

2026 Environmental and Land Use Law Section Midyear Conference

ORIGINAL PROGRAM DATE
May 14 – 15, 2026

Presented in partnership with the WSBA Environmental and Land Use Section

REPORTING YOUR CREDIT

This on-demand program was a live seminar presented on May 14 – 15, 2026. If you attended or viewed the original presentation, please note that WSBA members may not claim credit for the same CLE sessions if repeated within their three-year reporting period.

DESCRIPTION

Join us on-demand for the Environmental and Land Use Midyear. Hear from professionals from around the state and region speaking on crucial topics and updates.

AGENDA

1 2026 Legislative Update

What happened in the Washington State Legislature? There were numerous environmental and land use policy bills. What passed? What failed?
Jacob Lipson – Washington House of Representatives, Olympia, WA
Kellen Wright – Office of Program Research, Olympia, WA

2 Federal Changes, State Reality: A Consultant's Perspective on Environmental Programs in Washington

This presentation explores how recent federal regulatory rollbacks affect environmental programs in Washington, from an environmental consultant's perspective. It highlights why state-administered programs largely remain stable while also addressing impacts to grants and federal funding at the state level.
Anna Poliski – Maul Foster & Alongi, Inc., Seattle, WA

3 An Emergency Because We Say So: DOE Pushes Boundaries and Buttons With 'Emergency' Orders

In May 2025, the Trump Administration began unleashing a series of emergency orders pursuant to section 202(c) of the Federal Power Act directing the continued operation of coal plants that were slated to shut down due to age or conversion to natural gas. These orders, previously only issued in times of actual emergencies, were admittedly an attempt by the Administration to prop up the coal industry at any cost — including significant increases in energy costs to consumers in impacted areas. This session will cover the legal issues at play, the basis and status of the emergency order directed at Washington's TransAlta Centralia power plant, potential impacts to consumers in Washington and throughout the Pacific Northwest, and where litigation over this controversial practice is headed.
Kelly Wood – Washington Attorney General's Office, Olympia, WA

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4 Update on Affordable Housing Initiatives in Washington

This presentation provides a comprehensive update on state legislation, local ordinances, and other efforts to unlock housing supply and affordability at all income levels. Among other things, it will cover important bills passed during the 2026 state legislative session, anticipated developments in the 2027 session, and a few city-level highlights.

Taylor Haines – Hillis Clark Martin & Peterson P. S., Seattle, WA
Joshua Friedman – Hillis Clark Martin & Peterson P. S., Seattle, WA

5 2025-2026 Land Use Case Law Update

Hear about the Growth Management Hearing Board's stadium district zoning decision, Comprehensive plan challenges, and more.

Daniel Mitchell – Seattle City Attorney's Office, Seattle, WA
Isaac Patterson – Tharsis Law P.S., Attorney, Seattle, WA

6 Navigating Land Use and Energy Demand for Data Centers in the Pacific Northwest

The expansion of data center development is shaping energy and land use planning across the Pacific Northwest. This panel brings together leaders from government, industry, and the utility sector to examine the challenges and opportunities that large-scale data center load growth presents. Join Michael Jung, Malcom McCulloch, Erika Spanton, and Megan Lin for a timely and well-informed conversation.

Michael Jung – Oregon Data Center Advisory Committee, Salem, OR
Megan Lin – Perkins Coie LLP, Bellevue, WA
Malcom McCulloch Puget Sound Energy, Bellevue, WA
Erika Spanton – Beveridge & Diamond PC, Seattle, WA
Moderator: *Dr. Glenn Blackmon – Former Director, Washington Energy Policy Office, Olympia, WA*

7 Power and Ports: Challenges and Opportunities for Washington's Public Port Districts Facing Energy Adequacy Constraints

Washington's public ports are currently facing challenges aligning competitiveness and regional economic growth with increasing energy demands. In some cases, there is not enough energy supply to support the expansion of current businesses or recruitment for new opportunities. A reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy future will require collaboration on actionable solutions, including support for energy infrastructure, generation, and efficient permitting. This presentation will highlight port's role in energy and potential new opportunities.

Carly Michiels – Washington Public Ports Association, Olympia, WA

8 Energy Storage: Siting and Permitting BESS

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) are an essential element to achieving Washington's carbon reduction goals and ensuring a resilient grid. But BESS projects often face regulatory challenges and local opposition. This session will survey the current status of BESS development in Washington, summarize regulatory trends, address land use and siting hurdles, and provide considerations when permitting BESS projects.

Ryan Thomas – Perkins Coie LLP, Bellevue, WA

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9 The Six Sovereigns' Vision for Salmon Recovery in the Columbia River Basin, and Recent Legal Updates

The Six Sovereigns (the Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs and Nez Perce Tribes, and the States of Washington and Oregon) share a vision and blueprint for basin-wide salmon recovery called the Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative (CBRI). This panel will discuss the Six Sovereigns' continued collaboration and how they are pursuing the CBRI's goals despite the Trump administration's withdrawal from the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement. Panelists will also discuss how ongoing litigation, including the recent preliminary injunction issued by the District of Oregon to protect Columbia River salmon from hydropower impacts, affects the outlook for Columbia Basin salmon recovery solutions.

Miles Johnson – Columbia Riverkeeper, Hood River, OR
Kathryn Marckworth – Yakama Nation Office of Legal Counsel, Toppenish, WA
Michael Garrity – Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Olympia, WA

10 Your Ethical Obligations When Your Expert Witness Uses AI

Your next expert witness will probably use AI. What does that mean for you? This session will talk about the ways that expert witnesses will use AI and how those uses implicate your obligations under the Rules of Professional Conduct.

Chris Baird – Headwaters Law, Seattle, WA