



To the Washington Law School Classes of 2020, 2021, and 2022:

Surviving law school, passing the bar exam, and landing that first legal job are three of the most difficult challenges that attorneys face throughout their careers. In this profession, it's a rite of passage. But unlike the generations of attorneys that have gone before you, you're having to do all that in the midst of a global pandemic that has disrupted almost every facet of American life.

On behalf of the membership of the Environmental and Land Use Law Section of the Washington State Bar Association, we want you to know that we're here to help and support you through this difficult time. None of us know what's it like to be a 1L trying to remotely learn constitutional law, or a 3L preparing to take the bar exam and wondering how to land a job in these uncertain times. But many of us have experienced hardship in the course of our careers, and we'd like to pass along some of the important lessons that we learned as a result. We hope you find this compilation of reflections and advice to be helpful as you navigate through the unique challenges of this unprecedented moment in history.¹

Sincerely,

Kelly Wood, Chair
Pat Spurgin, Chair-Elect
Molly Barker, Secretary
Meghan Gavin, Treasurer
Elizabeth Tellessen, Immediate Past Chair
Caroline Cress, Young Lawyer Liaison

Donya Burns, Communications Liaison
Kyler Danielson, Communications Liaison
Le Anne Bremer, At-Large Member
Martha Wehling, At-Large Member
Darren Carnell, At-Large Member

¹ This is a compilation of direct submissions from our membership, which have not been individually edited. Please excuse any typographical or other errors.

REFLECTIONS AND ADVICE FROM THE ELUL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Caroline Cress, Assistant Attorney General
AGO Ecology Division
Young Lawyer Liaison, WSBA ELUL Section
University of North Carolina School of Law, Class of 2014

As the Young Lawyer Liaison to the ELUL Section, one of my roles is to build meaningful connections between our membership, newly-admitted attorneys, and local law students. One of my favorite ways to do that is through our annual spring networking events in Seattle and Spokane, where we bring together law students and local practitioners to meet and mingle over free drinks and finger foods.

I was really disappointed to have to cancel this year's networking event in light of the pandemic. But I was also inspired by the response I received from one of the law students who was helping to organize the event. She suggested that in lieu of the networking event, we provide the students with a compilation of ELUL members' advice for surviving law school, bar prep, and job searching during a global pandemic. This document is a result of that fantastic idea, and I sincerely hope that you find it useful as you navigate through this difficult time.

Bar Prep

Everyone learns differently. By now you should know what works best for you, and what doesn't. This applies just as much to studying for the bar as it did to studying for a final exam.

Try not to pay too much attention to how much more (or less) your friends and classmates are doing, and focus on what *you* need to do to get comfortable with the material in time for the exam. For example, I know that I'm a fast learner, and that I retain information better from reading than from listening. I also know that if I pick something up quickly, I tend to lose it pretty quickly too if I don't come back to it regularly. So I decided to do bar prep in a way that many would probably find questionable, but that worked for me—I spent the first month after graduation on a cross-country road trip, and saved the bulk of my bar prep for the month immediately before the exam. I did a little bit of studying along the way by reading while my partner was driving, but for the most part I gave myself a much-needed mental break and focused on the natural beauty of the places we were exploring.

By the time we arrived in Seattle, I was emotionally recharged and mentally prepared to spend a month cramming. And although I've since forgotten almost everything I learned that month about negotiable instruments, it worked for me. Figure out what works for you and stick to it.

Job Searching

First of all, know that landing your first job out of law school isn't easy, even in the best of times. Chances are, you won't end up with your dream job right away. And you'll probably hear

a lot of “thanks, but no thanks” before you get your first offer. Be persistent. Don’t be too hard on yourself, and try not to take the rejection personally.

Now, more than ever, you may have to settle for something that seems less than ideal. Prepare yourself mentally and emotionally for what may be a long period of non-legal employment. Start thinking now about what you can do in your spare time to keep your mind sharp and to build on your legal skills. I spent several months after my clerkship working temp jobs—catering, bartending, and landscaping. I felt fortunate to have those skills to fall back on, but it wasn’t easy. A few temporary catering gigs led to a more regular catering job at Boeing, which gave me just enough financial security to be able to spend my evenings doing pro bono work for the ACLU. That volunteer work not only helped to build my network and maintain my research skills, but it also helped me feel better about my job situation since I was still contributing to the community in a meaningful way.

Unfortunately, temp jobs like bartending and catering probably won’t be available to you any time soon, given how hard hit the food industry has been. The same is true for a lot of retail jobs. So you may have to get creative—if you’re artistic or crafty, start making things to sell on Etsy; if you have a green thumb, start reaching out to your neighbors to see if they could use an extra hand with their yards or gardens. If you’re eligible for unemployment benefits, apply for them.

Look at the job search process as a learning opportunity, and don’t create self-imposed limitations on your prospects. If you’re determined to go into public service, understand that you may have to take a detour through private practice, or a non-legal job, to get there. The Attorney General’s Office and many state agencies are implementing some version of a hiring freeze to prepare for the economic fallout of the pandemic; I expect many non-profits and other public interest organizations will do the same if they haven’t already. So go ahead and submit an application for that firm job you thought you’d never want—if nothing else, going through the process of tailoring your application materials and preparing for interviews is a valuable experience and good practice for the next job opportunity that comes your way.

One day, you’ll be able to look back on this difficult time in your life and appreciate the strength and grit that you developed as a result. And you’ll have a great story to tell.

I’ll leave you with a (paraphrased) nugget of wisdom that one of my law school professors gave me when I was going through a particularly difficult time: This is just a blip on the radar of your lifelong journey. Right now it might feel like you’re stuck, or that things will never get better—but you aren’t, and they will. You have a long and rewarding career ahead of you, and this bump in the road will turn out to be one of many that you will overcome. Trust that this will pass, and in the end you will be better for it.

Best of luck to all of you, and congrats to the Class of 2020!

Kelly Wood, Assistant Attorney General
AGO Environmental Protection Division
Chair, WSBA ELUL Section
Seattle University School of Law, Class of 2007

First up, take a deep breath. You have a lot of people rooting for you, including those of us who will be your fellow environmental and land use lawyers when you graduate, take the bar, pass the bar, and get your first job as a lawyer. Those things will happen. They may not happen on the path you'd envisioned for yourself, but they will happen. Relax, focus on what you can control, and understand that what you cannot control can also point you in directions and provide opportunities you never would have imagined on your own. And when it comes to those opportunities, stay flexible and keep an open mind.

Next up, the bar. I'm sorry you have to deal with the stress of that event within the stress of... [gestures broadly at everything]. But here's the thing. The bar exam isn't anywhere near as difficult as what you just went through in law school. Find a good bar prep program and stick with it. The work is the work. There are no short-cuts. But if you put in the hours, you'll come out of the test knowing it wasn't as bad as you thought it was going to be and confident that you passed. It's an endurance test. Treat it like one, with steady, dedicated training, and you'll be fine.

Third, getting a job. There are as many stories of becoming an environmental lawyer as there are environmental lawyers. No one has the same path. There is no magic. There are, however, things employers will look for, and as someone who has been involved in hiring new environmental lawyers, I can tell you what I look for. I do look at GPA and academic success. It's not the only thing, but it is, at the very least, a potentially relevant factor. Do as well as you can in law school. While a middle-of-the-road GPA definitely won't be a bar to getting a job, having a good GPA can help you stand out in a crowded field.

That said, many employers understand that law school measures (and rewards) a very specific skillset that doesn't necessarily translate into good legal skills. So, I look for other factors. Did the candidate take advantage of opportunities to hone real-world legal skills in law school? Like law review, moot court, clinics, externships, trial advocacy classes, etc.? All of those things require you to work in a collaborative, dynamic environment, and help you develop the critical thinking and communication skills you need to succeed as an attorney.

Especially in environmental law, you will not be working alone. You will be a member or even the leader of a team of other lawyers, support staff, experts, consultants, co-parties, and, of course, clients. I look for items on resumes that demonstrate an ability to be a successful team member. I always, *always* look at "other interests" sections, so please include them. Do you translate obscure 18th Century French poetry in your spare time? Awesome! Put it on your resume. Just don't get too carried away. As a new lawyer, your resume should be no more than 1.5 pages, and, ideally, a single page wherever possible. You won't get your legal job based on your high school employment record. And, finally, please, please, please quadruple-check your materials. You're applying for a job as a lawyer. Attention to detail matters. If your cover letter

accidentally includes a reference to the *other* job you're applying for, if your resume has more than an extremely minor typo, it's probably going to the bottom of the pile.

Finally, you're going to have setbacks. As with everything, the practice of law is a series of victories and defeats. Steps forward, and steps back. When the steps back happen—and they will—remember that the world keeps turning, things will get better, and that the best teaching tool in the world is to fail. Pick yourself up, reassess, course-correct if necessary, but always, *always* keep pressing forward. This profession is worth it. Like anything worth doing, it's engaging, stressful, fun, terrifying, maddening, glorious, tedious, chaotic often at the same time.

You will make it through this. If you keep pushing forward, you will look back one day and be amazed at how far you've come. It will always be an effort. There will always be more to do. The work is never done. Things are hardly ever clear-cut. Keep at it. As Kate Tempest wrote: "When everything is fluid, and when nothing can be known with any certainty: Hold your own."

LeAnne Bremer, Partner-in-Charge
Miller Nash Graham & Dunn LLP, Vancouver Office
At-Large Member, WSBA ELUL Section
Lewis & Clark Law School, Class of 1989

Remember that you already accomplished so much getting to this point. As you know it takes a lot of hard work and perseverance to graduate college, survive law school, take the bar, and find your place in this profession. You can do it! It will take the first few years to find your footing, but you will get there, and it will be easier. Don't get discouraged. At some point you will be able to use your well-honed instincts and experience and fall into the rhythms of your practice as second nature. My other piece of advice is to not judge yourself against what others have accomplished. We can all be valuable in different ways. Playing to your strengths, and having a good, positive can-do attitude will take you a long way. Good luck class of 2020!

Martha Wehling, Assistant Attorney General
AGO Natural Resources Division
At-Large Member, WSBA ELUL Section
Seattle University School of Law, Class of 2004

The double whammy of a limited job market combined with the Covid pandemic provides at least one golden opportunity for networking. Because most attorneys are teleworking, some with reduced hours, there is an increase in time spent on social media and other networking sites. Now is an excellent time to publish a blog post (for example, on LinkedIn) or write an article on a current legal issue (for example, in the ELUL's newsletter – hint hint), that will be seen by more attorneys than during "normal" times. While in private practice, my firm once hired a law clerk based on the quality of her analysis on a hot legal issue. The pandemic will likely result in changes not only to the legal practice, but also to the way environmental laws are implemented. A thoughtful analysis of these changes could make a big impact on firms providing advice to clients on how to move forward in the new world order.

As frustrating as it may be to be graduating now, try to enjoy the forced “break”. First, the lack of jobs and being trapped indoors will make it “easy” to study for the bar. Second, it’s natural to feel a little worn down after finishing law school, and not going to work immediately may help you refresh. Third, handling the stress of a pandemic in a poor job market will give you excellent coping skills for the future stressors that the practice of law throws at you. Your first few years as a practicing lawyer will be very stressful, and the timing of this pandemic allows an opportunity for family, friends, and (maybe) hobbies that you’d likely miss out on otherwise.

Many environmental attorneys have some experience in the non-legal world. That experience seems to help them provide more practical advice to clients than pure “ivory tower” legal advice. Use the time during the pandemic to read articles by non-lawyers in the area of law you want to practice in (like what civil engineers plan to do about the WOTUS byzantine nightmare; or how USFWS is implementing and revising critical habitat designations following the SCOTUS decision in *Weyerhaeuser* (dusky gopher frog)) to understand the risks and opportunities for clients. There is too much information to keep up with even in the best of times; the pandemic provides an opportunity for a deep dive in an area that interests you that won’t be available once you’re working.

Donya Burns, Attorney
Houlihan Law, P.C.
Communications Liaison, WSBA ELUL Section
University of Washington School of Law, Class of 2010

The reality is, many of you will not be able to land a paid and/or full time lawyering job in the near future, but it’s important to pass the bar exam and start practicing in some capacity—this could be a part-time gig, legal aid, contract work (think supplementary legal research and writing for smaller firms), in areas of law that you may or may not have thought about. It might be impossible to pay the bills doing this work (so, it may not be your full-time gig), but at the end of the day, future employers need to see that you cared enough about practicing law to continue honing your skills. Even more, it will show creativity, grit and depth of personality. And be persistent in applying for jobs!

Meghan Gavin, Environmental Attorney
Cascadia Law Group
Treasurer, WSBA ELUL Section
University of Washington School of Law, Class of 2015

To the class of 2020, congratulations on graduating law school! I hope you found a way to celebrate your accomplishment despite being stuck inside. During this challenging time (and afterward), I encourage you to trust yourself. I recommend seeing how the test prep courses suggest you study and then take it or leave it. You’ve been a successful student for approximately 20 years. You know how you best focus, learn, and retain information. Holding strong to your practices will help you succeed.

To all law students, I recommend increasing your exposure to the legal community in whatever way feels the least stressful right now, such as by emailing an associate in a practice area that interests you or by transforming something you've written for school into a short article. Many legal practitioners have a little extra time available in their workday that they would be happy to spend engaging with you.

REFLECTIONS AND ADVICE FROM PUBLIC SECTOR ATTORNEYS

Judge Mary Sue Wilson
Thurston County Superior Court
Former Division Chief, AGO Ecology Division
Gonzaga Law School, Class of 1989

Stress management – more than ever, physical and mental health are important. Take breaks to exercise, meditate, do things you love with people you love. Do not spend 100 % of your waking time thinking about your career or the pandemic.

Job searching – always look for ways you can use your skills while you are looking for work. My favorite applicants during the recession were those who had been honing their skills doing volunteer work while looking for a paying job. Lots of opportunities to help over the phone/via computer. Get involved in a local effort to provide legal assistance or other assistance in a virtual way. This will make you a more valuable candidate.

Courts are going virtual. Many are going to be broadcasting court proceedings on platforms like You-Tube. Check out your local courts' websites (Thurston county district court is already doing this). You can observe court virtually. When I speak with new lawyers, I always encourage them to observe proceedings and seasoned lawyers and judicial officers. What approach works? What doesn't? Observing real court is a way to get free training & get familiar with local practice. It might also give you a topic of conversation with a seasoned attorney at the next virtual networking event. And, you can observe in your PJs.

Kristen Mitchell, Deputy Attorney General
Former Division Chief, AGO Agriculture & Health Division
University of Washington School of Law, Class of 2001

I graduated in 2001. That was the year of the dot-com bust. And while it didn't compare to 2008 or 2020, it was tough to go from pure optimism on getting a job to dire panic. My job placement fell through and I did temp work for a year – many jobs including one helping a tech company organize their data to give to their patent attorneys – and then was lucky to connect with a friend who was leaving a King County Superior Court clerkship and I did that for a year. Then after multiple applications and multiple interviews, landed a job at the AGO in the Ag Health Division doing health care licensing work. The common thread was that none of these positions were in environmental law which was where I wanted to practice. I had a certificate (?) in environmental law from UW Law and had only been interested in working in that field. But after a few years at the AGO, I was able to move into the field working on NEPA, SEPA, CWA and FIFRA issues with DOH and WSDA. Later I did land use work with the Department of Commerce Growth Management Program (which I loved)!

So my advice to law students and recent grads is:

- Take the opportunities that present themselves. All experience is good experience even if the experience is bad – in other words, there is something to learn even in non-ideal places. It took me a long time to find my career spot but I was surprised at how much I learned in every non-ideal job.
- Ask people to be your mentor. I found that people were wary because they thought all I wanted was a job and they didn't have anything to offer. But lawyers tend to be super-gracious with time for mentoring. (I think it is the talking about yourself aspect that we love.) I had to overcome my natural introverted nature and asked a lot of people for advice. Some came through, some didn't. Some are still contacts. I got a lot of good advice, some not-so-great advice, but always good insight on what it takes to succeed in a law career.
- Be a mentor. At the same time I was looking for a permanent job, I was a volunteer mentor for 1Ls and also talked to prospective law students. I've been a mentor for others throughout my career and some of my "mentees" are now close friends and colleagues that I reach out to for advice.
- Don't take rejection personally. I had two firm job offers fall out from under me. I had another job that lasted two days when I figured out that they were going to string me along at almost minimum wage through a "training period" and then dump me for a new crop of "trainees". I sat in a dark conference room with a dozen recent grads and put bar code stickers on discovery docs for two weeks straight to make rent. (That was the tech dark ages...) I applied for every job in the state and got no interviews. I considered leaving the law or opening a solo firm. In the end, I followed good advice and just kept trying. I made the job search a job. I spent a set amount of time on it every day and then put it aside and got outside, spent time with friends, volunteered for non-profits and generally tried to keep busy. I remember being frustrated, depressed, desperate, hopeless – you name it. Just hang in there. You just need one "yes" – no one is going to care how many "nos" it takes to get there. It took me 2 years to get there. And I don't think those two years have held me back at all. In fact, I'm now glad I had them and didn't walk straight into the "dream" job.
- If you are studying for the bar, just put your head down and focus on that. The whole stay and home thing might turn out to be a positive for bar prep. Back in the day, I also followed good advice and did not attempt to do a full-on job search while also studying for the bar. I wanted to give in to the panic and focus on the job search given the bad economic situation but the advice I got was to focus on the fact that what I needed was a bar number. All the jobs that were open for recent grads were gone and everything left was for licensed lawyers. So focus on that. Turn the bar exam into a job. Set a schedule. Figure out what you need to get accomplished each day. Divide it up in chunks and be disciplined. But also put it down and cook dinner, go for a run, call a friend. You will find later that it turns out to be a lot like developing a litigation plan in your cases in the future – see, good practice!
- Volunteer! There is no shortage of people with legal needs and no cash. Legal aid is a great way to build skills, confidence, fill your time and you can feel good about what you are doing for people. Spend time on the job search, yes, but you can find other ways to build skills and a resume.

- Don't give up on environmental law. Lots of folks are like me and come back to it after starting out elsewhere. You can reach your goals in a roundabout way. So to close the loop, I go back to my first thought – take the opportunities that present themselves. But think about how they are helping you take steps toward the next opportunity.
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Patricia O'Brien, Division Chief
AGO Natural Resources Division
Willamette University College of Law, Class of 1980

You are living in a unique time, where the road ahead is uncertain. Have confidence that the spirit and determination that helped you get to law school will help you find the road ahead. Natural resource, land use, and environmental law can be an extremely fulfilling area of work. Here are some tips that have served me well:

- *Identify what you value.* Take steps so that your life reflect your values. Find passion in your work, or through volunteer and personal activities.
- *Relationships matter.* Always be professional and treat people with respect. Take care to develop your personal and professional relationships. While you do not have the power to change how others act, you are able to control how you respond.
- *Develop a support network.* Regular communication with peers and mentors can help you learn from experiences, broaden your perspective, and strengthen your personal resilience.

Good Luck!

Bill Sherman, Division Chief
AGO Environmental Protection Division
University of Michigan Law School, Class of 1999

We are so eager to have you join the profession, and to practice environmental law in particular! Your experience in this hard time will better prepare you to handle setbacks, crises, and the unforeseen, and it will give you an experience in common with your cohort that you will be able to draw on for your entire career. We are embarking on a really exciting time in environmental law, as legislatures and agencies experiment and the courts decide to get more and sometimes less involved. We need you and your brain!

I'm a little reluctant to offer advice on bar prep (but: make your own flash cards!), stress management (but: do things that you like sometimes!), or networking (but: do it!). But, as far as job-hunting in a hard time, I can say this: you will not have one legal career; you will actually have several careers, and not all of them will be perfect or perfect fits. If you aim for jobs that motivate you to do great work, and you identify things you can learn or skills you can develop in that job, you will find yourself constantly improving and accumulating experience that will make you uniquely effective, and uniquely you.

Adrienne Smith, Senior Counsel
AGO Natural Resources Division
Gonzaga Law School, Class of 1988

Trite but true, law school, bar prep, and landing your first job as a lawyer present big challenges. But my view is, everything you've done until now has prepared you for what's in front of you. Even meeting these challenges while enduring this pandemic. You didn't plan for this extra twist, but you will not be deterred from your goals! And the tenacity you use to succeed now will serve you well in the future when you are fighting the legal battles that will come your way. Thank you for hanging in there!

Phil Ferester, Senior Counsel
AGO Natural Resources Division
University of Oregon School of Law, Class of 1991

I know it feels like a weird time to be coming out of law school. The virus has severely disrupted our way of living, people are sheltering in their homes, and the job market is wacky. Guess what? Even with all of the great power a law degree provides, it will not change those circumstances. However, neither will those circumstances change the need for skilled lawyers to assist private clients, environmental groups, or governmental entities navigate the wide variety of environmental laws in our society. Your skills and your perspectives will shape our society for years into the future. So hold the vision of your career arc's long view. In ten years, you'll look back on this period and have some interesting stories about this period of your life.

Until then, focus on the things you can control. Hang in there, and study for finals or bar exams, knowing that for better or for worse, you have fewer distractions now than you had before. If you have a summer job or volunteer position this summer - know that those might involve working from home at least part of the time. But speak-up and be more aggressive than you might normally be, to try to make yourself part of remote team meetings or phone conferences on cases or issues related to your projects. Be polite, but more active in seeking feedback than you might otherwise be. Feedback might be harder to come by in a remote work environment. Try to be more "visible" even though the attorneys you're working with can't see you. Make sure your attorneys know that you're available for work. Focus on making every day a learning experience. Keep a journal, and write down three things you learned each day. And every day you work, do your best to demonstrate your positivity and can-do spirit - this attitude, in the toughest of times, might just land you your next job.

Nels Johnson, Senior Counsel
AGO Ecology Division
Vermont Law School, Class of 1997

I decided to go to law school when I was eleven years out of college and working in a waste management and composting business. I had briefly considered law school after college, but instead starting working, got married, and had a couple of children. The composting business

was a great thing in a lot of ways, but after a while my particular part of it began to feel like a dead end. So I dragged my young family off to Vermont Law School to get my JD and start my career in environmental law. During my second year, a recession hit, and environmental law jobs dried up. I got lots of pressure to adapt by concentrating on other areas, like tax law, or some sort of general practice. After law school I moved with my family to the Seattle area and looked for a job for a year and a half while doing contract work at a big firm. During that time I sometimes wondered whether I had made a terrible mistake, and whether I would ever find a rewarding legal job. I persevered though, and I was hired by the Attorney General's office Social and Health Services division. After three very educational years there I transferred to the Ecology division where I have been for 17 years. Working for the AGO has been perfect for me, because I generally feel I am on the right side of issues, and I get to work with terrific lawyers, scientists and advocates for the environment.

If you are going to law school because you want to work in environmental law, stick with your vision, don't get discouraged, and keep in touch with everyone you know or meet who has some connection to the kind of work you want to do. It may take longer than you would like, but you will get there if you stay focused and motivated.

Travis Burns, Deputy Prosecuting Attorney (Civil)
Thurston County Prosecuting Office
University of Wyoming College of Law, Class of 2005

Completing law school, passing the bar and getting that first job can be stressful. Adding the COVID health crisis certainly makes it no less comforting. In any event, getting through the doors to begin your legal career does not have to be nightmare and at times can present glimmers of enjoyment.

First and foremost, don't forget to laugh and find humility in all of this. The most creative and accomplished attorneys I know have mastered the skill of humor and humility to get through tense conversations, daily stress and conflict. A dash of humor and perspective lessens the enormity of problem and allows you to clearly attack an issue.

Second, your professional (and personal) life will get much better. The law school and bar admission process can be mundane, and if you are like me, often feels like your individuality is being stripped. To succeed, you need to "fit the mold" and exercise the principles of law without excess. But that doesn't last forever, and in my experience, the legal profession eventually gives back in spades. You will have an opportunity to shape an exciting and dynamic career that is worth looking forward to.

Third and finally, remember that the first job is the hardest to get . . . don't despair. Especially with today's uncertainties, most jobs won't be landed overnight. It is common for the first full time legal job to take months (sometimes years). Use a pinch of humor and long-term perspective and you will be able to reduce these stressful times to your advantage.

Best of luck!

Cindy Chang, Assistant Attorney General
AGO Environmental Protection Division
Washington University School of Law, Class of 2006

I graduated from law school in 2006 and was a junior lawyer during the Great Recession that was marked by shuttered law firms, mass layoffs, and hiring freezes. Job searches seemed indeterminate and demanded persistence. I remember feeling helpless when I found out that laid off equity partners from Big Law firms were competing with me for the few public service jobs that were exempted from widespread hiring freezes.

Looking back now, I am proud of my career path and where I've landed along the way, but I cannot even estimate the number of jobs I applied for and didn't get during the recession. At the time, every rejection felt personal; but experience tells me now that a lot of it was arbitrary, and frankly, a matter of luck, especially as a newer attorney. As you embark on job searches during this economic downturn, the most important thing is to keep trying – make a plan, reformulate your plan a million times, follow-up on every networking opportunity, explore all your options, and, of course, commiserate with your friends! The process may take longer, you may not end up with your dream job (but congrats if you do!); regardless, remember that you still have a long career ahead of you for you to achieve all that you hope to do.

Koalani Kaulukukui-Barbee, Assistant Attorney General
AGO Ecology Division
University of Hawai'i William S. Richardson School of Law, Class of 2006

Wow, going to law school during a pandemic. What a challenge! But you made it through the LSATs, got into law school, and by now are through at least one year, maybe even graduating. You've got this! Sure, I've never gone to law school during a pandemic, I can't possibly know all the difficulties you're facing. But I did have plenty of my own challenges during law school, and what I know we all have as lawyers (even baby lawyers) is the ability to find a solution to our problems and the strength and courage to push through adversity. It's in our blood.

When I started law school, I didn't have internet at home (I'm really not *that* old!) or even a law dictionary. Reading cases, I'd come across Latin (sometimes English) words I didn't know and I'd write them down to look up in the library the next morning. Ideal? No, but I made it work. You will too. You have information and communication at your fingertips and a mind that can come up with a creative workaround for anything. And, hey, at least you don't have fun things like birthday parties and weddings to distract you. Especially if you're studying for the bar, you don't need that taking you away from your outlines right now anyway!

Always looks for the silver lining and hold on to it. There are things you can't change (like a stay at home order) and there are things you can (like how you think about it and react to it). Knowing the difference will really lower your stress levels (which I'm sure are sky high right now). Even though you cannot physically interact with people right now, personal connections

are crucial to your career. Meet people virtually or however you can. Take that externship, even if it's only going to be online. Watch that webinar and reach out after to the presenter. Volunteer with an organization helping people with landlord-tenant or bankruptcy issues over the phone. Or whatever you like to do.

Your work will speak for itself and people will remember you, even if they've never met you in person. You never know when one of these people will ask you if you need work or will be on your hiring committee. But don't forget your reputation is everything, so make sure you wear pants on your zoom calls. And don't gossip in the chat box, even if you think it's private. Word gets around (and I heard the final zoom transcript includes those private chats!). This is a tough time to be a law student or trying to find your first legal job, but you've got this!

Courtney Throgmorton, Assistant Attorney General
AGO Ecology Division
Drake University Law School, Class of 2007

I graduated from law school in December 2007 and took the Washington bar in February 2008. By June 2008, I was a brand new lawyer and very eager to start my career. I hoped to secure a job in water or environmental law right away. Unfortunately, 2008 was a particularly bad year to be a new lawyer. Many of the large firms were deferring their associates for 1-2 years and paying them to work for other places, like non-profits or NGOs. Several state and local governments had implemented a hiring freeze. I secured my first attorney job by November 2008. Several of my law school friends were unemployed for more than 18 months after graduation. Needless to say, jobs were scarce. Environmental law jobs were practically non-existent.

Fast forward 12 years and our economic future is not clear. It is possible that you will graduate from law school, pass the bar, and then be thrown into a similar (or even worse) situation. The career you've been working for may not seem attainable...yet. I encourage you to look for job opportunities beyond your intended career goal. You may have to take a few professional detours to ultimately get where you want to go. If you keep an open mind and look for experiences that will help develop you as a lawyer, you will be better prepared for that "dream job" when it becomes available.

Even though I am now practicing in water and environmental law, I can honestly say that I would not change any part of my legal career. Some of my most rewarding professional experiences and accomplishments have been in legal jobs that I never envisioned taking when I was a law student. Be willing to take a risk and look for jobs beyond the plan that you have made for yourself. The job you want or even thought you had might not be available when you pass the bar and swear in. Instead of losing all hope, regroup and adapt. Good lawyers must do this on a regular basis.

Rarely in life will you have clients with simple black and white legal problems. Even when everything seems to be going your way, a curveball might be right around the corner. Consider landing your first lawyer job in an uncertain economic period your first professional curveball. Congratulations and welcome to the profession!

Benjamin Zelen, Assistant Chief Counsel for Environmental
Office of Chief Counsel, U.S. Department of Energy
Florida Coastal School of Law, Class of 2008

I wanted to do environmental law when I went to law school. While I was there I was strongly encouraged to have a backup plan because I was told there are not that many environmental attorney positions. I spent a lot of time on elder law as my backup. However, within 9 months of graduating I was an environmental attorney. Determination can help you overcome the odds.

Julian Beattie, Assistant Attorney General
AGO Ecology Division
University of Washington School of Law, Class of 2012

Stay optimistic, and stay committed to your goal of practicing environmental and land use law. You may not land your dream job immediately, but the best things are always worth waiting for. Use this time to take small steps. Gain practical skills and stay current with your networks. It took me five years of practice before I landed my first environmental law job. While you are waiting, keep up to date on environmental issues, and above all, stay patient. If this is where you want to be, you will eventually find a home here.

Aurora Janke, Assistant Attorney General
AGO Environmental Protection Division
University of Washington School of Law, Class of 2012

Being a law student and a lawyer can be incredibly stressful, even in normal times. As you continue in your legal training or begin your journey into the legal profession, my best advice for managing stress is to remember that you are more than a lawyer or a law student.

You will be a more effective lawyer for a longer period of time if you create time and space for the things that bring you joy, motivation, peace, and mental and physical health. For me, I am much more effective at managing my stress (and shrugging off the things that ultimately don't matter) when I get outside and go on a run or a hike or when I make time to connect with my loved ones.

Work will always call to you, but you do not always need to answer. Create boundaries that allow you mental and physical space outside of work and then be fully present when you do work. My guess (and hope) is that you will find better balance that makes you a better (and happier and healthier) lawyer.

Kiera Miller, Assistant Attorney General
AGO Natural Resources Division
Seattle University School of Law, Class of 2014

Congratulations on getting this far in law school! I cannot imagine what it's like to be studying and preparing during these strange and uncertain times. I have a few words of advice for the bar exam—some of it is advice given to me during my bar prep and some of it based on personal experience.

You have been training for this for three years (at least). You have all of the skills and tools that you need. Follow the bar prep instructions and take one day at a time. Studying for the bar is a game of mental endurance—it is not a sprint. Figure out a system that works for you and go with it. Think about taking practice tests in different environments (maybe a different room, or in a different seat at the table even).

If you feel overwhelmed, it's okay. You're not alone in that. Take deep breaths, walk around the block, lay on the floor, whatever. But then get back to it. If you have a hard day, don't beat yourself up. Just start fresh the next day. Definitely get into a sleep schedule, and eat your vegetables and brain food. Try to do something physical, like walk or run or stretch or do yoga or whatever you're into.

The practice of law is dynamic. It is intellectually demanding and challenging and rewarding. There are so many different ways to practice law and different ways to serve the public and the community. I hope that finals and the bar go well, and that you enjoy the job as much as I do.

Emily Nelson, Assistant Attorney General
AGO Ecology Division
University of Washington School of Law, Class of 2014

- Remote learning and testing, including Bar prep

In my opinion, Bar prep is better in isolation anyway. I recommend treating it like a job and studying consistently during “office” hours, making sure to completely disconnect at a certain time each day to let your brain rest and absorb the day's lesson. It is true that the Bar is a mile wide and about an inch deep, so don't worry about memorizing everything. And, no one cares what your score was—the bare minimum is just fine!

- Job searching during an economic downturn

Be open and willing to deviate from your “plan.” If your dream job is not going to be a reality for the next few years, consider jobs that will still help you develop the skills we rely on in practicing environmental law (i.e., administrative law, litigation, research, writing). Volunteer with legal clinics or legal services orgs while you search to help with networking and to boost the practical experience you can cite to on your resume. You may discover a passion for another subject matter you might not have otherwise considered.

Grace King, Attorney-Advisor
Office of Chief Counsel, U.S. Department of Energy
Gonzaga University School of Law, Class of 2015

1. Surviving Law School
 - a. Try to craft class schedules, internships, jobs, study group schedules that balance
 - i. Required curriculum for graduation
 - ii. As many classes that cover topics that are fair game on bar exam
 - iii. Electives that are of interest to your desired area of practice. Think outside the box, too – environmental law isn't simply substantive courses on different environmental statutes, etc., but could also be something like administrative law, legal research and writing, environmental policy, real estate, just as much as NEPA, CWA, etc.
 - iv. At least some time outside to walk, get fresh air, sun, out of stuffy law library (presumably, love of outdoors is at least part of why you want to practice environmental law, right?)
 - b. Don't overload yourself with too many extracurricular activities
2. Bar prep
 - a. Make a set schedule that includes some off time
 - b. If you're finding yourself thinking about bar prep during one of your scheduled off days or during your scheduled off time, consider whether you have a non-traditional way to study (flash cards while on treadmill, quizzing yourself during commercial breaks while watching TV)
 - c. Reach out to folks you know who have passed the bar for a pep talk – it helps
3. Job searching during pandemic
 - a. Consider your needs – broaden your search to JD preferred or anything that doesn't require you to pass the bar, if that is an added stressor for you
 - b. If you've been invited to interview and asked to propose times that work for you, have set times ready to propose
 - c. Dress up for video conference interviews, phone interviews (this is true whether in pandemic or not)
 - d. Have as many folks review your resume, cover letter as possible, take edits with a grain of salt

I am happy to take time to speak to any law students, recent grads, or bar preppers who may want to just chat and get ideas or vent frustrations.

Gabrielle Gurian, Assistant Attorney General
AGO Ecology Division
Georgetown University Law Center, Class of 2019

Thoughts on: Remote learning and testing, including – especially during – Bar prep

- Remote learning is hard. It is hard to stay motivated, and it is hard to focus without interacting with peers. When I was preparing for the Bar, I found it helpful to schedule breaks into my study time, like 15 minutes every two hours to take walks outside or exercise. I also found it helpful to have chat groups with peers to discuss answers to essay questions or issues, and to review what was difficult or challenging about a subject.
 - Oddly, when it came to focusing for long periods -- I also found that I worked better if I changed my location from time to time. Sometimes I'd work at a desk, the kitchen table, the couch, the floor. Sometimes I'd type my notes, hand write them, put them on flash cards. Switch it up.
 - For me, for Bar prep specifically, I realized it was easy to compare myself to other people's progress -- i.e. they finished 10% this week, I am only at 7% -- try not to do that. You'll finish what you finish. Some days will be more productive than others. Some weeks more productive than others. Yes, you have to set goals for yourself, and yes you have to be diligent. But, you also have to be cognizant of when you can't focus anymore, when you need to go for a walk, and when you need to sleep. Trust your process and don't compare it so much to everyone else's. This is easier if talk to people outside your immediate peer group, a friend or mentor that has been through it before.
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REFLECTIONS AND ADVICE FROM PRIVATE SECTOR ATTORNEYS

Maia D. Bellon, Partner
Cascadia Law Group
Former Director, Washington State Department of Ecology
Arizona State University College of Law, Class of 1994

First of all, congratulations ... you are a law student! Being admitted into law school is an achievement in and of itself, and that is something you should be proud of, especially during these unprecedented times. Keep up the great work!

Law School Tips: After you complete your core curriculum, enroll in classes to learn about areas of the law that you might not think you will practice in, but that have piqued your curiosity. And if you are drawn to a particular professor's teaching style, cadence, or humor, take additional classes taught by that professor. I was able to take multiple classes from a wonderful environmental and natural resources professor who ended up helping me find a part-time job tutoring 1Ls, inviting me to attend depositions in a *pro bono* case, and writing a great letter of recommendation. This is your opportunity to gain a range of academic and procedural knowledge while meeting a variety of professors and legal professionals that can support you in law school and beyond.

Bar Exam Tips: Take a Bar study course! Everything you need to know will be included in the course and materials. After you have given the course book the once over, flag the most vexing topics and methodically focus on those areas during your studies. While you are in study mode, make sure you build into your daily routine some distractions that make you feel good about yourself and make you laugh hard. And the day before the Bar exam, do not study. Plan a relaxing day, have a special dinner, watch a comedy, hydrate—hydrate—hydrate, and go to bed early. This will help your brain reboot and recharge for “showtime.” You got this!

Job Search Tips: Landing a job is not just about the look of your resume or the sound of your recommendation letters, but about your relationships and connections. Paid summer associate positions will likely be harder to come by these days, so take advantage of other opportunities such as clerkships, externships, internships, and volunteer work. Join public interest and community associations that feed your passion and give you joy. Genuinely nurturing and expanding your legal community contacts is key, as employers are more likely to hire you if they also have insight into your work ethic and personality. Don't give up or get down if you do not land your dream job right away, as sometimes wandering off the beaten path will open doors that provide you unexpected opportunities you never thought possible. Looking forward to seeing you around the bend!

Barry Ziker, Managing Partner
Joyce Ziker Parkinson, PLLC
University of Michigan Law School, Class of 1980

Surviving law school – Stay on top of the reading (but you’ve likely already figured that out) and rely on your classmates to talk through complex issues. Practicing lawyers still do that every day.

Prep for the bar – Spend the money on a prep class, keep up with all of the assignments and otherwise stay with their program, and you’ll pass the bar. Really. It’s not more complicated than that.

Looking for a job – This is a really tough time to look for work for all of the obvious reasons, there’s just no way to sugar coat that. Still, put yourself out there by emailing a cover letter and resume to either an attorney that has a practice you’d like to emulate, or at larger firms, through their HR group. If you’re not able to find work with a particular firm but feel like you want to make a connection (there’s always next year), then a friendly email to one of the firm’s attorneys asking if s/he would be willing to spend a few minutes on the phone with you to talk about environmental law in Seattle would be worth a try.

Ken Lederman, Principal
Foster Garvey P.C.
Seattle University School of Law, Class of 1996

1. Don’t take law school classes just because the subject matter will be on the Bar Exam
 - The Bar prep courses will provide details on those 1-2 classes that you didn’t take but will be on the exam. Don’t let the Bar exam stop you from taking classes or clinics that motivate your intellectual curiosity. And if you have the chance to do an externship or clerkship for credit rather than taking more classes, then take it. You will always learn more from living your efforts rather than just completing tasks.
2. Make a networking and client development plan, and stick to it
 - Developing relationships and connecting with colleagues and professionals is always going on. Stay organized and focused in your efforts, and make a conscious effort to keep up connections over time rather than just have “one-time” discussions. Law schools offer excellent template plans to work from, and having a plan will lead to your ability to enhance that plan as you move forward. It will also help you on your messaging, particularly on how you differentiate yourself from other young lawyers.
3. Get a Hobby
 - It can be anything – fitness, music, art, philanthropic efforts, etc... But make sure you have something that isn’t completely connected to law, and that you can truly embrace as your own. A hobby is particularly beneficial if you can do something that allows you to utilize a totally different skill-set than the ones you use in your legal efforts.

Alexandra Kleeman, Partner
Stoel Rives LLP
Vanderbilt University Law School, Class of 2011

I started law school in August 2008. Two months later, the markets crashed, and the Great Recession hit. To put it mildly, it was a less-than-ideal time to be embarking on a legal career. I was incredibly worried about finding a job and making my student loan payments. I've been thinking a lot about those times over the past few months because there seems to be just as much, if not more, uncertainty in the legal profession right now. Not just for students, but for practicing attorneys too. In other words, we're all scared right now. You're not alone. I don't know how valuable my thoughts are, but here goes.

If you're looking for a job right now, my best advice is get scrappy, creative, and flexible. And be kind to yourself. This is a difficult time for all organizations—public, private, and nonprofit, and I imagine it's going to be a while before anyone can think about major hiring decisions (unless you're looking at Amazon).

That being said, expand your geographic search area. Watch the regional legal markets, and see where things start bouncing back, then start applying aggressively. Write thoughtful and tailored cover letters. Tell employers why they specifically are your first choice (even if they aren't). Proof read everything; I can't tell you how many applications I've seen thrown out for typos or poor grammar.

Think about how a job that's available now might lead you to something else in the future, and be flexible. Maybe it's not what you want to be doing right now, but could it become something more interesting? More aligned with your passions? Could your passions evolve? Don't take a bad job just for the sake of having a job, but if a valuable opportunity comes up, consider it, even if it's not something you originally saw yourself doing. This is one person's opinion, but I believe having good experience on your resume is better than extended periods of nothing. Employers are forgetful; in a year or two, they may not remember how hard this time was, so having something on your resume is probably going to be better than nothing.

This brings me to the be kind point. You can't invent jobs out of thin air. This time is unbelievably hard. Everyone is struggling. Do not beat yourself up if you aren't where you want to be now, or in six months, or a year, or two years. We've never had to bounce back from something like this; there's no roadmap. But, you're a high achiever; you finished law school! To the extent you can, take pleasure in the forced slowness. Enjoy the things you love about yourself and your life. Hug your dog/cat/child/partner/succulent a lot. And, maybe apply to Amazon?

If you're still in school or looking for a job now, consider doing a clerkship. I remember I was very resistant to the idea when I was in school, but right now, it's a fantastic idea. Clerks have an edge in hiring at firms, and it's a great way to learn how to be a lawyer. It's good experience, even if it's not the experience you were hoping to have. (It goes to my whole "be flexible" thing.) And, if you're still in school, especially if you're starting your first year, really focus on

your grades. I hate to apply more pressure than you already feel, but grades matter. They're going to matter even more now. Do your absolute best.

Good luck. My final advice comes from Baz Luhrmann. I have it written on a sticky attached to my computer monitor because I need to repeat it often: "Don't worry about the future. Or worry, but know that worrying is as effective as trying to solve an algebra equation by chewing bubble gum." Just do your best; that's all you can do, and it will be more than enough.

Valerie Fairwell, Attorney
Cascadia Law Group
University of Washington School of Law, Class of 2013

- 1) Get to know lawyers — lots of them (aka network!). Having a good network will be invaluable in your first years of practice and for years to come. Ask everyone you speak with to connect you with one or two other people.
- 2) You probably don't need to do *everything* the bar prep company gives you to do.
- 3) During bar prep, find something that is relaxing to do every day or at least every week, whether it is working out or a hobby.