

Lisa M. Bruderly Environmental Attorney

What jobs have you held prior to becoming an attorney? I graduated from Penn State, with a degree in Environmental Resource Management, nine years before I went to law school. My first job out of college was as an environmental scientist with a consulting company in Pittsburgh, Pa. I conducted many environmental site assessments and performed sampling all over the country for chemical and natural gas facilities. It was terrific exposure to working in the environmental field.

Later, I was an environmental auditor for Columbia Gas Transmission in Washington, Pa. and Charleston, W.Va. I audited more than 200 facilities in 13 states, and then worked with the facilities to resolve any findings. I also helped develop environmental management systems and policies and procedures. For six months, I was an on-site environmental sampler/inspector for a large pipeline replacement project in New York.

These jobs provided invaluable field experience that still helps me in evaluating the technical issues that are so often intertwined with environmental law questions.

How did you decide you wanted to focus on environmental law? As an environmental auditor, I went to a different facility each week, evaluated its environmental compliance and then reported back to the attorneys at Headquarters. I enjoyed discussing interpretations of environmental law with the attorneys and also liked working with site personnel to find practical ways to ensure compliance, while still maintaining operations. I realized that I wanted to pursue a career in environmental law.

What do you consider your greatest achievement? One of my greatest achievements is when a client tells me (in the best way) “you don’t seem like a lawyer.” Many field and facility personnel have had negative experiences with lawyers who “tell them” what an environmental law says and then, either leave the facility to figure out compliance on their own or suggest compliance measures that are infeasible. I believe my job, at its most basic level, is to make my clients’ jobs easier, by providing practical and cost-effective advice about sophisticated environmental issues. With my legal knowledge and prior field experience, I enjoy taking the time to understand a facility’s operational and organizational capabilities and constraints and then working with my client, as a team, to identify ways to comply with law, with the least disruption possible on operations.

Professionally, I’ve had the opportunity to represent clients in some of the largest Section 404 (dredge and fill) enforcement actions in the country. I’ve also helped many clients address wastewater, stormwater and sewage issues that have had the potential to require multi-million dollar capital improvements and intensive operation and maintenance obligations.

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LISA M. BRUDERLY
lbruderly@babstcalland.com
412.394.6495

Pittsburgh, PA
Two Gateway Center
603 Stanwix Street
Sixth Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
412.394.5400

BABSTCALLAND.COM

What made you choose to practice with Babst Calland? I've practiced at Babst Calland for more than 21 years. I chose Babst Calland because the large size of its Environmental Group (approximately 25 attorneys focused on environmental compliance) offered me the rare opportunity to focus exclusively on environmental law and develop a specialized practice in water law. Babst Calland gives me the ability to work with, and learn from, some of the best environmental law practitioners in the country, some of which have helped to write the laws that our clients ask us to interpret. In my practice, I have clients from a wide variety of industries with facilities all over the country. No two days are ever the same.

Personally, Babst Calland has supported me, without question, through health, child and elderly parent issues. There is an overwhelming sentiment that, while you are expected to work hard, "family comes first." This support has been invaluable throughout the years.

What is the quality you most like in an attorney? I appreciate an attorney who is responsive and pays attention to details. Environmental law is very technical and fact-specific. Without mastering the facts and paying attention to the intricacies of applicable regulations, it's easy to overlook important details on which an accurate regulatory interpretation may depend.

Where is your happy place? One of my favorite things to do is travel. I believe providing my children the opportunity to see other parts of the world (and the United States) is one of the best gifts I can give them. My family and I have had many wonderful adventures to Italy, Scotland, Iceland, the Canadian Rockies, Alaska, Hawaii, California and other locations. As a two-time Penn State graduate, I also love a weekend trip to Happy Valley.

When you're not working, what would people find you doing? When I'm not working, I am typically driving my children to soccer, basketball and/or volleyball practice and going to their games. I enjoy cheering them on with the other parents. Other highlights of my day include eating out, spoiling our dog and plotting our next vacation.

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