

SEAN LYNESS

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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL OF LAW

Assistant Professor of Law

2025–

Civil Procedure; Water Law; Legislation & Regulation

Admissions Committee (2025–), Chair (2026–27)

Faculty Development & Committee on Committees (2026–)

Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee (2026–)

Faculty Secretary (2025–26); Curriculum Committee (2025–26)

NEW ENGLAND LAW | BOSTON

Assistant Professor of Law

2023–25

Visiting Assistant Professor of Law

2022–23

Faculty Fellow

2020–22

Civil Procedure; Property; Administrative Law

Water Law; Environmental Litigation; Constitutional Law

Adjunct Faculty Review, Co-Chair (2024–25)

Rules & Admissions Committees (2021–25); Dean Search (2024)

Environmental Moot Court Team (2021–24)

Instructor of Legal Writing

2019–20

Legal Research & Writing I, II

EDUCATION

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL, J.D., *cum laude*

2015

Harvard Environmental Law Review, Technical Editor

BROWN UNIVERSITY, A.B., Political Science

2012

Pi Sigma Alpha, Political Science Honors Society

PUBLICATIONS

The (Limited) American Right to Roam, 112 IOWA L. REV. (forth. 2027).

Litter Law, 91 BROOK. L. REV. 911 (2026).

Groundwater Law and Texas v. New Mexico & Colorado, 55 ENVTL. L. 507 (2025).

- Reprinted in 63 FOUND. J. FOR NAT. RESOURCES & ENERGY L. (2026).

Entrusting Groundwater, 2024 WIS. L. REV. 1823 (2024).

Groundwater Law's Limits, 48:1 ENVIRONS ENVTL. L. & POL'Y J. 1 (2024).

Localizing the Public Trust, 49 COLUM. J. ENVTL. L. 49 (2024).

- Reprinted in LAND USE AND ENVTL. L. REV., 2025-26.

The Constitutional Public Trust in a Warming World, 41 PACE ENVTL. L. REV. 58 (2023) (symposium).

Revitalizing the State Environmental Responsible Corporate Officer Doctrine, 64 B.C. L. REV. 253 (2023).

The Local Public Trust Doctrine, 34 GEO. ENVTL. L. REV. 1 (2021).

- Case note in Blumm & Wood, THE PUBLIC TRUST DOCTRINE IN ENVTL. AND NAT. RES. L. 221 (Supp. 2021).

Tangled Up in Procedure: The State and Local Climate Cases After Baltimore and Ford, HARV. ENVTL. L. REV. ONLINE (Oct. 2021).

A Doctrine Untethered: "Passage Along the Shore" Under the Rhode Island Public Trust Doctrine, 26 ROGER WILLIAMS U. L. REV. 102 (2021).

- Cited by both parties in *Stilts, LLC v. State of Rhode Island*, WC-2023-0481 (R.I. Super.), the plaintiff in *R.I. Ass'n of Coastal Taxpayers v. Neronha*, 1:23-cv-278 (D.R.I. 2023), and by the State in *Roth v. State of Rhode Island*, WC-2023-0440 (R.I. Super.).
- Case note in Blumm & Wood, THE PUBLIC TRUST DOCTRINE IN ENVTL. AND NATURAL RES. LAW 139 (3d ed. 2021).

PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

RHODE ISLAND ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE 2016-20

Special Assistant Attorney General

Environmental, Open Government, & Litigation Units

RHODE ISLAND SUPERIOR COURT 2015-16

Law Clerk, Honorable Presiding Justice Alice B. Gibney

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE Summer 2014

Law Clerk, Environment & Natural Resources Division

PROVIDENCE CITY SOLICITOR'S OFFICE Summer 2014

Law Clerk

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY Summer 2013

Law Clerk, Environmental Enforcement Section, Region 1

COMMUNITY WORK

Save the Bay, Legal Committee	2023–
<i>In re: RI Coastal Resources Management Council</i> , 2020-11-84	2023–
<i>Weekapaug Fire District v. Town of Westerly</i> , PM-2023-06573 - Pro bono support of public right-of-way designation	
RI Bar Association, Environmental and Energy Law Committee	2025–
<i>Corbett v. RI Coastal Resources Management Council</i> , PC-2024-6628 - Pro bono support of coastal regulation	2025
AALS Section for New Law Professors, Outreach Committee	2023–25
Co-Supervisor, UN Fund for Coral Reefs Research	2022

OTHER WRITINGS

Brief for Surfrider Foundation and Backcountry Hunters & Anglers as Amicus Curiae Supporting Defendant, *Stilts/Roth v. Rhode Island*, SU-2024-0244-MP (R.I. Supreme Ct.) (co-authored), March 2026.

“Chevron Deference’s Demise Suggests *Auer* Won’t Last Much Longer,” *Bloomberg Law Insights*, July 10, 2024.

Brief for Law Professors as Amicus Curiae Supporting Plaintiff, *Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment v. Utah Dep’t of Natural Res.*, No. 230906637 (Utah 3d Dist. Ct.) (co-authored), May 2024.

“Managing the Groundwater Governance Gap,” *New England Law Review Faculty Blog*, May 5, 2024.

“A Primer on Rhode Island’s Shoreline Access Rights,” *R.I. Bar Journal*, September/October 2023.

“*Biden v. Nebraska* and Growing Judicial Conversationalism,” *New England Law Review Faculty Blog*, July 31, 2023.

“Oil Giants Inch Closer to Discovery in State Climate Cases,” *Bloomberg Law Insights*, April 26, 2023.

“State and Local Climate Lawsuits are 4-1 at the Federal Circuit Courts,” *Northwestern University Law Review Of Note*, June 9, 2022.

“No, Really, Civil Procedure Matters: The State and Local Climate Cases,” *New England Law Review Faculty Blog*, June 5, 2022.

“Rhode Island Senate Must Act to Preserve the Shoreline,” *THE BOSTON GLOBE RHODE ISLAND*, June 3, 2022.

“The Public Trust Doctrine and *Mississippi v. Tennessee*,” *University of Cincinnati Law Review Blog*, April 19, 2022.

“2021 Public Trust Doctrine Update,” *Water Law Institute* 5-1, ROCKY MT. MIN. L. FOUND. 2021.

“The Rhode Island Public Trust Doctrine: 1663–1982,” Written testimony before the Rhode Island Special Legislative Commission on Lateral Shoreline Access, September 23, 2021.

“Good Lawyering: Oral Arguments in *Baltimore*,” *New England Law Review Faculty Blog*, July 13, 2021.

“Climate Cruelty and Local Governments,” *The Environmental Blog*, June 5, 2021.

“Justice Kagan and Judicial Conversationalism,” *New England Law Review Faculty Blog*, April 6, 2021.

“Preserve Access to Rhode Island Shore,” *THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL*, June 23, 2018.

PRESENTATIONS

Climate Takings

- Vermont Law School Colloquium on Environmental Scholarship, September 25, 2026 (selected).
- Natural Resources Law Teachers Institute, May 27, 2026 (selected).
- UMass Faculty Development Committee Works In Progress, April 3, 2026.

The (Limited) American Right to Roam

- AALS Annual Meeting, Environment & Natural Resources Works In Progress, January 6, 2026.
- Early Environmental Law Scholars Conference, University of Florida Levin College of Law, November 8, 2025.
- Vermont Law School Colloquium on Environmental Scholarship, September 19, 2025 (selected).

Groundwater Law and Texas v. New Mexico & Colorado

- The Supreme Court and the Environment, Symposium, Lewis & Clark Law School, April 5, 2025 (selected).

Litter Law

- Mercer Law Virtual Environmental Law Guest Speakers, February 23, 2026 (selected).
- Vermont Law School Colloquium on Environmental Scholarship, September 20, 2024 (selected).
- Columbia Law School Sabin Colloquium on Innovative Environmental Law Scholarship, May 24, 2024 (selected).

Constitutional Law: Individual Rights, Brown University Pre-College Program, June 2024.

Entrusting Groundwater

- Sustainability Conference of American Legal Educators, Arizona State University College of Law, May 10, 2024 (selected).
- Northeastern University School of Law Junior Scholars Conference, March 1, 2024.
- Vermont Law School Colloquium on Environmental Scholarship, September 23, 2023 (selected).
- Online Workshop for Environmental Scholarship, March 13, 2023.

Rhode Island's Public Trust Doctrine

- Expert Witness Testimony before the Rhode Island Senate Judiciary Committee on S0417, a Shoreline Access Protection Bill, May 4, 2023 (invited testimony).
- Expert Witness Testimony before the Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee on H5174, a Shoreline Access Protection Bill, March 28, 2023 (invited testimony).
- Save the Bay Workshop on Shoreline Access, January 9, 2023 (invited).
- Expert Witness Testimony before the Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee on H8055, a Shoreline Access Protection Bill, April 5, 2022 (invited testimony).
- Testimony before the Rhode Island Special Legislative Commission on Lateral Shoreline Access, September 23, 2021 (invited testimony).

Localizing the Public Trust

- Vermont Law School Colloquium on Environmental Scholarship, September 24, 2022 (selected).
- Columbia Law School Sabin Colloquium on Innovative Environmental Law Scholarship, May 26, 2022 (selected).
- Online Workshop for Environmental Scholarship, March 10, 2022.

"The Constitutional Public Trust in a Warming World," Pace Environmental Law Review Symposium on Environmental Constitutionalism, October 28, 2022.

“The Reshaping of the Roberts Court,” New England Law Boston, March 15, 2022 (invited panelist).

“Using Non-Environmental Law to Combat Climate Change,” George Washington University Law School, February 21, 2022 (invited panelist).

Revitalizing the State Environmental Responsible Corporate Officer Doctrine

- AALS Annual Meeting, Works-In-Progress, January 5, 2022.
- Vermont Law School Colloquium on Environmental Scholarship, September 25, 2021 (selected).
- Natural Resources Law Teachers Institute, June 4, 2021 (selected).

“2021 Public Trust Doctrine Update,” The Foundation for Natural Resources & Energy Law, Water Law Institute, November 4, 2021 (invited speaker).

The Local Public Trust Doctrine

- New England Law Boston Faculty Workshop, March 18, 2021.
- Online Workshop for Environmental Scholarship, February 4, 2021.

“Legal Writing Tips,” Presentation to Summer Interns at the Rhode Island Office of the Attorney General, Summers 2020–26.

MEDIA

Allison Prang, “Exxon, Massachusetts Clash Over Climate Damages, Public Records,” BLOOMBERG LAW, May 21, 2026.

Nancy Lavin, “Quidnessett is done negotiating with state coastal regulators. Now, it’s taking them to court.” RHODE ISLAND PBS, September 23, 2025.

Alex Nunes, “Judge sides with property owners in blow to new shoreline access law,” THE PUBLIC’S RADIO, July 15, 2024.

Nancy Lavin, “R.I. Superior Court judge sides with property owners in shoreline access law dispute,” RHODE ISLAND CURRENT, July 15, 2024.

Nancy Lavin, “Shoreline Access in the R.I. Constitution?” RHODE ISLAND CURRENT, February 6, 2024.

Nancy Lavin, “Same Arguments. Different Court: Shoreline Access Debate to Play Out in State System,” RHODE ISLAND CURRENT, January 9, 2024.

Brian Amaral, “Property Owner’s Suit Seeks to Block New R.I. Shore Access Law,” THE BOSTON GLOBE, July 7, 2023.

Alex Nunes, “Private Property Owners File Lawsuit Against Rhode Island’s New Shoreline Access Law,” THE PUBLIC’S RADIO, July 7, 2023.

Brian Amaral, “R.I.’s Shore Access Bill is Now Law. Will it Survive Court Challenges?” THE BOSTON GLOBE, June 28, 2023.

Ryan Blessing, “Spring Ave. Fight Aided by Online Appeals,” THE WESTERLY SUN, May 27, 2023.

Ellen Liberman, “A Shore Thing,” RHODE ISLAND MONTHLY, April 2022.

Antonia Noori Farzan, “Shoreline Access Bill Met with Both Public Support and Talk of Lawsuits in First Hearing,” THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL, April 6, 2022.

Brian Amaral, “The Right to Exclude: R.I. Study Panel on Shoreline Rights Hears Property Owner’s Side,” THE BOSTON GLOBE, Nov. 4, 2021.

Brian Amaral, “Expert Suggests Rhode Islanders Might Need to Rethink the Law on Shoreline Rights,” THE BOSTON GLOBE, Sept. 23, 2021.

Antonia Noori Farzan, “The Little-Known Story of Why Narragansett Can Charge You Admission at Town Beach,” THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL, Sept. 2, 2021.

BAR

Massachusetts; Rhode Island; Federal District Court for the District of Rhode Island; First Circuit Court of Appeals.