

PRESS RELEASES | MAR 15, 2017

# BB&K Environmental Team Wins California Lawyer Attorney of the Year Award

Congratulations to Michelle Ouellette, Sarah Owsowitz and Jennifer Lynch



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**Media Contact:** Denise Nix • 213-787-2552 • [denise.nix@bbklaw.com](mailto:denise.nix@bbklaw.com)

**RIVERSIDE, Calif.** — The *Daily*

*Journal's* California Lawyer of the Year Award in the Environmental category was given today to a team of Best Best & Krieger attorneys. Partner Michelle Ouellette, along with Of Counsel Sarah Owsowitz and Associate Jennifer Lynch, were recognized with this prestigious award for their successful representation of a water district in its partnership with a private landowner to pump fresh groundwater from an aquifer in the Mojave Desert. The water would otherwise become unusable after mixing with highly salinated brine water and evaporating. The project will prevent the waste of water and transport it to Southern California water customers, including in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties.

A series of unsuccessful lawsuits raised challenges to the project, including under the California Environmental Quality Act and that the Santa Margarita Water District, BB&K's client, was wrongly identified as the lead agency under CEQA. "CEQA is complicated and so are water district partnerships," Ouellette told the *Daily Journal*. "This project provides a stable water source."

Public-private partnership projects, like this one between SMWD and Cadiz, Inc., are still unique although becoming more popular. "Increasingly financially strapped public agencies need to work with private entities to get things done," Ouellette said. "We felt very confident about our legal arguments, but with CEQA, one never knows."

[Read the entire article by clicking here.](#)

## People



**Michelle Ouellette**

PARTNER

(951) 826-8373



**Sarah E. Owsowitz**

OF COUNSEL

(925) 977-3308



**Jennifer J. Lynch**

OF COUNSEL

(949) 263-6580

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Learn more about the project and the legal challenges by clicking here.

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Water

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