

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE'S WORK, 2011-12

The Natural Resources Committee met regularly through the year, normally every two weeks. Members were Reed Benson (chair), Darcy Bushnell, Eileen Cohen, Denise Fort, Eileen Gauna, John LaVelle, Luke Pierpont (student), and Nick Pino (student). Major accomplishments for the year include:

- Offering a new course, Introduction to Natural Resources and Environmental Law, as a 2-credit elective geared to first-year students. The course attracted 30+ students (mostly 1Ls), and evaluations were generally positive. Several of the first-year students in the course now serve on the *Natural Resources Journal* staff and/or in leadership positions in the Environmental Law Society.
- Hosting a series of speakers dealing with environmental and natural resource issues, supported by a small grant from the NREEL section of the New Mexico State Bar. Speakers were Judge Matthew Reynolds (water adjudications and drought), Greg Neibert (oil and gas development and the ESA), Tracy Hughes (environmental and administrative law in New Mexico), and Barb Cosens (resolving water disputes involving agricultural, tribal, and environmental issues).
- Expanding faculty involvement in the Utton Transboundary Resources Center, with Denise Fort serving as both Utton Center director and a regular member of the law faculty, and with Barb Cosens (a tenured law professor at Idaho) serving as a visiting faculty member working in the Utton Center.
- Assisting in the recruitment of a new faculty member to teach and write in the field of oil & gas law. The hiring effort succeeded as Alex Ritchie joined the faculty (and the Natural Resources Committee) for 2012-13.
- Developing a budget for the Natural Resources and Environmental Law Program, in the total amount of \$15,000 for the 2012-13 academic year.
- Revising the requirements for the Natural Resources and Environmental Law Certificate, adding a NR/E-related drafting course as an optional item. This new addition to the "menu" should make it somewhat more feasible for students to complete the requirements, and may boost enrollment in these important courses.
- As part of NR/E curriculum planning, we considered adding a new "Environmental Law in Practice" course. The committee had previously identified this course as a top priority for building the program, and we had hoped to offer it for the first time in the 2012-13 year. Questions arose about this course, however, including the ways that it might differ from a strengthened externship program. Ultimately the committee decided that the idea needed further study and development, and we decided not to offer the course for 2012-13.
- Holding a planning retreat for the program in April, 2012, resulting in a brief review of the status of the program and a list of action items for the coming year. Some of the action items were implemented by the end of the 2011-12 academic year, while others were in progress at that time.

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Chair, Natural Resources Committee  
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