

ELI Insider

A Newsletter of the
Environmental Law Institute
Leadership Council

Volume 2, Issue 2, Spring 2014
Edited by Brett Kitchen

Teach a Man to Fish and You Feed Him for a Lifetime Granta Nakayama

The typical conversation with an environmental lawyer can produce a wide range of stories, spanning decades of experience and covering a breadth of topics. Ask any of them how they got their start in environmental law, and you might hear how they clerked for a famous judge or U.S. Supreme Court Justice, interned for a U.S. congressman, worked for the U.S. EPA, or simply had a passion for the environment from an early age. But helping design and build nuclear reactors on submarines and aircraft carriers?

Talk to Granta Nakayama.

Granta, a partner with Kirkland & Ellis LLP in its Washington, D.C., office and a leader in the firm's environmental and energy practices, studied nuclear engineering at MIT. Upon graduating in 1981, he went to work for Admiral Hyman Rickover—the “father” of the modern U.S. nuclear navy—in the U.S. Navy Nuclear Propulsion Program. Rickover served under U.S. administrations from Woodrow Wilson to Ronald Reagan, and Granta learned much from his experience in managing young staff and identifying and tackling problems before they grew into bigger ones. “He is someone I have always respected as the person who had an effect on my early career,” says Granta. “He certainly shaped my views and my approach to technical management and trying to motivate people in a positive way.”

Granta served as a U.S. Navy lieutenant through 1986, and then worked for the Department of the Navy until 1994. The end of the Cold War saw a declining emphasis on the nuclear program, so he turned his attention to the environmental issues based on the interaction of the naval nuclear propulsion program and the wider environmental community. He began attending George Mason Law School, but without any intention of joining a firm.

A fourth generation Japanese-American, Granta's personal family history—his mother was interned in a U.S. government camp during WWII—and living through the civil rights era in the 1960s in the South peaked his interest in law. But after graduating, an adjunct professor who was a partner at Kirkland & Ellis persuaded him to join the firm. And a new career was born.

Fast forward to 2005. Granta is nominated by the Bush Administration to be Assistant Administrator for Enforcement at EPA. After U.S. Senate confirmation, he took the office in August, just two weeks before Hurricane Katrina hit. “It was a trial by fire,” he says, as he had to deal with the many issues associated with the disaster. The managerial skills he learned under Rickover paid off. He motivated his staff to unleash their creativity in ways that would keep them driven and allow them to do their jobs.

During his tenure there, productivity increased significantly. “The statistics really bear it out. [The staff] increased their outputs in terms of the number of cases they were able to resolve or the amount of pollution they were able to reduce through enforcement. It confirmed my faith in the power of good folks and the government to do good things.” Granta adds that this was the

accomplishment he felt best about from his tenure at EPA, noting that it was not a personal accomplishment, but one by those who worked there. His term ended in 2009, and he returned to Kirkland.

One of his favorite pastimes is fishing, a sport he has enjoyed more and more over the years. And it is part of a long Japanese tradition, one that has been carried out by four generations of his family in the United States. He sees it as a way of connecting with nature and reminding him of the precarious state of our coastal resources. He recalls stories from his grandmother, who would find abalones while wading in the



Members of the Leadership Council

Paul J. Allen
Anonymous
Bruce Barnbaum
Don Baur
Kenneth Berlin
Laurie Burt
Leslie Carothers
Trammell S. Crow
John C. Cruden
Amy L. Edwards
Gail Charnley Elliott
E. Donald Elliott
Adeeb R. Fadil
Albert M. Ferlo
J. William Futrell
Kevin A. Gaynor
Michael B. Gerrard

Jeffrey B. Gracer
Joel M. Gross
David P. Hackett
Paul E. Hagen
Ridgway M. Hall, Jr.
J. Kevin Healy
Kevin P. Holewinski
Alan Horowitz
Michael C. Kavanaugh
Douglas H. Keare
Laurence Kirsch
Robert C. Kirsch
Ann Klee
Chuck Knauss
Adam M. Kushner
Stanley Legro
Lawrence R. Liebesman

R. Christopher Locke
Raymond Ludwizewski
Jane C. Luxton
Angus Macbeth
Martha E. Marrapese
Roger R. Martella, Jr.
Bradley M. Marten
Craig Mathews
William H. Meadows
Thomas Milch
Leonard A. Miller
Tom Mounteer
Grant Nakayama
Bruce Pasfield
Robert V. Percival
William Rawson
Martha L. Rees

Kenneth Rivlin
Kathy B. Robb
John P. & Virginia B. Sall
Stephen Sellick
Lester Sotsky
Donald W. Stever
Margaret N. Strand
Edward L. Strohbehn, Jr.
Robert "Bob" Sussman
Deborah K. Tellier
William L. Thomas
Dr. Lucy R. Waletzky
Daniel Weinstein
Benjamin Wilson

waters along the shores of Monterey, California. "She could collect abalones and put them in a burlap sack, and they would dry them; and that would be something they would eat over the winter. Of course, today, you can't find an abalone anywhere along the coast unless you go diving with scuba gear, and even then you may only find a small one." He has enjoyed fishing in Alaska, Florida, and the Assateague National Seashore, but his favorite spot is in Hawaii, where he can fish off a cliff catching tuna—and sometimes even a large shark! The Aloha State is also the home of his wife Larrene (whose younger brother went to elementary and grammar school with Barack Obama), with whom he has two children, Ian and Meredith.

Granta's involvement with ELI extends to our board, of which he has been a member since 2012. He views the Institute as an "organization that punches above

its weight," and "a tremendous resource in the environmental community." He appreciates its objectivity and capacity for bringing together all groups across the environmental spectrum. In particular, he lauds ELI's Boot Camp for Environmental Law as something that prepares young people who are going to be the future of environmental law. There is one area of the law where he would like to someday see firm action taken: environmental justice. "I think environmental justice is an important moral issue and part of the reason for that is obviously my growing up in the 1960s in the south and my family's history of being relocated. We should really ensure that those who have the least in society are not burdened the most by environmental effects. There is no statute or regulation that governs [it]." He believes Congress should address this area while updating the initial environmental laws and regulations passed in the 1970s.

About the Leadership Council

ELI Leadership Council members help ensure a future of innovative programs for ELI.

Members of the Leadership Council are the leading supporters of the Environmental Law Institute. Each member has made a gift of \$5,000 or more. Members continue their active involvement in the Leadership Council with an annual donation of \$3,000 or more. Members are listed in a custom-made showcase in the Institute's headquarters and on its website (www.eli.org).

Through the ELI Leadership Council, the Institute recognizes individual members at five cumulative giving levels:

Executive Circle (\$100,000+)
Chairman's Circle (\$50,000+)
Director's Circle (\$25,000+)
President's Circle (\$10,000+)
Partner (\$5,000+)

The Environmental Law Institute is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt, charitable organization listed in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are deductible for federal income, gift, and estate tax purposes to the maximum extent permitted by law.