



Lathrop GPM Strengthens Tort, Insurance & Environmental Practice with Four Additions, Three Promotions

January 18, 2024

(January 18, 2024) - Lathrop GPM has bolstered its Tort, Insurance & Environmental Practice Group with the addition of four attorneys over the past six months, as well as the elevation of three attorneys, effective Jan. 1, 2024.

The new hires include counsel Susan McMichael and associate Blaine Bengtson in Denver, and associates Gillian Wener and Caitlin Albaugh in Boston and Kansas City, respectively. Elevations to partner include counsel Jessica Rosell in Kansas City and associate Matthew Walker in Chicago. Associate Kayla Brewe in St. Louis also will elevate to counsel.

"We're thrilled to build on the deep knowledge and experience of our environmental and toxic tort group with the addition of new attorneys and elevation of talent within our ranks," said Mara Cohara, leader of the firm's Tort, Insurance & Environmental Practice Group. "This recent growth reflects our ongoing commitment to attracting and developing a talented team to meet growing client needs around these complex, challenging and often high-stakes matters."

About the new hires

Susan McMichael is a seasoned environmental attorney who focuses on environmental regulatory, permitting and compliance matters. She has in-depth knowledge of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), including regulatory compliance and clean-up requirements. McMichael has led causal investigations, along with technical experts, to develop solutions for a large facility to identify, correct and prevent future RCRA non-compliances. She is a former assistant general counsel for the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED). She holds a J.D. from the University of New Mexico School of Law, and a B.A. from the University of Colorado, Boulder. McMichael is currently licensed in New Mexico and her admission to the Colorado bar is pending.

Gillian Wener advises on all areas of environmental law, including regulatory compliance, due diligence, enforcement actions and litigation. Wener has an extensive background in regulatory compliance and utilizes her prior experience working for state environmental departments to help clients navigate enforcement



issues, permit appeals and other environmental matters in federal court, state court and administrative tribunals. Prior to joining the firm, Wener served as an Assistant Attorney General in the Environment, Natural Resources & Agriculture (ENRA) Division of the Michigan Department of Attorney General. She holds a J.D. from The George Washington University Law School, and a B.A. from the University of Michigan - Ann Arbor. Wener is currently licensed in Michigan and her admission to the Massachusetts bar is pending.

Blaine Bengtson focuses his practice on environmental law, including regulatory compliance, transactional issues and litigation, as well as litigation involving contaminants and toxic tort claims, and some complex civil litigation. He assists clients with environmental matters under federal and state law, and in judicial and administrative forums, and has deep experience with environmental regulatory work. Bengtson is a member of the firm's PFAS team, where he helps monitor state and federal regulation of PFAS and assists clients in assessing their current and future liability. He holds a J.D. from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law, and a B.A. from the University of Kansas.

Caitlin Albaugh is a first-year associate and recently received her J.D. from the University of Kansas School of Law and a B.A. from the University of Kansas. Albaugh joined the firm's Kansas City office as an associate after working as a summer associate in 2022 and now advises clients regarding insurance and environmental tort matters.

About the new promotions

Jessica Rosell - promoted from Counsel to Partner on Jan. 1 - concentrates her practice on environmental, litigation, and appellate matters, representing clients in negotiating administrative claims with federal and state environmental agencies, advising clients in initiating and maintaining environmental regulatory compliance programs, and assisting in complex environmental and toxic tort litigation in federal and state courts. Rosell's extensive experience handling highly technical issues in state and federal regulatory matters and in litigation uniquely positions her to advise on emerging contaminants, particularly PFAS issues related to due diligence, regulatory compliance, remediation, and litigation avoidance. Rosell holds a J.D. from Washington University School of Law and a B.A. from Trinity University.

Matthew Walker - promoted from Associate to Partner on Jan. 1 - concentrates his practice on all areas of environmental law including litigation and regulatory compliance. Walker is well-versed in litigation involving the core environmental laws, including suits under the Clean Water Act, contaminants and toxic tort, enforcement actions for waste violations and issues surrounding state and federal CERCLA claims. He also focuses on monitoring state and federal investigation and regulation of PFAS, and helps businesses develop strategies to adapt to regulatory developments. Walker has been instrumental in helping to launch the practice group's first blog, the PFAS Playbook. Walker previously served as an Assistant Attorney General with the Environmental Bureau of the Illinois Attorney General's Office where he litigated matters relating to



environmental, land use and energy disputes. He earned his J.D. *cum laude* from University of Illinois in 2016 from where he also received a B.S. in Natural Resources and Environmental Science in 2013 and an M.S. in 2016.

Kayla Brewe - elevated from Associate to Counsel - focuses her practice on environmental, toxic tort and product liability litigation, including Superfund sites and odor nuisance class actions. She also assists with contribution claims under CERCLA and state counterparts. She received her J.D. from the University of Missouri School of Law in 2016 where she was named to the Order of Barristers and served as the note and comment editor of the *Journal of Environmental and Sustainability Law*. She received a B.A. *summa cum laude* from the University of Central Missouri in 2013.