

NICOLE HOEKSMAGORDON

PRINCIPAL

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LANGUAGES:
English



Nicole defends the land use decisions and environmental review behind California's largest projects, and she trains the judges and attorneys who interpret them.

Nicole Hoeksma Gordon advises and defends government and private clients through major infrastructure, energy, commercial, and residential development projects across California. Her practice centers on CEQA, NEPA, endangered species, and the patchwork of planning and zoning regulations that govern development across the state, representing clients from initial concept through trial and final appeal. That full arc is where she built her command of the legal, political, administrative, and business considerations that shape real-world decisions and project outcomes.

With that insight, Nicole educates the field. Since 2022, she has trained California judges, justices, and court research attorneys through the California Judicial Council; since 2010, she has taught UCLA Extension's Successful CEQA Compliance: A Step-by-Step Approach; and since 2021, she has co-chaired CLE International's Annual CEQA Conference, the CEQA bar's main statewide program. She also chaired the Environmental Law Section of the California Lawyers Association and remains on its executive committee.

Most importantly, Nicole litigates what she advises, all the way to the California Supreme Court. In the fight over UC Berkeley's People's Park housing, she was lead counsel for The Regents, and the decision was unanimous. This perspective makes Nicole a long-range strategic partner. Los Angeles World Airports has used her as CEQA counsel across the modernization of LAX for nearly two decades. LA County has engaged her as special counsel on the Centennial master-planned community at Tejon Ranch, the Antelope Valley Area Plan, and the OurCounty Sustainability Plan. And the California Public Utilities Commission has relied on her as its primary CEQA and NEPA counsel since 2006, spanning more than 40 energy transmission projects.

EDUCATION

USC Gould School of Law, JD, 2005

Middlebury College, BA, *cum laude*, 2001

ADMISSIONS

California, 2005 – Bar No. 240056

U.S. District Court, Central District of California

PRACTICE AREAS

Land Use & Environmental

Air Quality

CEQA/NEPA

Climate Change & Sustainability

Energy, Utilities & Renewables

Land Entitlements

Wildlife & Natural Resources

HONORS & AWARDS

- *The Best Lawyers in America* – Environmental Law; Land Use and Zoning Law (2025–2027)
- The Green 500: 500 Leading Environmental Lawyers – *Lawdragon* (2026)
- Southern California Super Lawyers – *Super Lawyers* (2021–2025)
- 500 Leading Litigators in America – *Lawdragon* (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 – *Super Lawyers* (2014–2015)

PROFESSIONAL & COMMUNITY AFFILIATIONS

Nicole shapes how California's bench, bar, and planning profession learn environmental law.

- Instructor, Introductory and Advanced CEQA 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)
- Environmental Law Section, California Lawyers Association – Chair (2018–2019); Advisor to the Executive Committee (2019–Present); Executive Committee Member (2014–2019)
- The State Bar of California, Member

PRESENTATIONS & PUBLICATIONS

- 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)

REPRESENTATIVE EXPERIENCE

University of California (UC). Lead counsel in litigation defending UC Berkeley’s development plans and student housing needs.

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- **People’s Park Student Housing.** Lead counsel through the full litigation arc over UC Berkeley’s student and supportive housing project at People’s Park, culminating in the unanimous California Supreme Court victory clearing the project’s 1,100-plus student beds and 125 supportive housing beds and confirming AB 1307’s application to pending cases (*Make UC a Good Neighbor v. Regents*(2024) 16 Cal.5th 43). The case turned on whether CEQA applies to noise from resident students’ social activities and when off-site alternatives must be analyzed. Nicole guided the litigation through the Legislature’s intervention to its conclusion, and defeated the petitioners’ claim for private-attorney-general fees.
 - **Goldman School and Enrollment Litigation.** Defended the approval of a new academic and housing project at the Goldman School of Public Policy through a published decision in the First District (*Save Berkeley’s Neighborhoods v. Regents*(2023) 91 Cal.App.5th 872), amid the statewide uproar over whether Berkeley could enroll its

full freshman class.

Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA). CEQA counsel across the multi-billion-dollar modernization of LAX and on Van Nuys Airport planning, reviewing and defending environmental documents, negotiating with local, regional, state, and federal agencies, brokering settlements, and litigating when necessary.

- **Program Defense.** Key role in defeating three lawsuits challenging the LAX Specific Plan Amendment Study, and settled litigation against LAWA to the benefit of the airport and the City of Los Angeles ahead of the 2028 Olympic Games.
- **Landside Access Modernization Program (LAMP).** Close review of the planning documents and EIR for the multi-billion-dollar overhaul of how travelers reach LAX, including the Automated People Mover to Metro's 96th Street station, new intermodal facilities, and the consolidated rental-car center.
- **Airfield and Terminal Modernization.** In-depth review of the draft EIR for the airfield, terminal, and roadway upgrades, among the first City documents to run a vehicle-miles-traveled analysis for a major airport, alongside the Terminal 5 renovation and air cargo modernization projects.

County of Los Angeles. Special counsel to the Department of Regional Planning, the Department of Public Works, and other County departments on the County's highest-profile land use work.

- **Puente Hills Landfill Park.** Litigation over funding a regional park at the former Puente Hills landfill, the nation's largest before its 2013 closure, involving contractual, permitting, and landfill-infrastructure issues and an inverse condemnation cross-complaint, resolved through a 2021 settlement securing \$80 million from the Sanitation District to build the park.
- **Centennial at Tejon Ranch.** Counsel on the master-planned community of up to 19,333 homes and 10 million square feet of non-residential use, spanning the development agreement, the affordable housing program, EIR review, and the Planning Commission and Board resolutions, then the successful defense at trial, including on consistency with the region's transportation plan and the EIR's analysis of alternatives, which was ultimately upheld in a published appellate decision (*Center for Biological Diversity v. County of Los Angeles*(2025) 112 Cal.App.5th 317).
- **Antelope Valley Area Plan.** Defended the EIR for the plan covering roughly 1,800 square miles of the unincorporated County, built to preserve the Antelope Valley's rural character while meeting the housing and employment needs of a growing population, at trial and in the Court of Appeal.
- **OurCounty Sustainability Plan.** Defended, at trial and on appeal, the County's determination that its 2019 sustainability plan was not a project under CEQA (*Save Our Rural Town v. County of Los Angeles*).
- **Hecate Grid Battery Energy Storage.** Defended the CEQA and zoning challenge to the County's approval of a battery energy storage system that integrates renewable energy

into the grid and supports reliability, resilience, and the County's emissions goals.

- **Stormwater Interceptor.** Special counsel to the Flood Control District on the fully automated, solar-powered trash interceptor that captures plastic and litter before it reaches the ocean, settling two lawsuits before briefing and trial.

City of Pasadena. Lead counsel in the defense, at trial and on appeal, of the CEQA challenge to the City's improvements to the Lower Arroyo archery range (*Stewards of Public Land v. City of Pasadena*).

Santa Clara Valley Water District. Special counsel for more than a decade on CEQA litigation and the environmental review behind water supply, flood management, and stream stewardship projects.

California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). CEQA and NEPA counsel since 2006 across more than 40 transmission, reconductoring, and substation projects, advising on alternatives, project objectives, integration of environmental review with the Commission's administrative processes, and post-approval procedures. Project bench:

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- **LSPGC Manning 500/230 kV Substation.** IS/MND for the Manning Substation on a 40-acre site, a new 12-mile double-circuit 230 kV line to Tranquillity Switching Station, and ~7 miles of reconductoring on PG&E's Panoche-Tranquillity 230 kV lines. Nicole named as Principal & Lead Counsel.
 - **PG&E Northern San Joaquin 230 kV.** EIR for ~10.6 miles of new double-circuit 230 kV transmission, one expanded substation, one modified, one new, a new switching station, reconfiguration of four 60 kV lines, and upgrades at four remote-end substations. Nicole named as Principal & Lead Counsel.
 - **SCE Ivanpah-Control TLRR.** CEQA/NEPA review for SCE's Permit to Construct within its TLRR Program: 358 miles of 115 kV subtransmission, 360 miles of OPGW/fiber, and related work across Inyo, Kern, and San Bernardino Counties, crossing significant BLM lands.
 - **SCE Control-Silver Peak TLRR.** CEQA/NEPA review of an Eastern Sierra TLRR component in Bishop and unincorporated Inyo and Mono Counties, on Inyo National Forest and BLM lands.
 - **LS Power South Bay Project.** EIR for a new 12-mile 230 kV AC transmission line connecting PG&E's Newark Substation to Silicon Valley Power's Northern Receiving Station across Fremont, Milpitas, San José, and Santa Clara.
 - **PG&E Moraga-Oakland X 115 kV Rebuild.** EIR for upgrades to ~5 miles of four overhead 115 kV lines between Moraga and Oakland X Substations across Orinda, unincorporated Contra Costa County, Oakland, and Piedmont.
 - **LSPGC Santa Clara Valley Project.** EIR for two new HVDC terminals and associated transmission — a 13-mile 320 kV DC underground line (Grove-Skyline), a 230 kV AC tie line, and a 1.2-mile 500 kV AC underground line (Metcalf-Grove) in San José.
 - **LS Power Collinsville 500/230 kV Substation.** EIR for a new 500/230 kV Collinsville Substation near the unincorporated community of Collinsville.

- **LS Power Gates 500 kV Dynamic Reactive Support.** IS/MND for a CAISO-identified reliability-driven voltage-support project at PG&E's Gates Substation, following decommissioning of the Diablo Canyon nuclear units.
- **LS Power Round Mountain 500 kV Dynamic Reactive Support.** IS/MND for the Fern Road Substation, a ±529 MVAR dynamic reactive support facility with two STATCOM units feeding the Round Mountain–Table Mountain 500 kV lines.
- **SCE Gorman–Kern River TLRR.** IS/MND for rebuilding 65.3 miles of existing 66 kV subtransmission, including OPGW and substation modifications.
- **SoCalGas Ventura Compressor Station Modernization.** CEQA review for modernization of the Ventura Compressor Station at 1555 North Olive Street.
- **SCE California City Substation 115 kV Upgrade.** EIR for transformer replacement, two new 115 kV subtransmission lines (Kramer–Cal City and Cal City–Edwards–Holgate), new getaways, and telecom at four substations.
- **North Gila to Imperial Valley #2 500 kV.** CEQA documentation for a new 500 kV transmission line between the North Gila and Imperial Valley Substations.
- **SDG&E San Marcos to Escondido TL6975 69 kV.** IS/MND for new single-circuit overhead structures, rebuilds from single- to double-circuit, and reconductoring and re-energizing of existing conductors.
- **SCE Circle City Substation and Mira Loma–Jefferson 66 kV.** EIR and PTC for a new 66/12 kV substation, four new 66 kV source lines, a new 66 kV subtransmission line, upgrade to Mira Loma Substation, and six new 12 kV underground getaways.
- **PG&E Vierra Reinforcement.** IS/MND for expansion of the Vierra Substation in Lathrop and ~1 mile of new double-circuit 115 kV line west to the existing Tesla–Stockton Cogen Junction line.
- **PG&E Ravenswood–Cooley Landing 115 kV Reconductoring.** IS/MND for wire replacement on 1.6 miles of double-circuit 115 kV supported by nine lattice towers between Ravenswood and Cooley Landing Substations.
- **PG&E Missouri Flat–Gold Hill 115 kV Reconductoring.** IS/MND for reconductoring, pole replacement, and lattice-tower modifications in El Dorado County.
- **Horizon West / PG&E Estrella Substation and Paso Robles Area Reinforcement.** EIR and PTC for a new 230 kV substation and a new 70 kV substation in unincorporated northern San Luis Obispo County.
- **Ten West Link 500 kV (Delaney–Colorado River).** CEQA/NEPA review for a 114-mile 500 kV line, 17 miles of which is in California from Blythe eastward to the Colorado River near I-10 in western Riverside County.
- **SDG&E Cleveland National Forest.** EIR/EIS for SDG&E's Master Special Use Permit and PTC Power Line Replacement Projects in and around the Cleveland National Forest.
- **PG&E Gates–Gregg (Central Valley Power Connect) 230 kV.** Forthcoming CEQA review for the Central Valley Power Connect 230 kV Transmission Line Project.
- **SDG&E Tie Line 649 Wood-to-Steel Replacement.** IS/MND for wood-to-steel replacement, conversion of ~430 feet of underground cable under SR-125 to overhead,

and modification of access roads.

- **SDG&E TL 695 and TL 6971 Reconductor (Pendleton).** IS/MND for reconductoring in northern San Diego and southern Orange Counties.
- **SCE Santa Barbara County Reliability.** EIR for reliability upgrades, including complex issues related to construction completed years earlier without a permit.
- **PG&E South of Palermo 115 kV Reinforcement.** CEQA compliance for reconstruction of the ~60-mile Palermo–Rio Oso transmission system across Butte, Yuba, and Sutter Counties.
- **SDG&E TL674A Reconfiguration and TL666D Removal (Del Mar Substation).** CEQA review addressing safety, environmental, and NERC-reliability concerns in SDG&E's Del Mar Substation area.
- **SCE Mesa Substation.** EIR and PTC to upgrade the 220/66/16 kV Mesa Substation to a 500/220/66/16 kV substation and rebuild transmission infrastructure in the Western Los Angeles Basin Electrical Needs Area.
- **PG&E Sanger Substation Expansion.** IS/MND for expansion of the Sanger Substation in unincorporated Fresno County with a new breaker-and-a-half bus configuration.
- **PG&E Fulton–Fitch Mountain Reconductoring.** IS/MND for reconductoring a 9.9-mile section of the Fulton–Hopland 60 kV Power Line between the Fulton and Fitch Mountain Substations in central Sonoma County.
- **SDG&E Sycamore–Peñasquitos 230 kV.** EIR and CPCN for a new 230 kV line between the Sycamore Canyon and Peñasquitos Substations, with four line segments and modifications to four substations.
- **SDG&E Salt Creek Substation.** EIR for a 69/12 kV substation, an underground 69 kV loop-in (TL 6910), and additional generation at the existing CalPeak Power site.
- **SCE Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project (Segments 4–11).** EIR/EIS for construction of the 500 kV project, including National Forest land requiring a 50-year Special Use Easement.
- **PG&E Santa Cruz 115 kV Reinforcement.** IS/MND for a PTC for transmission infrastructure to improve reliability in the Santa Cruz area during outages.
- **PG&E Cressey–Gallo 115 kV.** IS/MND for a new 115 kV line between Cressey and Gallo Substations forming a loop with two other area substations.
- **SDG&E Sunrise Powerlink.** EIR/EIS for the 117-mile, \$1.883 billion 500 kV renewable-energy transmission superhighway from Imperial County to San Diego County, 1,000 MW capacity across federal and state lands.
- **SCE Devers–Palo Verde No. 2 (DPV2).** EIR/EIS and CPCN for a 500 kV line across California and Arizona through multiple cities, counties, and federal and tribal lands, with additional environmental review on the post-approval Petition for Modification.
- **PG&E Embarcadero–Potrero 230 kV.** IS/MND and CPCN for a transmission project in San Francisco, with a portion of the line installed offshore under the San Francisco Bay seafloor.
- **SCE El Casco System Project.** EIR for the El Casco Substation site and upgrades to 15.4

miles of existing 115 kV subtransmission between Redlands and Banning.

- **TNHC Talega–Escondido / Valley–Serrano 500 kV Interconnect (TE/VS).** CEQA advice for the TNHC 500 kV interconnect; project application dismissed without prejudice.
- **SCE Antelope Transmission Project Segments 2 and 3 (ATP 2–3).** EIR/EIS for new and updated electric transmission lines and substations delivering wind energy from Tehachapi to SCE's customers and the California grid.
- **PG&E Atascadero–San Luis Obispo 70 kV Reconductoring.** Legal review for replacement of deteriorating conductors and structures on a 15.5-mile segment of the Atascadero–San Luis Obispo 70 kV line.
- **SCE Red Bluff Substation.** CEQA advice on Desert Sunlight Solar Farm improvements analyzed in a BLM EIS, using the EIS in place of an EIR under CEQA Guidelines section 15225.
- **SCE Antelope–Pardee 500 kV.** EIR for the proposed transmission line, including numerous post-approval project modifications.

PUBLISHED DECISIONS

- *Center for Biological Diversity v. County of Los Angeles*(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 872
- *City of San Diego et al. v. Board of Trustees of the California State University*(2015) 61 Cal.4th 945