



Nicole Hoeksma Gordon
Principal

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Practice Groups
Land Use & Environmental Law

Bar Number
240056

Education
USC Gould School of Law, JD, 2005
Middlebury College, BA, *cum laude*, 2001

Practicing Since: 2005

Nicole Hoeksma Gordon is a Principal in Meyers Nave's Land Use and Environmental Law practice group. Throughout California, clients rely on Nicole for her strategic counsel on public infrastructure projects, renewable energy projects, commercial and residential developments, and a wide range of entitlement matters. Nicole's practice centers on navigating intricate legal frameworks, including the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the federal and California Endangered Species Act (ESA), as well as planning and zoning regulations. She represents clients at every stage of the process, from administrative proceedings to trial and appellate litigation.

A trusted advisor for high-profile and often controversial projects, Nicole recently served as lead counsel for The Regents of the University of California in a landmark case before the California Supreme Court. She successfully defended UC Berkeley's Long Range Development Plan and a transformative student and supportive housing project at the historic "People's Park" site.

Nicole's leadership extends beyond her legal practice. Since 2021, she has co-chaired the CLE International's Annual CEQA Conference, convening the state's foremost practitioners to address cutting-edge issues in environmental law. As a former Chair (2018-2019) and current Advisor to the Executive Committee of the Environmental Law Section of the California Lawyers Association, Nicole plays a pivotal role in shaping the discourse on environmental law in California. She is also a sought-after speaker, frequently presenting at public and private workshops and training sessions, including instructing judges, justices, and court research attorneys on CEQA through the California Judicial College.

Honors and Awards

- *The Best Lawyers in America* – Environmental Law; Land Use and Zoning Law (2025–2027)
- 500 Leading Litigators in America – *Lawdragon* (2025–2027)
- 500 Leading Environmental Lawyers – The Green 500 – *Lawdragon* (2026)
- Southern California Super Lawyers list, *Thomson Reuters' Super Lawyers® Magazine* (2021–2025)
- Inspirational Women Award Nominee – *Los Angeles Times* (2021, 2024)
- Leaders of Influence: Thriving in their 40s – *Los Angeles Business Journal* (2021, 2024)
- Top Women Attorneys – *Los Angeles Business Journal* (2020)
- Most Influential Women Attorneys – *Los Angeles Business Journal* (2019)
- Southern California Super Lawyers Rising Stars list – *Thomson Reuters' Super Lawyers® Magazine* (2014–2015)

Professional and Community Affiliations

- CLE International, CEQA Annual Conference, Co-Chair (2021–Present)
- California Lawyers Association, Environmental Law Section, Executive Committee Member (2014–2019), Chair (2018–2019), Advisor (2019–Present)
- Los Angeles County Bar Association, Environmental Law Section, Member
- The State Bar of California, Member (2005–Present)

Presentations and Publications

- Instructor, "Introductory and Advanced Courses for Judges and Justices," *Center for Judicial Education and Research* (2022–Present)
- Co-Chair, CEQA Annual Conference – *CLE International* (2021–Present)
- Instructor, Successful CEQA Compliance: A Step-by-Step Approach – *UCLA Extension* (2010–Present)
- Presenter, "Tribal Consultation & CEQA" – *City Attorney's Association of San Diego* (June 11, 2026)
- Panelist, "CEQA & Housing Panel," *Appellate Judicial Attorney Institute (AJAI)* (April 28, 2026)
- Presenter, "CEQA Update: What the Courts/Legislature Do to Use this Year?" – *County Counsels Association of California Land Use Study Section – Fall 2025 Meeting* (November 6, 2025)
- Speaker, "Strategies for Successfully Resolving CEQA and Land Use Disputes" – *League of California Cities, City Attorneys Spring Conference* (May 7, 2025)

- Presenter, "Saved by the Bill: Discussing Make UC a Good Neighbor v. UC Regents and AB 1307 with the Team Who Wrote and Defended the UC Berkeley EIR" – *AEP 2025 California State Conference* (April 8, 2025)
- Presenter, "Waiving Environmental Review for Rebuilding After Natural Disasters: Implications of Executive Order N-4-25" – *LACBA Environmental Spring Symposium* (April 4, 2025)
- Author, "Court of Appeal Publishes First Opinion Addressing Assembly Bill 52, Concluding City Failed to Meaningfully Consult with Tribe" – *Meyers Nave Client Alert* (March 17, 2025)
- Panelist, Striking the Right CEQA Balance: Protecting the Environment While Promoting Housing Development – *Los Angeles County Bar Association Environmental Law Spring Symposium* (2024)
- Presenter, CEQA and NEPA – Friends or Frenemies? – *Association of Environmental Planners (AEP) Conference* (2020)
- Co-Author, CEQA's "Unusual Circumstances Exception" in the Wake of Berkeley Hillside – *Environmental Law News* (Spring 2016, Vol. 25, No. 1, p. 9)
- Co-Author, Demystifying CEQA's Cumulative Impact Analysis Requirements: Guidance for Defensible EIR Evaluation – *California Environmental Law Reporter* (September 2011, Vol. 2011, Issue No. 9, p. 379)

Published Decisions

- *Center for Biological Diversity vs. County of LA* (2025) 112 Cal.App.5th 317
- *Make UC a Good Neighbor v. Regents of University of California* (2025) 117 Cal.App.5th 282
- *Make UC a Good Neighbor v. Regents of University of California* (2024) 16 Cal.5th 43
- *Make UC a Good Neighbor v. Regents of University of California* (2023) 88 Cal.App.5th 656
- *Save Berkeley's Neighborhoods v. Regents of University of California* (2023) 91 Cal.App.5th 72
- *City of San Diego et al. v. Board of Trustees of the California State University* (2015) 61 Cal.4th 45

Representative Experience

- **Los Angeles World Airports LAX Modernization Projects.** Nicole regularly provides CEQA advice to Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) on its multi-billion-dollar efforts to modernize the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). This work involves reviewing

CEQA and NEPA documents, responding to comments, negotiating with local, regional, state and federal agencies, brokering settlement agreements, and litigating when necessary. Recent and ongoing projects include the Terminal 5 Renovation Project, the Landfield Access Modernization Project, the Airfield & Terminal Modernization, Landside Access Modernization, and the Cargo Modernization Project. Nicole also played a key role in successfully defending LAWA against three separate lawsuits challenging the LAX Specific Plan Amendment Study, and settling a lawsuit against LAWA to the benefit of LAWA and the City of Los Angeles in anticipation of the 2028 Olympic Games.

- **LAX Landside Access Modernization Program (LAMP).** Detailed review of planning documents and EIR for this multi-billion-dollar overhaul of LAX's ground transportation system, which includes an Automated People Mover connecting to Metro's 96th Street Project, Intermodal Facilities, and a new Consolidated Rental Car center.
- **LAX Airfield and Terminal Modernization Projects.** Reviewing LAWA's forthcoming Draft EIR for this multi-billion-dollar project to upgrade airfield, terminal, and roadway infrastructure at LAX. In-depth EIR review includes complex CEQA issues and will be among the first City documents to address VMT analysis for a major airport.
- ***Make UC a Good Neighbor v. Regents of University of California*** (2024) 16 Cal.5th 43. Nicole served as lead counsel, successfully representing the Regents of the University of California in a CEQA case before the California Supreme Court involving UC Berkeley's Long Range Development Plan and a student and supportive housing project proposed at the site known as "People's Park." The case involved questions related to whether CEQA applies to "student party noise" and when CEQA requires analysis of off-site alternatives.
- ***Save Berkeley's Neighborhoods v. Regents of University of California*** (2023) 91 Cal.App.5th 872. Nicole successfully defended UC Berkeley's approval of a new academic and housing project at the Goldman School of Public Policy in the First District Court of Appeal. The published decision followed high-profile coverage of whether UC Berkeley would be able to enroll its full Fall 2022 freshman class. When the Legislature stepped in, Nicole guided the litigation to its final successful conclusion. Nicole also successfully defended UC Berkeley against a claim for attorneys' fees by petitioners in this case under the private attorney general statute (Gov. Code, § 1021.5).
- **California Public Utilities Commission Transmission Line Projects.** Since 2006, Nicole has advised the CPUC on CEQA and NEPA issues on more than 40 transmission, reconductoring, and substation projects. In connection with these projects, Nicole has provided advice on numerous, complex CEQA and NEPA issues, including determinations regarding project alternatives, project objectives, integration of CEQA with the CPUC's administrative processes, and post-approval procedures, to name a few.
- **Santa Clara Valley Water District Projects.** For more than a decade, Nicole has served as special counsel to the Santa Clara Valley Water District, working on CEQA litigation matters as well as CEQA issues related to a wide variety of water supply, flood management, and stream stewardship projects.

- **Centennial Specific Plan.** Advised Los Angeles County on a master-planned community at Tejon Ranch with up to 19,333 housing units and 10 million sq. ft. of non-residential use. Work included negotiating a development agreement, affordable housing program, in-depth EIR and CEQA review, and drafting Planning Commission and Board resolutions. Successfully defended the County in two lawsuits, including on the critical issue of consistency with SCAG's then-current RTP/SCS.
- **Los Angeles County Department Projects.** Nicole serves as special counsel to the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, Department of Public Works and other County Departments on numerous high-profile projects, including:
 - Defended a CEQA and planning and zoning law challenge to the County's approval of a site plan review and a franchise ordinance for a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) known as the Hecate Grid Humidor Storage 1 LLC project. Once built, the BESS will help integrate renewable energy to the electric grid and support grid reliability and resilience, supporting the County's goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improving electrical demand response.
 - Special counsel to the Los Angeles County Flood Control District on CEQA issues related to its Stormwater Interceptor Project, a fully automated, solar-powered trash collection device designed to capture floating plastic, trash, and litter before they reach the ocean. Nicole was also responsible for settling two different lawsuits related to the project before briefing and trial.
 - Defended the County in *Center for Biological Diversity, California Native Plant Society v. County of Los Angeles et al; Tejon Ranch Co., Centennial Founders, LLC, Tejon Ranchcorp* (2021) Court of Appeal, Second District, Division Seven, Case No. B318083 against a CEQA and planning and zoning law challenge. The project at issue involves an application for a new, master-planned community on Tejon Ranch in unincorporated Los Angeles County to develop up to 19,333 dwelling units and 10 million square feet of non-residential use. This work includes advising on complex CEQA and land use issues related to project entitlements.
 - Successful defense of the County at both the trial court and in the Court of Appeal in its finding that the County's 2019 OurCounty Sustainability Plan was "not a project" under CEQA in *Save Our Rural Town v. County of Los Angeles, et al.* (2022) Court of Appeal, Second District, Division Four Case No. B309992.
 - Represented the County in litigation over the Los Angeles County Sanitation District's obligation to fund a regional park at the site of the former Puente Hills landfill, the largest active landfill in the U.S. prior to its closure in 2013, known as the Puente Hills Landfill Park. The litigation involved contractual permitting issues and complex infrastructure issues associated with building a park on a landfill site. Defendants filed a cross complaint alleging inverse condemnation. Nicole was instrumental in settling the case in 2021 and securing \$80 million from the Sanitation District to fund the future park.

- Successful defense of the County at both the trial court and in the Court of Appeal in a challenge to the EIR the County prepared for its Antelope Valley Area Plan update in *Center for Biological Diversity v. County of Los Angeles* (2018) Court of Appeal, Second District, Division Two Case No. B284427. The Antelope Valley Area Plan, a component of the County's General Plan, covers approximately 1,800 square miles of the unincorporated County and is designed to preserve the natural environment and rural lifestyle and character of the Antelope Valley while responding to the growing population's need for additional housing and employment opportunities.

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