

**CONTACT**

sea@vnf.com  
206.802.3858

**PRACTICES**

Climate Change  
Endangered Species & Wildlife  
Hydropower  
Land Use  
Litigation & Investigations  
Native Affairs  
Water

**EDUCATION**

University of Miami  
University of Washington  
University of Washington School  
of Law

**BAR AND COURT ADMISSIONS**

Washington State Bar  
U.S. District Court for the Western  
District of Washington  
U.S. District Court for the Eastern  
District of Washington  
U.S. Court of Appeals for the  
Ninth Circuit  
U.S. Court of Federal Claims

**SOPHIA E. AMBERSON**

**ASSOCIATE**



**Professional Background**

As a core member of the Firm's Litigation, Enforcement, and Investigations practice, Sophia advises and represents both public and private sector clients in an array of environmental and natural resources litigation matters involving the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, National Environmental Policy Act (and state equivalents), CERCLA (Superfund).

Sophia is committed not only to helping her clients navigate these matters before (or to avoid) litigation, but is also a zealous advocate for her clients in litigation. She has represented both public and private sector clients at nearly every court level, from administrative hearings to state and federal trial courts up through appeal to the Ninth Circuit. Her clients value her straightforward approach to problem solving, both with respect to written and oral advocacy, on the one hand, and navigating the court system and opposing parties on the other. Sophia's depth of both subject matter and litigation experience make her uniquely qualified to advise clients who both are and are not experienced in environmental issues or litigation themselves.

Sophia has always been interested in environmental practice. Prior to attending law school, Sophia received her Master's in Marine and Environmental Affairs, and her research focused on how the environment influences tribal well-being. During law school, she served as an extern to Honorable Robert S. Lasnik in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington, and she interned in D.C. at the U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, where she worked with the Office of International and Maritime Law on environmental law issues. Sophia was an Associate Editor-in-Chief of the Washington Law Review, President of the Environmental Law Society, Vice President of the Native American Law Student Association, and an executive board member of the Moot Court Honor Board.

When not in the office, Sophia loves exploring beaches with her husband, daughter, and golden retriever. Her hobbies include reading, hiking, and crocheting.

**Representative Experience**

- Preparing and analyzing expert reports, drafting discovery requests and responses, working with government agencies for production and certification of records, preparing expert and fact witnesses for deposition and trial testimony, motion practice on both evidentiary and dispositive issues, and deposing and cross-examining expert and fact witnesses.
- Represents public and private sector clients pertaining to a variety of issues, including mining rights, landslides, wetlands, water availability, boundary disputes, property access, development rights, liens, construction defects, covenants and land use restrictions, leases and contracts, Land Use Petition Act (LUPA) appeals, and many other actions.
- Represents California water contractors in federal litigation defending Biological Opinions issued pursuant to the ESA regarding the effects of the State Water Project and the Central Valley Project on threatened and endangered species.
- Represents coalition of industry groups and property owners in Oregon in federal litigation challenging implementation of a Biological Opinion issued by NOAA-Fisheries to Federal Emergency Management Authority regarding the effect of the National Flood Insurance Program.
- Represented a California water agency in federal litigation pertaining to the Biological Opinion issued

pursuant to the ESA regarding the effects of the California Waterfix project on threatened and endangered species.

- Consistent success with both settlement and litigation of liability claims for remediation of soil and groundwater contamination.
- Provides strategic counsel on all aspects of NEPA and SEPA analyses to a wide variety of project proponents, including in relation to an airport expansion project, sediment diversion projects, and water supply and infrastructure projects.
- On-going representation of an investor-owned utility in adjudications before state utility commissions as well as provides strategic advice related to environmental and land use matters.

## Awards and Honors

"Best Lawyers in America: Ones to Watch" by *Best Lawyers*

Environmental Law, 2024 - 2025

Litigation - Environmental, 2024 - 2025

Natural Resources Law, 2024 - 2025

## Articles and Presentations

- Traditional Ecological Disclosure: How the Freedom of Information Act Frustrates Tribal Natural Resource Consultation with Federal Agencies, *Washington Law Review*, Vol. 92 pp. 937, 06/19/2017
- The Heartbeat of Our People: Identifying and Measuring How Salmon Influences Quinault Tribal Well-being, *Society & Natural Resources*, Vol. 29 pp. 1389, 05/25/2016

## Alerts

- Rundown on Recent Executive Orders on Federal Funding and Legal Issues, 02/13/2025
- Biden-Harris Administration Debuts Inaugural Ocean Justice Strategy, 12/28/2023
- U.S. Supreme Court's *Sackett* Decision Prompts Conforming WOTUS Rule, 09/11/2023
- U.S. Supreme Court Narrows WOTUS, Limiting Scope of Clean Water Act, 05/30/2023
- EPA Proposes to Expand State and Tribal Authority Over Section 401 Water Quality Certifications, Reversing Trump Era Rule, 06/15/2022
- Shifting Baselines: New Guidance from Army Corps and NMFS on ESA Compliance for Work on Existing Structures, 01/19/2022
- UPDATED: EPA and Army Corps Announce Latest Update to Definition of "Waters of the United States", 12/07/2021
- EPA and Army Corps Announce Latest Update to Definition of "Waters of the United States", 11/29/2021
- UPDATED: Rough Waters Ahead, Once Again: A District Court Vacates the 2020 Navigable Waters Protection Rule as the EPA and Corps WOTUS Definition Rulemaking Continues, 09/03/2021
- Rough Waters Ahead, Once Again: A District Court Vacates the 2020 Navigable Waters Protection Rule as the EPA and Corps WOTUS Definition Rulemaking Continues, 09/02/2021
- EPA Reissues Temperature TMDLs in the Columbia and Lower Snake Rivers, 08/30/2021
- U.S. Supreme Court Issues Decision Clarifying Boundaries of FOIA's Deliberative Process Privilege, 03/05/2021
- U.S. Supreme Court Holds Clean Water Act Covers Groundwater in *Limited Circumstances*, 04/24/2020
- Settlement of *County of Maui* Prolongs Clean Water Act Uncertainty for Regulated Community, 09/27/2019

- Federal Agencies Repeal Obama-Era Clean Water Rule, 09/17/2019
- Federal Judge Limits the Reach of the WOTUS Rule, 08/27/2019
- Federal Guidance on Section 404 Permitting Under Development, 02/14/2019
- Federal Agencies Release the New Clean Water Rule to Replace "Waters of the United States" (WOTUS) Rule, 12/12/2018
- BSEE Streamlines Oil and Gas Production Safety Systems Requirements, 10/04/2018
- Obama Era WOTUS Rule Reinstated in Washington State (For Now), 09/19/2018
- WOTUS Rule Reinstated in 26 States After Court Enjoins Delay, 08/27/2018
- EPA and Corps Seek Additional Comment on Proposal to Repeal Definition of WOTUS, 07/18/2018