



Chris Locke

Partner

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SERVICES & INDUSTRIES

[Air Quality](#)

[Clean Water & Water Quality](#)

[Cleanup & Cost Recovery](#)

[Investigations and Enforcement Defense](#)

[Natural Resources & Endangered Species](#)

[NEPA and Other Environmental Reviews](#)

[Project & Property Development](#)

[Renewable Energy](#)

EDUCATION

- University of California, Berkeley, School of Law (J.D., 1981)
- University of Massachusetts, Amherst (B.A., 1975)

BAR ADMISSIONS

- California (1981)

COURT ADMISSIONS

- All California Courts
- United States Supreme Court
- United States Courts of Appeals for the First, Fifth, Ninth and Eleventh Circuits
- United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit

An accomplished trial attorney, counselor and advocate, Chris Locke has more than 35 years of experience representing clients in California and other states in all aspects of environmental law and environmental litigation. Chris is described by clients as a “master strategist and exceptional litigator,” and has been consistently recognized for his skill and efficiency in understanding and achieving clients’ goals.

- United States District Courts for all California Districts
- Numerous *Pro Hac Vice* Admissions

Chris’ practice includes defense of federal and state enforcement actions, representation in actions involving CERCLA, RCRA, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act, FIFRA, and other federal and state statutory and common law claims, as well as cost recovery litigation and citizen suit defense. Drawing on his experience as a former federal prosecutor, Chris’ practice also includes internal investigations, grand jury representation, and defense of criminal and civil enforcement actions. Chris also assists clients with regulatory compliance, permitting and representation, project development strategies, and NEPA/CEQA/land use proceedings and related litigation.

Chris’ clients span a broad range of public and private interests, including construction, energy, entertainment, manufacturing, mining, real estate development, scientific research, technology, telecommunications, transportation, and wine businesses. Throughout his career, he has been recognized by clients for his strategic approach, whether in trial or appellate courts, regulatory or land use proceedings, or long-term business planning and risk management.

Prior to private practice in environmental law, Chris served as a Trial Attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., handling cases in both federal District Courts and Circuit Courts of Appeal, and later as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of California, in San Francisco.

Representative Matters

- Defense judgment for transportation company following month-long trial in state Superfund contribution action relating to former wood treating site, in federal District Court in Washington.
- Successful challenge to Air District permit conditions for renewable energy project which, following evidentiary hearings before the Review Board, were found to be neither fair nor reasonable, and not supported by BACT criteria.
- Dismissal with prejudice, affirmed on appeal, of claims against wineries for alleged failure to warn of trace levels of arsenic, in Los Angeles Superior Court and the California Court of Appeal.
- Representation of geothermal energy company in federal and state lease and license renewals, including categorical exclusion/exemption determinations under NEPA and CEQA, in California.
- Dismissal of Clean Water Act citizen suit for alleged storm water discharge violations at university construction and industrial sites, in federal District Court in California.
- Decline of prosecution by District Attorney for alleged hazardous waste and water quality violations at surface mining facility in Alameda County, California.
- Cost of trial settlement following partial summary judgment for transportation company in mass tort action relating to alleged groundwater contamination and vapor intrusion, in Contra Costa County, California.
- Judgment on the pleadings for major refiner, and an award of sanctions against plaintiffs and their counsel, in action for alleged personal injuries and business losses from selenium discharges, in federal District Court in California.
- Decline of prosecution by the United States Attorney for alleged criminal violations of Endangered Species Act and other statutes in the importation of medicinal products.
- Successful prosecution of claims for commercial landowner following successful motions on key CERCLA and RCRA liability issues in environmental cost recovery litigation against former tenants at wood treating facility in federal District Court in Oregon.
- Cost of trial settlement for manufacturers following successful pretrial motions to exclude expert testimony and evidence in mass tort action for property damage, personal injury and fear of future illness, in Riverside County, California.
- Successful defense, resulting in judgment on the pleadings, upholding Supervisors' approval of EIR for expansion of Skywalker Ranch in Marin County, California.

Recognition and Activities

- Fellow, American College of Environmental Lawyers (ACOEL)
- Advisory Council, ACOEL Foundation
- Chair, ACOEL Honors Intern Task Force
- Steering Committee, ELI Leadership Council
- Member, ABA Section on Energy, Environment and Resources
- Member, Bar Association of San Francisco
- Member, Marin County Bar Association
- Director, Jack London Park Partners
- Former Director, Legal Aid of Marin
- Former Director, ELI
- Chambers USA – Environment (2011-present)
- Best Lawyers in America - Environmental Law; Litigation–Environmental (2011-present)
- Lawdragon Green 500: Leaders in Environmental Law (2023-present)
- Northern California Super Lawyers (2004-2008, 2010-present).
- Who's Who Legal (2022-present)