

# Environmental & Natural Resources Law Seminar

## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

*by order of presentation*

### **Mary Shahid**

*Maynard Nexsen  
Charleston, SC  
(Course Planner)*

I have practiced environmental law for more than 30 years, assisting companies, corporate entities, landowners environmental professionals and municipalities in offering state and federal permits for developmental construction. I received my BA from Vanderbilt in 1981 and my JD from the University of South Carolina in 1984.

### **Michael S. Traynham**

*Maynard Nexsen  
Columbia, SC*

Michael Traynham is an experienced environmental law attorney based in the Columbia, South Carolina office of Maynard Nexsen. Prior to joining the firm in 2020, Michael served as Chief Counsel for Environmental Quality Control at the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. His responsibilities included overseeing legal services for the Bureau of Water, Bureau of Air Quality, and Bureau of Land and Waste Management, as well as advising agency staff on environmental permitting and enforcement issues affecting the State of South Carolina.

Michael received his B.S. from the University of South Carolina Honors College and his J.D. from the University of South Carolina School of Law. He lives in Irmo and volunteers with Scouts BSA Pack 95 and Troop 91 (mostly to go camping with his three girls) and in various ministries at Crossroads Church. He is a past chair of the South Carolina Bar Environmental and Natural Resource Section and the Administrative and Regulatory Law Committee and is currently a Council Member with the South Carolina Bar Government Law Section.

**Nathan Haber**

*Duke Energy  
Greenville, SC*

Nathan Haber is currently Associate General Counsel for Duke Energy, primarily focusing on South Carolina regulatory issues. Prior to working at Duke Energy, Nathan served as the Director of the Water Quality Division at the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control as well as previously serving as Assistant General Counsel for the SCDHEC where he focused primarily on matters pertaining to water and coastal issues. Nathan is a former Chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Section of the South Carolina Bar and currently serves as a Secretary. Nathan also co-taught Environmental Law at Charleston Law School as an Adjunct Professor, prior moving to Columbia. Nathan holds a bachelor's degree from the University of South Carolina, a law degree from Touro Law School, and an LL.M. in Environmental Law from Vermont Law School. Nathan is admitted to practice law in New York and South Carolina.

**Lesley Firestone**  
*Moore & Van Allen, PLLC*  
*Charleston, SC*

Lesley regularly represents clients before the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services in matters involving Brownfield Agreements, underground storage tanks, solid waste regulations, NPDES permitting, and hazardous waste compliance. She also counsels clients on wetlands and coastal resource management issues before the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the S.C. Bureau of Coastal Management, as well as Endangered Species Act matters before the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In addition to her advisory work, Lesley represents clients in litigation, handling requests for information, enforcement actions before administrative agencies, and challenges to permitting decisions before administrative agencies and the South Carolina Administrative Law Court, as well as appeals to the South Carolina Court of Appeals and Supreme Court.

She also has extensive experience representing lenders and developers in the financing and development of solar farm projects, guiding clients through permitting, regulatory requirements, and environmental risk management to support sustainable energy initiatives.

### **Notable**

- *Best Lawyers in America*, Administrative / Regulatory Law, 2023-2026; Energy Law, 2024-2026; Environmental Law, 2024-2026, Real Estate, 2025-2026, Commercial Litigation, 2025-2026
- *Lawdragon 500 X – The Next Generation*, 2025
- *South Carolina Lawyers Weekly*, Influential Women of Law, 2025
- *Greenville Business Magazine*, Legal Elite, 2025
- *Charleston Regional Business Journal* Women of Influence Honoree, 2024
- *Charleston Regional Business Journal*, 2020 Forty Under 40 winners, 2020
- *South Carolina Super Lawyer* Rising Star, Environmental, 2019-2021
- University of South Carolina Law School CALI Awards: Advanced Legal Research; Secured Transactions; Death Penalty Seminar
- Leadership Charleston class of 2020, Charleston Metro Chambers of Commerce
- Member, American Bar Association *Real Property, Trust and Estate Law Journal*, 2009-2011
- Phi Beta Kappa, University of South Carolina
- Page, South Carolina State Senator Greg Ryberg, 2006-2007
- In State Consultant and author for South Carolina Chapter, Brownfields Law and Practice, Matthew Bender and Co., Inc., 1998

## **Rita Bolt Barker**

*Wyche, PA  
Greenville, SC*

Rita Bolt Barker is a shareholder with Wyche, PA, in the firm's Greenville office. An experienced environmental attorney, she represents clients in federal and state courts, as well as before the US Environmental Protection Agency and the SC Department of Environmental Services. Her varied experience includes advising clients on matters arising under federal and state environmental statutes. Rita also assists clients to redevelop contaminated sites and counsels clients on assessing environmental risks and incentives associated with corporate transactions, including mergers, acquisitions, and real estate deals.

Rita has written and presented on numerous environmental law topics and has been an adjunct professor at Clemson University and Furman University. She was an editor of Environmental Law in South Carolina (4th ed.). Rita is a Council member of the American Bar Association's Section of Environment, Energy and Resources and received the Section's Distinguished Environmental Advocate Award. She is a Fellow in the American College of Environmental Lawyers and presently serves as the ABA Liaison for the SC Bar Environment & Natural Resources Section. Rita earned her J.D. from Harvard Law School and her B.A. from Clemson University.

## **Leslie Lenhardt**

*S.C. Environmental Law Project  
Mount Pleasant, SC*

Leslie has been with SCEP since 2019. She attended law school at the University of South Carolina School of Law and has worked for SCDES and in private practice in environmental law.

## **Joe Owens**

*Burr & Forman, LLP  
Charleston, SC*

Joe Owens is a partner in the firm's Administrative, Government and Regulatory practice group. He works with clients on matters involving business law, administrative law, environmental law, and land use. Joe's practice includes emphasis on regulatory and administrative compliance, environmental permitting, site development, and entitlement for industry and governmental entities, as well as administrative and civil litigation.

In his land use practice, Joe represents clients in securing entitlement approval for large-tract developments with various agencies and governments in South Carolina. In that capacity, Joe has assisted property owners and developers obtain rezoning, infrastructure agreements, or related entitlements for a variety of significant industrial, commercial, and planned use developments, primarily in the Charleston Tri-County region.

Joe's practice also focuses on coastal property law, where he brings extensive experience advising beachfront property owners and associations in regulatory compliance, project permitting, and administrative matters under state and federal laws in South Carolina.

Joe received his J.D., cum Laude, from the University of South Carolina School of Law and his B.A. from Clemson University. While in Law school, he served as President of the Environmental Law Society and received the CALI Award for South Carolina Administrative Law. Prior to private practice, Joe served as a law clerk for the Honorable William P. Keesley in the 11th Judicial Circuit for South Carolina.