® 2021 Bet-the-Company Litigation "Lawyer of the Year" in Sacramento
- Best Lawyers® 2018 Bet-the-Company Litigation "Lawyer of the Year" in Sacramento
- *Super Lawyers*, Northern California Super Lawyer, Business Litigation, 2004, 2007-2022
- *Sacramento Magazine*, Top Lawyer, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Business Litigation, Mediator, Commercial Law, 2015-2023
- *Sacramento Business Journal*, Best of the Bar, 2018

Speaking Engagements / Events

- *Genetic Engineering in Agriculture: Science, Policy & Law*, Presented by the Agribusiness Committee of the California State Bar Business Law Section, June 13, 2017
- *Trends in Legislation and Constitutional Challenges*, Co-presenter, The State Bar of California, Agricultural Law Conference, June 25, 2015
- *Keeping the Family Farm in the Family - Part 3*, Downey Brand and Westmark Group Program, October 29, 2013
- *Keeping the Family Farm in the Family - Part 2*, Downey Brand and Westmark Group Program, May 16, 2013
- *Groundwater Nitrates Workshop*, Co-presenter, The State Bar of California, Agricultural Law Conference, April 24, 2013
- *The Legal & Regulatory Implications of Nitrates in Groundwater*, Speaker, UC Davis Agribusiness Workshop, April 24, 2013
- *Keeping the Family Farm in the Family - Part 1*, Downey Brand and Westmark Group Program, March 28, 2013
- *Demand-Driven Production Regulations and Standards*, Speaker, UC Davis Agribusiness Workshop, March 11-12, 2013

Publications

- *Cause for Concern Over Organic Fertilizer Made from Food Waste?*, Western Grower & Shipper, July/August 2017
- *Proposition 37: The Challenges Faced by the Food Supply Chain*, Downey Brand Food & Agriculture Law Practice Group, October 2012

Legal Alerts

- *Natural Uranium Contamination in Central Valley Aquifer Linked to Nitrates*, September 18, 2015
- *Pistachio Bushy Top Syndrome - Down The Legal Rabbit Hole In Search Of A Remedy*, May 6, 2015
- *Court Rules on Goldfields Parties' Definition of "Groundwater"*, October 2012