Summer 2008

Introduction

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Recommended Citation
Available at: http://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nrj/vol48/iss3/1
INTRODUCTION

Earlier this year I attended the American Bar Association’s 27th Annual Water Law Conference. I rarely miss this confab—not because it’s always in sunny San Diego, but because I think it’s the best water law conference of the year. I always learn a lot there, both from the formal presentations and from the conversations I have with water law scholars and practitioners from across the country.

As the new faculty editor of the Natural Resources Journal, I was very pleased to hear the NRJ mentioned twice by distinguished speakers within the first few hours of the conference. In a plenary session on interstate water issues, former Supreme Court special master Owen Olpin spoke favorably about key provisions of the Model Interstate Water Compact, which was developed by the Utton Transboundary Resources Center and published in the NRJ (47 NAT. RESOURCES J. 17 (2007)). Then at lunch, the keynote speaker was New Mexico Attorney General Gary King, a UNM law graduate and longtime state legislator who mentioned having served as a student editor of the NRJ (Note & Comment Editor, 1982–83).

Law journals don’t normally get much airtime at the ABA Water Law Conference, where the program is more practical than academic, so I was happy to hear those two positive remarks about the NRJ. Upon further reflection, I feel even better about them, because I think those references represent the NRJ’s two major contributions to the natural resources field.

Owen Olpin’s statements about the Model Interstate Water Compact exemplify the Journal’s contributions to the literature of natural resources law, policy, and management. Over its nearly 50-year history, the NRJ has published many important and influential articles from a diverse group of accomplished authors. These articles have enhanced understanding, and shaped the debate, regarding important natural resource issues.

Gary King’s reference to his service as an editor reflects the NRJ’s influence on individual students who have gone on to careers in natural resources. Their time on the Journal helped them gain knowledge and skills that would serve them well as lawyers, administrators, and policymakers in the field. And Gary King was not the only former NRJ student editor at this conference; others I spoke with, including some of New Mexico’s finest water lawyers, also mentioned their service on the Journal.

Strong academic journals have genuine value, although their worth is often difficult to measure. I believe the success of the Natural Resources Journal can be measured, at least partially, by the influence of its articles and the impact of its alumni. The NRJ will remain important as today’s articles influence tomorrow’s natural resource decisions, and as today’s editors become tomorrow’s great lawyers, judges, and legislators, debating and deciding the big issues of their day.

—Reed D. Benson