

PARTNER

Alisha M. Winterswyk

She/Her

alisha.winterswyk@bbklaw.com

(949) 263-6565 Irvine

Alisha Winterswyk is the practice group leader of Best Best & Krieger LLP's (BBK) Environmental & Natural Resources Practice Group and co-leads the firm's CEQA/NEPA practice. She advises public and private clients on a wide range of state and federal environmental laws, with particular emphasis on the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the California Coastal Act. Alisha's practice also includes advising on large-scale infrastructure projects, renewable energy developments, adaptive reuse projects, and large master-planned communities. She regularly counsels clients on the substantive and procedural requirements of CEQA and NEPA and defends agency decisions and development projects when they are challenged in state and federal court. Over the course of her career, Alisha has reviewed and drafted hundreds of CEQA documents and litigated dozens of cases.

Alisha also maintains a robust land use practice and is a trusted advisor on complex entitlement and development matters. She works with public and private clients to navigate the legal and regulatory issues that shape project planning, approvals, and implementation, including matters involving zoning, subdivisions, coastal development, annexation, and related land use requirements. Clients value her sound judgment, timely counsel, and practical, steady approach to solving difficult issues and keeping projects moving.

As Assistant City Attorney for the city of San Juan Capistrano and a former assistant city attorney for several Southern California cities, Alisha brings substantial experience advising planning, engineering, and public works departments. Alisha's vast experience in these roles gives her a practical understanding of how public agencies evaluate risk, make decisions, and keep projects moving.

In addition to her practice, Alisha has been active in teaching, professional leadership, and industry education. She served as an adjunct professor at Whittier Law School, where she taught California environmental law, and has guest lectured at several Southern California universities on environmental and land use topics. She is a frequent speaker at conferences, seminars, and continuing legal education programs, including as a panelist for the Association of Environmental Professionals' annual essential and advanced workshops.

CORE PRACTICES

- California Coastal Act
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
- Data Centers & AI Infrastructure
- Environmental Law & Natural Resources
- Environmental Litigation
- Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Municipal Law
- Special Districts
- Ports
- Airports

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Alisha is an advisor and former secretary to the California Lawyers Association Environmental Law Section Executive Committee and a past director and president of the Orange County Association of Environmental Professionals. She also serves on BBK's Culture & Community Committee.

While in law school, Alisha was editor-in-chief of the *Whittier Law Review* and a member of the Moot Court Honors Board. She also served as a judicial law clerk to the late Honorable Presiding Justice David G. Sills of the California Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division Three.

Accolades

- Wonderful Women, *Lawyers of Color*, 2023
- The Best Lawyers in America®, Land Use and Zoning Law, 2023–2027
- The Best Lawyers in America®, Municipal Law 2023–2025
- *Lawdragon*, 500 Leading Environmental Lawyers, 2025, 2026
- Latino Leader Worth Watching, *Profiles in Diversity Journal*, 2022
- *Southern California Super Lawyers Rising Stars*, Environmental, 2013–2015

EDUCATION & ADMISSIONS

Education

Whittier Law School, J.D., magna cum laude

Whittier College, B.S.

Bar Admissions

California

Professional & Community Involvement

- Association of Environmental Professionals, Member, 2006-present
- Association of Environmental Professionals, Orange County Chapter, Board Member, 2010-2021
- California Lawyers Association, Environmental Law Section Executive Committee, Advisor, 2020-present
- California Lawyers Association, Environmental Law Section Executive Committee, Secretary, 2018-2019
- Whittier Law School, California Environmental Law, Former Adjunct Professor, 2010-2015
- Western State College of Law, State & Local Government Law, Former Adjunct Professor, 2010-2012

Thought Leadership

Publications

- "Specific Plan EIRs and Exemptions for Follow-On Actions," *BBKnowledge*, Feb. 19, 2014

Presentations

- "How to Write A Great Project Description - Practical Tips for a Clear, Defensible Description," CLE International, California Environmental Quality Act: From Policy to Practice, Dec. 3, 2026
- "The Planner's Guide to Public Hearing Presentations," American Planning Association California Conference, Oct. 4, 2026
- "Mixing and Matching: How Developers are Combining State Laws to Get More Housing Built," American Planning Association California Conference, Oct. 3, 2026

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- "Riding the Exemption Wave: The Ins and Outs of Common CEQA Exemptions," Association of Environmental Professionals California State Conference, April 23, 2026
- “CEQA Trivia,” Planning Officials Forum, Shaping Orange County's Next Chapter: Housing, Sustainability and Streamlining, Feb. 13, 2025
- “CEQA Trivia,” American Planning Association California Conference, Sept. 29, 2024
- “VMT Analysis - Off the Test Track and On the Road,” Association of Environmental Professionals State Conference, March 26, 2024
- “Planning, Zoning, and Development Law Update,” University of California, Los Angeles Extension Annual Land Use Law & Planning Conference, Feb. 2, 2024
- “How to Write and EIR: A Webinar,” Association of Environmental Professionals Webinar, Aug. 17, 2023
- “Planning, Zoning and Development Law Update” and "Quick Hits: 2023," UCLA Extension Public Policy Program's Annual Land Use Law and Planning Conference, Jan. 27, 2023
- “How to Write an EIR," California Association of Environmental Professionals Webinar, July 28, 2022
- “CEQA Mid-Year Update & Litigation Strategies,” County Counsels’ Association of California Spring Land Use Study Section Conference, May 5, 2022
- “CEQA Presentation,” Webinar, Southwestern Law School, Mar. 17, 2021
- “Planning, Zoning, and Development Law: What's New from California's Judicial and Legislative Branches?” and "Quick Hits: 2022," UCLA Extension’s Annual Land Use Law & Planning Conference, Jan. 21, 2022
- “Planning, Zoning and Development Law: What's New from California's Judicial and Legislative Branches,” UCLA Extension Public Policy Program’s 35th Annual Land Use Law & Planning Conference, Jan. 8, 2021
- “The California Environmental Quality Act Turns 50: Where Have We Been, Where Are We Heading - A Trip Down Memory Lane,” Argent Communications Group California Land Use & Policy Annual Conference, Nov. 20, 2020
- “"Get With the Program: How to Draft a Programmatic Analysis that is Specific Enough to Stand the Test of Time,” Association of Environmental Professionals Virtual Conference, Nov. 10, 2020
- “Who's in Charge: CEQA Conflicts and Cap-and-Trade,” Panel, Los Angeles County Bar Association, Oct. 22, 2020
- “Advanced CEQA Workshop,” Workshop, Association of Environmental Professionals – Orange County, Mar. 6, 2020
- “Planning, Zoning, and Development Law: What’s New from California’s Judicial and Legislative Branches?” and "Quick Hits," UCLA Extension Public Policy Program's 34th Annual Land Use Law & Planning Conference, Jan. 24, 2020
- Co-Chair, UCLA Extension Public Policy Program's 33rd Annual Land Use Law and Planning Conference, Jan. 18, 2019
- “The Great Debate: Can Housing in California be Affordable and Environmentally Conscious?” American Planning Association California Conference, Oct. 7, 2018
- “Great! We’ve Been Served! Now What? How Do You As an Agency/Consultant Survive a CEQA Lawsuit,” Association of Environmental Professional's State Conference, Mar. 27, 2018
- “Update: Planning, Zoning, and Development Law – A Heapin’ Helping of Housing, and So Much More,” Land Use Law and Planning Conference Program, Jan. 19, 2018
- “Findings: How to Bridge the Analytic Gap Between Raw Evidence and the Decision,” Association of Environmental Professionals' California State Conference, May 20, 2017
- “Advanced CEQA Workshop,” Workshop, Association of Envrionmental Professionals, Mar. 3, 2017
- “Planning, Zoning, and Development Law Update,” UCLA Extension's 31st Annual Land Use Law & Planning Conference, Jan. 27, 2017

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- “The Interplay between the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA),” Law Seminars International SGMA, GSA Setup & GSP Preparation Conference, Jan. 9, 2017
- “Sustainable Groundwater Management Act 2.0: 2 Years To 2020/2022,” State Bar of California, Environmental Law Section Webinar, Nov. 17, 2016
- “Southern Sierra Tree Die-Off,” State Bar of California Environmental Law Section’s Environmental Law Conference, Oct. 22, 2016
- “Complying with CEQA, Brown Act, and Other Public Noticing Requirements,” League of California Cities’ Annual Conference, Oct. 6, 2016
- “CEQA and Noticing - Best Practices for Complying with CEQA, Brown Act and other Public Noticing Requirements,” Association of Environmental Professionals' Annual Conference, Apr. 4, 2016