

UNMSOL Natural Resources/Environmental Law in a Nutshell

This Nutshell provides details of the many choices in these fields of study. Faculty members of the Natural Resources Committee will be pleased to discuss any of these opportunities.

The Natural Resources and Environmental Law Certificate Program allows students to gain a more comprehensive understanding of natural resources and environmental issues and problems. Its curriculum includes all law school courses concerning natural resources and the environment, as well as several related graduate courses offered through other academic units on campus (e.g., biology, economics, civil engineering, geography, geology, political science, public administration, architecture and planning, and the Water Resources Program).

The Certificate

Beginning with the class of 2015, the following are the requirements for the Natural Resources and Environmental Law Certificate (the “Certificate”):

21 credits that include:

- Mandatory Core Courses: 2 out of the following 3: Administrative Law, Environmental Law (survey), Natural Resources Law.
- Mandatory: Fulfilling either the “seminar paper” or the “drafting course” portion of the law school’s writing requirement on a topic relating to natural resources or environmental law. The Natural Resources Committee will identify particular seminars for which any completed paper will be recognized for the certificate; a paper written for another seminar may qualify, but only with the approval of the Committee. Only Committee-approved drafting courses will satisfy this requirement. Questions about whether a writing seminar or drafting course qualifies should be directed to a Natural Resources and Environmental Law faculty member.
- Mandatory: satisfactory completion of at least one of the following:
 - An externship in the natural resources or environmental field.
 - *Natural Resources Journal* membership (six credits total).
 - A Committee-approved, non-law graduate level course on a natural resources/environmental topic.
 - Pace Environmental Moot Court competition or NALC Animal Law Moot Court competition (related to a wildlife or other natural resources issue).
 - Committee approved, faculty-supervised individual research in natural resources/environmental issues (minimum 2 credits).
- Additional courses:
 - See [list of courses](#) that count toward the 21 credit requirement. Courses not on this list may count toward the 21 credits if approved by the Natural Resources Committee. Questions about unlisted courses should be directed to a Natural Resources and Environmental Law faculty member.
 - With prior approval from the Natural Resources Committee, graduate-level courses from other UNM departments may satisfy as many as six (6) hours of the course requirements.

Before students can receive the Certificate, they must submit a completed Record of Completion for the Certificate and an unofficial transcript to the registrar. These documents should be submitted to the registrar *within the first two (2) weeks of the student's last semester* in law school. For additional questions regarding the Natural Resources and Environmental Law Certificate, please check with the Natural Resources Committee.

Natural Resources and Environmental Law Faculty Pre-Tenured, Tenured, Research, and Emeritus

- Mindy Benson – Associate Professor, Geography Department
- Reed Benson – UNM Law Faculty
- Marsha Baum – UNM Law Faculty
- Denise Fort - UNM Law Faculty Emerita
- Eileen Gauna - UNM Law Faculty
- Em Hall - UNM Law Faculty Emeritus
- Adrian Oglesby - Director, Utton Center
- Alex Ritchie – UNM Law Faculty
- Cliff Villa – UNM Law Faculty
- Jeanette Wolfley – UNM Law Faculty (on leave)

Natural Resources Faculty Committee

The Natural Resources Faculty Committee, which has two student representatives, continually strives to build a more robust natural resources program at the UNM Law School. In connection with those efforts, in 2015, the Law School hired Assistant Professor Cliff Villa, who focuses his research and scholarship on environmental and disaster law issues. Other recent hires include Assistant Professor Jeanette Wolfley, who was hired in 2013 and focuses her research and scholarship on the intersection of Indian law and natural resources law, and Associate Professor Alex Ritchie, who was hired in 2012 and focuses his research and scholarship on oil and gas and business law. Input from students and others is important to the work of the Committee and welcomed.

Natural Resources Journal

Students try out for the National Resources Journal through a competition in the summer after their first year at the UNM School of Law. The editors generally select between 8 and 12 students for the NRJ staff. From these students, the 3L NRJ editorial board selects the NRJ editorial board for the following year.

The NRJ is the nation's oldest law school journal focusing on natural resource matters. For nearly 50 years, the NRJ has published influential articles on water resources, public lands, energy, oil and gas, environmental law, and a wide range of other topics. The NRJ has always been an interdisciplinary journal, examining not only legal issues, but also the scientific, economic and other dimensions of natural resource policy and management. For more information on the NRJ, please contact Professor Reed Benson or Associate Professor Alex Ritchie.

Opportunities Outside the Classroom - Externships

The UNM School of Law offers a broad range of opportunities for externships. If you want to pursue academic credit for an externship, please contact the Law School's Office of Student and Career Services for more information. Please contact a member of the Natural Resources Committee if you are interested in discussing these or other externship possibilities.

The following is a sampling of firms and agencies in areas that pertain to Natural Resources and Environmental Law that may be interested in a student extern.

New Mexico

Defenders of Wildlife (Albuquerque)
Institute of Public Law, Center for Wildlife Law (Albuquerque)
Interstate Stream Commission (Albuquerque)
National Resources Defense Council (Albuquerque)
The Nature Conservancy (Albuquerque)
U.S. Dept Agriculture (Forest Service) (Albuquerque)
U.S. Regional Solicitor's Office (Albuquerque)
Utton Transboundary Resources Center (UNM Law School)
Legal Aid of New Mexico (*acequia* issues)(Santa Fe)
New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (Santa Fe)
New Mexico Environment Department (Santa Fe)
New Mexico Environmental Law Center (Santa Fe)
New Mexico State Land Office (Santa Fe)
Office of the State Engineer (Santa Fe)
Oil Conservation Commission (Santa Fe)
Public Regulation Commission (Santa Fe)
WildEarth Guardians (Santa Fe)
Western Environmental Law Center (Taos)

Out of State

Center for Biological Diversity (Tucson, Portland, Oakland, Denver, Anchorage)
Earthjustice (Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Denver, Seattle, Bozeman)
National Wildlife Federation (Boulder)
Trout Unlimited Western Water Project (CO, UT, WY, MT)
U.S. Department of Justice (Washington, D.C.)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Washington, D.C. and Regional Offices including Denver, Dallas, and Seattle)
Western Resource Advocates (Boulder)

UNM Law Clinic

On occasion, the UNM law clinic works with community groups and community partners on land use issues and environmental matters. For example, the clinic has worked with the Pajarito Mesa Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association to obtain a water supply system for their community and with the New Mexico Water Lawyers' Association, a nonprofit organization.

Environmental Law Moot Court

The Pace Environmental Law Moot Court Competition is the preeminent environmental law moot in the United States, attracting competitors representing more than 70 national and Canadian law schools. Participants write and debate about an environmental topic that involves issues drawn from real cases. The competition is unique in that three teams argue the issues, reflecting the fact that environmental litigation frequently involves multiple parties: the government, a public interest group, and a member of the regulated community. Teams write and file their briefs for their respective parties in early December and travel to Pace in White Plains, NY in February for the oral phase of the competition.

Environmental Law Society

The Environmental Law Society is a student organization at the law school. The mission of the Environmental Law Society is to:

- Promote awareness of environmental, natural and cultural resource issues and their legal, political and socio-economic implications.
- Facilitate environmental, natural and cultural resource activism through example, education and community involvement.
- Encourage communication and collaboration between the conservation, social justice and political/legal communities.
- Enhance the law school experience for students interested in environmental, natural, and cultural resource issues confronting New Mexico and our world.

The Environmental Law Society provides students with networking, community service, and other opportunities for involving students in issues relating to natural resources and the environment.

Summer Stipends Program

For the past several years, the Natural Resources and Environmental Law Program has made funds available for students to intern over the summer with non-governmental conservation and environmental organizations, and local, state and federal governmental agencies that regulate or otherwise work in areas related to conservation of natural resources or environmental stewardship. The program is open to all UNM School of Law students that have completed their first or second year. For more information, please see a member of the Natural Resources and Environmental Law Faculty.

Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation Programs

As a constituent law school member of the Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation (RMMLF), UNM School of Law students may participate in RMMLF educational programs. RMMLF typically waives registration fees for UNM School of Law students that attend its programs, and will often cover certain travel and lodging expenses for students subject to an annual budget of funds that may be available to the UNM School of Law Natural Resources and Environmental Law Program.

In recent years, UNM School of Law students have attended RMMLF programs on topics such as energy and mineral development in Indian Country, climate change regulation, air quality issues affecting development of oil and gas and mining, renewable energy, mineral title examination, and many other programs in cities such as Denver, Colorado, New Orleans, Louisiana, Anchorage, Alaska, Tucson, Arizona, and Las Vegas, Nevada. In addition, UNM School of Law students are eligible to apply for a limited number of scholarships that are awarded annually by RMMLF. For more information about student opportunities related to RMMLF programs and scholarships, please see Associate Professor Alex Ritchie or Professor Reed Benson.

Resources – UNM Law Library

The UNM Law Library supports the Natural Resources/Environmental Law education and research component of the law school by providing both instruction and access to a wide range of print and electronic resources. A list of electronic sources includes:

- [Climatewire](#) 
- [Energywire](#) 
- [Environment & Energy Daily](#) 
- [Environment & Energy News PM](#) 
- [Environment Reporter](#) [BNA] 
- [Environmental Law Reporter](#) [ELI] 
- [Greenwire](#) 
- [International Environment Reporter](#) [BNA] 
- [Land Letter](#) 
- [Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation](#) 

The Utton Transboundary Resources Center

The Utton Transboundary Resources Center researches and provides information to the public about water, natural resources and environmental issues, with a particular focus on New Mexico and the Southwest. It also supports collaborative natural resource management using multidisciplinary expertise and inclusive, diverse stakeholder involvement. The Center also includes the Joe M Stell Ombudsman Program. It offers provides pre-mediation education, as well as information regarding adjudications to unrepresented water rights claimants and defendants. Its primary purpose is to streamline the adjudication process by providing claimants with unbiased information about the multifaceted process.

The Utton Center has a legal staff of two attorneys: Adrian Oglesby Director, and Darcy S. Bushnell, who administers the Joe M Stell Water Ombudsman Program. The Center has a group of affiliates who are available to assist on projects, and it employs researchers and law students for specific projects.

Interplay With Indian Law

In addition to the Natural Resources and Environmental Law Certificate, the UNM Law School currently has a certificate program in Indian Law. There is substantial overlap between the two areas as many of the issues in Indian Country involve natural resources and energy related matters. Some students elect to obtain a certificate in both Indian Law and Natural Resources and Environmental Law. Some courses that are offered regularly, such as “Natural Resources in Indian Country” satisfy the requirements for both certificates.