



MICHELINE NADEAU FAIRBANK

Director

Natural Resources

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Continuous improvement is better than delayed perfection

Mark Twain



MICHELINE NADEAU FAIRBANK

Micheline Nadeau Fairbank is a highly respected natural resources attorney whose practice focuses on water rights, environmental regulation, and mining law, supported by extensive litigation experience at the state, federal, and appellate levels. Based in Fennemore's Reno, Nevada office, she advises clients on complex and contested issues affecting the development, protection, and use of natural resources throughout the West.

Micheline's water law practice is informed by her unique first-hand regulatory experience. She most recently served as Deputy Administrator for the Nevada Division of Water Resources, working closely with the Nevada State Engineer to administer Title 48 of the Nevada Revised Statutes and oversee the allocation and management of Nevada's water resources. In that role, she was deeply involved in water rights disputes, regulatory compliance, and policy implementation in one of the nation's most water-constrained regions, an experience that gives her clients a strategic advantage in agency proceedings and enforcement matters.

Her environmental and mining practice is equally robust. Micheline previously represented the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, where she handled permitting, compliance, and enforcement matters involving hazardous waste management, CERCLA, mine reclamation, and regulatory obligations under the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act, as well as related state statutes. She brings particular depth to mining matters, combining technical fluency with practical risk assessment to help clients advance projects while managing regulatory exposure.

Litigation is a core component of Micheline's practice. She has extensive experience litigating natural resource and environmental matters before Nevada state courts, federal district courts in Nevada and California, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and administrative agencies,

including the National Labor Relations Board and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Born and raised in Northern Nevada, Micheline is known for her pragmatic approach to problem-solving and her ability to work effectively within strict statutory frameworks or develop creative legal strategies when circumstances demand. She is conscientious, efficient, and focused on delivering solutions that are legally sound, economically practical, and durable.

Outside her practice, Micheline's connection to the land is personal as well as professional. She is an avid hiker who regularly participates in charity hikes and spends much of her free time hunting and fishing throughout the Mountain West or exploring remote terrain by foot or off-road vehicle with her family. She is also a passionate, if perpetually over-ambitious, gardener whose plans routinely exceed the hours available, resulting in a landscape that reflects both resilience and creativity.

EDUCATION

- B.A., Western Colorado University, *cum laude*
- J.D., Willamette University College of Law

AREAS OF PRACTICE

- Natural Resources
- Business Litigation
- Water Law
- Mining Law

REPRESENTATIVE CASES

- *Coachella Valley Water District v. Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians*, United States Supreme Court Case Nos. 17-40, -42.
- *United States v. United States Board of Water Commissioners*, 893 F3d 578 (9th Cir. 2018)

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- Western States Water Council Executive Committee, 2019-2023
- Western States Water Council, Legal Committee, 2019-2023
- Western States Water Council, Non-Tribal Federal Water Needs Subcommittee, 2018-Present
- Western Regional Partnership, Water Security Committee, 2019-2023
- Nevada Supreme Court Commission to Study the Adjudication of Water Law Cases, 2021-2023
- Board of Directors, Walker Basin Conservancy, 2023-present
- Conference of Western Attorneys General, Western Attorney General Legal Action Committee, July 2014-April 2018

ARTICLES AND PRESENTATIONS

- Presenter, "Resolving Water Rights Disputes," Nevada Land and Water Law: Ownership and Access CLE, January 2026
- Co-Presenter, "Stormwater Runoff Law and Disputes A-Z," NBI, November 18, 2025

- Presenter, "Stormwater Runoff Hot Topics and Case Law Updates" Live Online Seminar, June 3, 2025
- Co-Author, "Assembly Bill 104: Nevada Adopts Water Rights Retirement Program," Western Water Law and Policy Reporter, June 2025
- Co-Author, "Lower Colorado States Call for Improvements to Glen Canyon Dam," California Water Law & Policy Reporter, June 2025
- Author, "[How Halting Penny Production Could Reshape Natural Resource Policies](#)," Fennemore Blog, May 23, 2025
- Co-Author, "Lower Colorado States Call for Improvements to Glen Canyon Dam," Western Water Law & Policy Reporter, May 2025
- Co-Author, "Additional Funding From the US Bureau of Reclamation Announced for Southern Nevada Water Authority Conservation Initiatives," Western Water Law and Policy Reporter, March 2025
- Interview, "[Thursday Thoughts with Micheline Nadeau Fairbank: Harnessing Nevada's Lithium Potential](#)," Fennemore Blog, May 2, 2024
- Featuring, "People: Micheline Fairbank joins the Fennemore Craig Business Litigation and Natural Resources practice groups," Northern Nevada Business Weekly, May 29, 2023
- Interview, "[I always love how there is something new to learn every time and, in every case, and situation](#)," Fennemore Blog, May 11, 2023
- State Groundwater Management and Federal Reserved Water Rights: What's Next? ABA Section of Environment, Energy, and Natural Resources Water Resources Committee Newsletter, March 2018

ADMISSIONS

- California
- Colorado
- Nevada
- United States District Court, District of Nevada
- United States District Court, Northern District of California
- United States District Court, Eastern District of California
- United States District Court, Central District of California
- United States District Court, Southern District of California
- 9th Circuit Court of Appeals
- United States Supreme Court