Many of us in the Legal Planet community are deeply saddened by the passing of Michael Zischke on January 2nd. A talented and award-winning land use and environmental lawyer, Mike was widely recognized for his extensive expertise in California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) litigation and compliance. He co-authored *Practice Under the California Environmental Quality Act*, the two-volume treatise most often cited by California courts, first published in 1993 and now in its second edition. His in-depth knowledge of CEQA set a gold standard for the field, earning him respect from colleagues and clients alike.

A native of Orinda, Mike attended high school there before heading t

o Dartmouth College, where his early passion for human rights led him to design a student course on the subject. Although he initially aspired to become a human rights lawyer, his interest in environmental issues ultimately shaped his legal path. Before law school, Mike worked for Congressman Bob Carr of Michigan in Washington, D.C., and even considered a run for Congress.

Mike graduated from Berkeley Law in 1982. While a student there, Mike served as Articles Editor for *Ecology Law Quarterly* (ELQ), where he found his community—"the most fun people, best parties"—despite what he claimed was his general lack of enthusiasm for classes. After graduating, Mike helped draft the incorporation papers for the Environmental Law Research Institute (ELRI), which for many years raised funds to support ELQ. His early involvement in environmental law at Berkeley was just the beginning of a distinguished career that would leave a lasting impact on the field and on all who had the privilege of working with him.

Over his remarkable 40+ year career, Mike's dedication and passion resulted in countless professional accolades and published articles. For 22 consecutive years, he was ranked among California's leading attorneys in both environmental law and real estate/land use by *Chambers USA*, one of the legal industry's most prestigious honors. According to *Chambers*, clients described Mike as "one of the leading land use attorneys in the US" and "an excellent environmental attorney."

He was also a founding member of the Advisory Board for the Center for Law, Energy & Environment at Berkeley Law (CLEE), where his guidance helped shape CLEE's trajectory and growth in the environmental policy sphere.

Ethan Elkind, Director of CLEE's Climate Program, reflected, "Mike was quite a force in the CEQA world. His mastery of the law and ability to navigate complex environmental regulations made him one of the most prominent practitioners in the field. His influence and expertise helped shape how CEQA is practiced today, and his work engendered respect from practitioners on all sides of the CEQA world."

Mike was deeply committed to his profession and served as a mentor to countless attorneys. He was involved in numerous professional organizations, including Lambda Alpha (an honorary land economics society), the American College of Real Estate Lawyers, and the California Building Industry Association. His leadership in these groups and his extensive writings on CEQA and environmental law cemented his reputation as a thought leader and a lawyer's lawyer—admired for his wisdom, sharp intellect, and even a touch of Seussian wit.

Beyond his professional achievements, Mike was a lover of California history, a passionate theater crew member, a world traveler, and a captivating storyteller. His philanthropic contributions extended far beyond CLEE, reflecting his deep commitment to public service and education. He offered pro bono legal guidance to a child care center law group and was a steadfast supporter of Berkeley Law and ELQ. He also actively supported his wife's philanthropic interests, including efforts to help Sonoma County recover from devastating wildfires.

Above all, Mike was a devoted husband to Nadine and a loving father to Julie and Jessica. His warmth, generosity, and brilliance will be deeply missed. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, friends, and colleagues.