



Environmental
Law Center

VERMONT LAW & GRADUATE SCHOOL

Year in Review



Our Mission

Environmental challenges have never been more pressing or more complex. The Environmental Law Center and the Maverick Lloyd School for the Environment at Vermont Law and Graduate School prepare our students to make an impact.

The Environmental Law Center (ELC) oversees the most comprehensive graduate environmental law program in the country. Ranked among the nation's best by *U.S. News & World Report*, our environmental law program includes six legal clinics, seven centers and institutes, 60+ environmental law courses, and 76 environmental faculty who are dedicated to cultivating a rich and cooperative learning community.



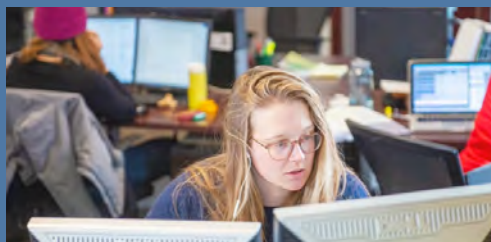
“Our graduates are on the front lines of environmental advocacy and justice, clean energy policy, the sustainable food movement, and animal protection. We are training a new generation of leaders prepared to confront our many environmental challenges with clear-eyed optimism and determination to build a more sustainable and just future.”

Christophe Courchesne

*Director of the Environmental Law Center and Environmental Advocacy Clinic,
Associate Dean for Environmental and Experiential Programs, and Associate Professor of Law*

PROGRAMS AND CLINICS

Maverick Lloyd School for the Environment



Building on Vermont Law and Graduate School's depth of expertise in law and policy focused on the environment, clean energy, sustainable food and agriculture, and animal protection, the Maverick Lloyd School for the Environment trains students to create solutions to the complex environmental challenges facing communities today. The interdisciplinary graduate curriculum brings climate change and economic justice to the forefront.

 [READ MORE HERE](#)

Environmental Advocacy Clinic

Established in 2003, the **Environmental Advocacy Clinic** (EAC) trains the next generation of environmental attorneys with practical, real-world opportunities to learn the skills and strategies of environmental litigation and advocacy. In the EAC, students represent public-interest clients including leading national, regional, and local nonprofit organizations under the supervision of experienced lawyers, working on cases involving important and challenging environmental and natural resources issues.

This year, the EAC filed an **amicus brief in federal court on behalf of its client Vermont Public Interest Research Group**, defending Vermont's first-in-the-nation Climate Superfund law, which seeks to secure funding for climate adaptation efforts from responsible fossil fuel companies. The EAC also worked with the forest protection group Standing Trees to challenge unlawful practices in the management of public forests in **Vermont** and **New Hampshire**.

 [READ MORE HERE](#)

Environmental Justice Clinic

Founded in 2019, the **Environmental Justice Clinic** (EJC) has worked in partnership with community organizations, Tribal nations, coalitions, and other stakeholders to support multi-strategy campaigns to combat environmental racism and advance community health and human rights. Student clinicians develop and implement legal, administrative, and policy strategies to address the disproportionate impacts of environmental pollution and land dispossession on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and low-income communities. Students also engage in research and advocacy to support new law and policy on environmental justice. Student clinicians practice a client-centered, community-lawyering approach, building relationships with community-based clients and partners.

This year, the **EJC filed an amicus brief in *Held v. State of Montana*** in the Montana Supreme Court on behalf of five federally recognized tribes and two Indigenous education scholars. The case was brought by 16 youth plaintiffs, represented by Our Children's Trust, who said their rights under the Montana Constitution to a "clean and healthful environment," were being violated by the state's promotion and use of fossil fuels.

 [READ MORE HERE](#)

Institute for Energy and the Environment

The **Institute for Energy and the Environment** (IEE) is focused on teaching and researching the law and policy of the clean energy transition. The IEE is a center for graduate research on the transition to a clean energy future and home to the year-round pro bono transactional law Energy Clinic. The clinic assists local communities in accessing the energy transition, which includes more than 15 community solar projects commissioned or under development in Vermont and New Hampshire.

This year, the **Energy Clinic** partnered with the Randolph Area Community Development Corporation in Vermont to help secure permits and grants, advise on and secure tax credits, and draft zoning amendments that were critical in securing a 21-unit energy-resilient housing development at Salisbury Square.

“What a perfect learning opportunity for our students. They immediately went to work and successfully drafted new zoning bylaws, which were critical in removing roadblocks for the project and in securing a Neighborhood Development Area designation from the state”

- **Jenny Carter JD'86/MSL'87**

Senior Attorney, Institute for Energy and the Environment; Professor of Law

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Center for Agriculture and Food Systems

The **Center for Agriculture and Food Systems** (CAFS) creates publicly accessible resources and provides law and policy support to partners across the food system. Over the last year, CAFS projects have focused on food and land access, institutional procurement, agricultural production, and food system workers. Recent publications include the “**State Farm to School Policy Handbook: 2002-2023**” (co-produced with the National Farm to School Network) and “**Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production: A Guide to Local Policy**,” which scans municipal policies relevant to urban food production in cities nationwide.

CAFS is home to the VLGS **Food and Agriculture Clinic**, where students support CAFS’s research and policy analysis alongside CAFS’s staff, faculty, and community partners. This year, for example, student clinicians **Emily Starobin JD’25** and **Laura Ataa Agyekumhene LLM’25** co-authored the issue brief “**Are Fair Labor Labels Trustworthy? Unpacking the Truth Behind Ethical Claims.**”



Student clinicians collaborate with CAFS staff, including Food and Agriculture Clinic Director Emma Scott, to provide legal and policy counsel to food system organizations.

 [READ CAFS’S ANNUAL REPORT HERE](#)

Historic Gift Supports VLGS’s Environmental Work

This year, Vermont Law and Graduate School received its largest-ever donation from an anonymous international foundation dedicated to solving environmental challenges. This gift aims to reinforce and grow the school’s expertise in animal protection policy and agriculture and food systems. In addition, the funding will focus on research and advocacy to combat the expansion of harmful aquaculture.

 [LEARN MORE HERE](#)

Animal Law and Policy Institute



The **Animal Law and Policy Institute** trains tomorrow's animal advocacy leaders through education, scholarship, policy development, community engagement, and litigation. Engaging with advocacy organizations, communities, journalists, and policymakers, the institute serves as a resource hub for animal law and policy issues through mentorship, as well as real-world training and experiences. Because of the interconnections between justice movements, animals, humans, and the environment, the institute closely collaborates with the school's other environmental programs.

This year, the **Farmed Animal Advocacy Clinic** worked on numerous projects aimed at combating the expansion of harmful aquaculture, including producing research and white papers for national and international partners on a range of issues, including genetic pollution caused by salmon farming.

 [LEARN MORE HERE](#)

Environmental Tax Policy Institute



The **Environmental Tax Policy Institute** analyzes the ways in which taxation can be used to address environmental problems. The institute serves as a resource to inform the public and private sectors, non-governmental organizations, and academia about the role of environmental taxes at local, state, and federal levels.

This year, Fulbright Visiting Researcher **Rodolfo Salassa Boix** (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona) spent three months at VLGS working on the taxation and pricing of maritime emissions. Hosted by Environmental Tax Policy Institute Director and Professor **Janet Milne**, Professor Salassa Boix delivered a **Hot Topics lecture** to the community and took part in multiple seminars and academic events at VLGS, significantly enriching his research.

 [LEARN MORE HERE](#)

U.S.-Asia Partnerships for Environmental Law

The **U.S.-Asia Partnerships for Environmental Law** program was founded to further the work of environmental rule of law and public participation within China and Asia to address critical environmental and energy challenges and to improve enforcement of policy, laws, and regulations.

This year, the program—in collaboration with the Transnational Environmental Law Clinic—continued its work to share sustainable best practices in environmental protection and energy regulation and work with policymakers and educators to develop the next generation of environmental advocates.

 [LEARN MORE HERE](#)

SPREADING ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE

Colloquium on Environmental Scholarship

Since 2009, Vermont Law and Graduate School has hosted its annual Colloquium on Environmental Scholarship. This event offers environmental law scholars from around the world the opportunity to present their works-in-progress, get feedback from their colleagues, and meet and interact with those who are also teaching and researching in areas related to environmental and natural resources law, or any related specialty areas.



The 16th annual colloquium welcomed over 30 panelists and more than 60 attendees.

Alumni in Energy Symposium

The 12th Annual VLGS Alumni in Energy Symposium returned to Climate Week NYC. Titled “Navigating Challenges to the Energy Transition,” this year’s event had record attendance and featured in-depth discussions on the energy impacts of data center growth, the challenges facing independent power producers, and investing in climate tech, plus, a keynote from **Jamie Van Nostrand**, outgoing chair of the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities.



 [WATCH THE 2025 SYMPOSIUM](#)

Norman Williams Distinguished Lecture in Land Use Planning and the Law

The 20th Annual Norman Williams Distinguished Lecture in Land Use Planning and the Law was presented by **Dr. Sarah Mills**, director of the Center for EmPowering Communities and Clinical Associate Professor of Practice of Urban Planning at the A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Michigan. Her lecture, entitled “Navigating an Energy Transition,” focused on lessons learned from rural communities grappling with the siting of new energy facilities.

 [WATCH THE NORMAN WILLIAMS DISTINGUISHED LECTURE](#)



Environmental Honorary Degree Lecture

VLGS was honored to welcome one of this generation’s most important climate litigators and leaders, **Julia Olson**, co-executive director and chief legal counsel for Our Children’s Trust, to deliver the 2025 Honorary Degree lecture, “Children’s Climate Rights: Foundation of Democracy,” as the environmental speaker during VLGS’s 49th Commencement festivities in May.



 [WATCH OLSON’S LECTURE HERE](#)

Hothouse Earth Podcast

This year, Hothouse Earth, VLGS's in-house podcast featuring thought-provoking conversations on pressing topics in environmental law and policy, presented engaging discussions on a range of topical environmental subjects. In 2025, we dove deep into the management of Grand Canyon National Park with Park Superintendent **Edward Keable JD'86**, found reasons for optimism in environmental justice with **Marianne Engelman-Lado** and **Sharmila Murthy**, and explored disaster law with **Dr. Kirsten Bookmiller JD'26**—among other timely topics.



Edward Keable JD'86 at Grand Canyon National Park.

 [LISTEN TO HOTHOUSE EARTH EPISODES HERE](#)

Vermont Journal of Environmental Law

Vermont Journal of Environmental Law (VJEL) is a student-run organization that provides a forum to discuss contemporary environmental issues and environmental justice.

VJEL also released its annual Top 10 Watch List, a selection of 10 articles considered to be the most pressing environmental law issues of the year. Co-authored by staff editors and partnering faculty, this publication serves as a vital resource for practitioners, policymakers, and academics navigating the rapidly evolving field of environmental law.



 [READ VJEL PUBLICATIONS HERE](#)



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December News

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SUMMER SESSION IN VERMONT

Hot Topics in Environmental Law Lecture Series

Throughout the summer, invited experts, distinguished scholars, and media fellows deliver presentations on a variety of current issues in environmental law and policy as a part of the VLGS Summer Session.

This year's series featured 16 talks on topics such as the climate crisis, environmental justice, and animal law. Experts presented on a unique range of topics, such as Distinguished Energy Law Summer Scholar **Mijin Cha's** lecture, "A Just Transition for Whom? Understanding the Opportunities and Limitations of a Just Energy Transition" and Animal Law Media Fellow **Marin Scotten's** "Toxic Sewage Sludge: How the Biosolid Fertilizer Industry is Poisoning Farm Animals."

 [WATCH HOT TOPICS HERE](#)

Distinguished Summer Scholars

Each year, leaders in the fields of environmental law, climate law, energy law, and animal advocacy are invited to campus as distinguished summer scholars.

The 2025 Scholars in residency were **Madison Condon**, Boston University School of Law (Climate Law Scholar); **Mijin Cha**, University of California Santa Cruz (Energy Law Scholar); **Marianne Engelman Lado**, director of the Environmental Justice Lab, New York University School of Law (Environmental Law Scholar); and **Kristen Stilt**, Brooks McCormick Jr. Animal Law and Policy Program, Harvard Law School (Animal Law Scholar).

Environmental Media Fellows

The Environmental Media Fellowship is a unique opportunity open to full-time journalists who cover issues such as natural resources, energy, food systems, animal protection policy, and other related subjects. Media fellows are invited to audit a summer course, meet with our faculty, and deliver a lecture in the Hot Topics in Environmental Law series.

This year's cohort of environmental media fellows included **Dana Drugmand MELP'17**, an independent climate journalist who runs Climate in the Courts; **Julia Sklar**, who covers climate science and coastal issues; and **Valerie Volcovici**, who covers energy and environmental policy for *Reuters*.

The animal law media fellows were **Stephanie Hanes**, lead climate change and environment writer for *The Christian Science Monitor*; **Julianne Hill**, an award-winning writer and producer for the *ABA Journal*; and **Marin Scotten**, an independent journalist focusing on industrial farming policy and its impact on animals.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACULTY

PROGRAM DIRECTORS



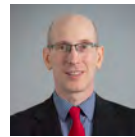
Laurie Beyranevand JD'03

Director, Center for Agriculture and Food Systems; Pescosolido Professor of Food and Agricultural Law and Policy



Christophe Courchesne

Director, Environmental Law Center; Director, Environmental Advocacy Clinic; Associate Dean, Environmental and Experiential Programs



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Acting Director, Maverick Lloyd School for the Environment; Professor of Law



Janet Milne

Director, Environmental Tax Policy Institute; Professor of Law



Delcianna Winders

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Visiting Professor of Law



Todd Howland

Interim Director and Visiting Professor of Law, Environmental Justice Clinic



Kirt Mayland LLM'05

Visiting Professor of Law, Institute for Energy and the Environment



Liz Turner

Visiting Professor of Law



Lindi von Mutius JD'08

Visiting Professor of Law, Environmental Justice Clinic



PARENTEAU CLIMATE ACTION FELLOWS

This was the inaugural year for the Parenteau Climate Action Fellowship, which honors the climate law leadership of Professor of Law Emeritus and Senior Fellow for Climate Policy **Patrick Parenteau**. In the fall, we welcomed **Rachel Westrate** and **Terrence Neal**, who are contributing to the work of our environmental clinics and engaging in independent research.

 [READ MORE HERE](#)

MORE ENVIRONMENTAL FACULTY AND STAFF

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Rachel Westrate

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Director, Master of Legal Studies Program; Associate Professor of Law





VERMONT

LAW & GRADUATE SCHOOL

Vermont Law and Graduate School is celebrating 50 years.
We educate students with the purpose of creating leaders
who use the power of the law to make a difference.



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