

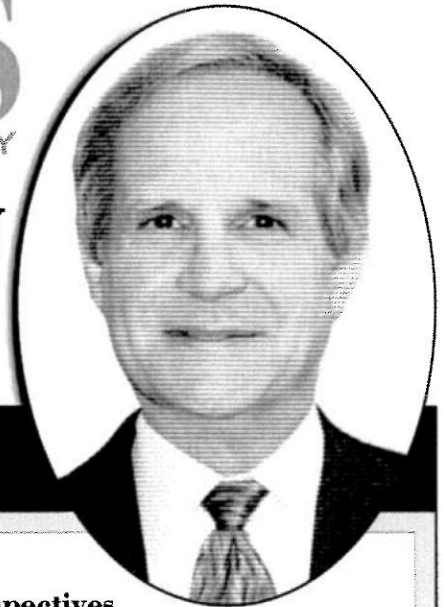
TEN LEADERS

I N N E W J E R S E Y

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ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

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EDUCATION

Rutgers College, BA, 1967
Rutgers University Law School, Newark, JD, 1970

AFFILIATIONS

Michael Gross is a member of the New Jersey Bar Association and the American Bar Association. He heads Giordano, Halleran & Ciesla's environmental law section, which co-wrote the environmental-law portion of the New Jersey Land Use and Environmental Law Treatise. He is also co-author of the regular New Jersey Water Law Survey updates to the Water and Water Rights Treatise. Gross has also served as an adjunct faculty member of Rutgers University and Monmouth University graduate programs, lecturing on Environmental and Land Use Law. He has lectured widely before such groups as the Institute for Continuing Legal Education, the New Jersey Builders Association, the State Chamber of Commerce, and the New Jersey Society of Real Estate Appraisers. He has served as co-host of "Environmental Straight Talk," a cable-television program.

BIOGRAPHY

Steady and measured, yet passionate about his work, Michael Gross plays a key role in New Jersey environmental law — not only for his clients and his firm, but also as a policymaking force. Indeed, the 57-year-old Newark native sustains a far-reaching presence, representing high-profile clients, lobbying the state on environmental issues, and communicating the fundamentals of environmental law to constituencies throughout the state. Further, he is the manager of a firm with one of the best-known environmental practices in the state. In fact, the firm has recruited and trained some of the best regulatory attorneys and litigators in the field today. In law school ("I was the first member of my family to go to graduate school."), Gross recalls that environmental law was offered only as a seminar, but at the time "factories were belching smoke throughout the state." He clerked briefly for Red Bank Judge Appellate Theodore LaBrecque, and then for four years (1971-75) served as deputy attorney general, representing the DEP. As deputy AG, Gross tried some of the state's first major cases against corporate polluters. Among his adversary defendants were Owens-Corning Fiberglas and Crown Cork & Seal, both of which had top-notch legal counsel, and provided challenges that earned him early career spurs. Gross joined Giordano, Halleran & Ciesla shortly thereafter, and by the late 80s had brought the firm many of the state's most important clients/constituencies: The N.J. Builders Association and K. Hovnanian Companies, among others. He remains general counsel to the NJ Shore Builders Association and environmental counsel to the NJBA. Gross's often low-key manner only partly conceals a wry wit and humor. Indeed, stage presence landed him a cable-television show on environmental issues, and he has lectured frequently on an array of environmental matters. Even today, as Gross helps oversee the management of his firm, he remains immersed in the law, handling environmental compliance issues for clients involving water, CAFRA and Pinelands matters. Though the firm maintains a substantial litigation department, Gross continues to appear before local planning and zoning boards on behalf of clients. Gross is an enthusiastic runner; he and his wife enjoy traveling, and they have two grown children. He lives in Wayside, Ocean Township, New Jersey.

Michael Gross: Observations & Perspectives

Many of the great strides in environmental law - stringent standards, meaningful enforcement, voluntary and coercive hazardous waste remediation - began here in New Jersey. When I began my career it was all just beginning and in many respects, thirty years later, environmental law continues to evolve.

For one thing, there's still a lack of understanding about the role of home builders, who are often advancing positive social policy on their own. A no-growth mentality might translate into certain short-term benefits, but in the long run it will be detrimental. We have worked toward a coherent environmental policy, but to a large degree we still don't have a coherent housing policy. A lot of people cannot afford housing in our state. Our kids can't find homes they can afford.

It is a far-reaching issue in New Jersey. The state still has to figure out how to efficiently and effectively develop Brownfield properties. For families to live in such developments there must be a viable infrastructure, such as schools and transportation. An urban development is not a success unless it attracts families. And that's a chicken-and-egg problem: Infrastructure has to be in place to attract families, but that infrastructure won't be there unless families are there to demand it.

My clients respect the process of permitting and environmental compliance, but frequently they'll ask me: How long is this going to take? Time is money. Often permits will come back in 90 days, but more complicated requests can take two years, perhaps even four or five years, to get approval. A lengthy approval process can get costly, and a client must have the resources to

stay the course. And of course, the best way to ensure a speedy resolution is to have a conforming application.

Much of my job involves effective communication: I give my clients as much information as possible. I'm frequently sending out letters, addressing technical issues - but I make sure those issues are relevant to each client. Often we'll meet at the highest levels of the DEP to

address a client issue. My practice is geared to clients making proper business decisions based on the information I provide them, so that they may move forward. Many of my clients have a lot at stake.

I believe in "the little things" that properly serve clients. For example, every day I re-tape my voice-mail message so that callers know where I am and what I'm doing. And I make every effort to return calls promptly. Everyone's time is valuable. We work hard to make ourselves an effective resource for our clients.

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