ELI Insider
A Newsletter of the Environmental Law Institute Leadership Council

Volume 12, Issue 1, Summer 2024
Edited by ELI Staff

Forever Adding More Dimensions:
Daring to Dream With Margaret Hill

The word "simply" is not in Hill's vocabulary. She conducts her work to her meticulous standards, a fair and just counsel in all the matters that she takes on. But she never let herself be "simply" a graduate student, "simply" a young woman, "simply" capable of one thing.

Hill chased her ambitions to Boston, then Pittsburgh, then Washington, D.C., and then back to near where she grew up in Philadelphia, where she now Co-Chairs Blank Rome's Energy/Chemical Industry Team and previously chaired the Firm's Energy, Environment and Mass Torts Practice Group. Today she is described across the internet as a powerhouse who helped reshape the industry, and who continually receives the highest ratings for her work.

No matter what she chooses to try, Margaret pushes the boundaries of what can be accomplished

Hill's first foray into environmental work happened following her studies as a graduate student in political science and international relations when she began working at the Gulf Oil Corporation's Domestic Policy and Planning group at its headquarters in Pittsburgh. She finished a two-year graduate program in one year as her ambitions took hold. As a young employee, Hill had unique opportunities to collaborate directly with senior executives mapping out corporate strategy across the country. The biggest challenges that Gulf Oil was facing centered around environmental and energy development. Hill focused on domestic strategy for many pertinent issues including offshore oil leasing, mineral development, nuclear power, and water protection.

Hill had a strong political science background before working at Gulf Oil, but her work at the company sparked interest in the environment and legal niches. So, she enrolled in law school while at Gulf Oil, and continued working there after she graduated. But after Chevron acquired most of the company, and in a testament to her tenacity and adaptability, she seized the opportunity to make the most of her multifaceted educational background. Hill redirected her career path with a goal of gaining more experience practicing environmental law and joined the U.S. Department of Justice as a Trial Attorney in what is now known as the Environment and Natural Resources Division. Here, she continued solidifying her passion for practicing environmental law for two years, after which she dabbled in lobbying before moving into private practice at Winston Strawn and then on to Blank Rome.

Throughout the early years of her career in Washington, D.C., Hill remembers ELI as a premier organization that was always a fixture of the field. She has been a longtime attendee of our annual Award Dinner and remembers engaging with ELI's work substantively during a spike in Superfund litigation shortly after becoming an attorney. Blank Rome was already a member firm when Hill joined their practice in 2000, and she was glad to further her association with ELI.

Hill's practice at Blank Rome is broad in subject and reach, including compliance, permitting, enforcement, transaction, and litigation. While many choose to specialize in certain areas, Hill draws on her time at Gulf Oil for her generalist skills handling cross-cutting issues related to all environmental statutes, undeterred by state lines. She has worked with every EPA regional office and takes clients from multiple states. Hill would not have it any other way. She loves the excitement of never knowing what kind of issue will land on her desk day-to-day and is always up for the challenge of diving into a topic she has never worked on before. Being a jack of all trades is necessary for her transactional work because the conversations often go beyond just one issue. Her greatest joy in her work is assisting companies in compliance with environmental laws and contributing to the development of their business.

If Hill could edit her career path to do anything differently, she would have stayed at DOJ longer to gain more of the experience that it offers. She believes the best part about Justice is the opportunity to do a variety of work and to learn from excellent, intelligent attorneys. However, she is fortunate to have also found excellent, intelligent attorneys outside of DOJ.

Hill credits her former mentor at Winston Strawn, John Proctor, as the strongest influence on her career. His motto was simple: "work hard." Proctor passed this drive down to Hill, putting a strong emphasis on always expanding her skills and trying to do anything and everything that comes her way. She took this advice to heart and, years later, used it to start the Energy and Chemical Industry Team at Blank Rome in 2009. At the time, the Marcellus Shale Play was expanding, and Hill recognized the unique opportunity to extend the reach of the Firm's practice. Her informal team grew over the years and now the Firm formally recognizes industry teams like it in addition to their practice groups.

Hill's personal interests are no less ambitious than her professional ones. She often travels to upstate New York in remote areas of the Adirondacks to snowmobile in deep winter. Though Hill warns of the mental fortitude it takes to manage temperatures well below freezing and the difficulty of operating the heavy machine, she assures that the beauty of the landscape is worth it every time.

No matter what she is doing, Hill is solutions-oriented, diving into an issue headfirst to parse through the varied considerations and find the viable outcome. Her hope is that her work can encourage more young people to focus on practicing environmental law.

We Have the Tools to Start on Plastic Pollution

By Cecilia Diedrich — Environmental Law Institute

Plastic has become ubiquitous in modern life. It's increasingly apparent, however, that the convenience it provides comes at a higher price than most of us realize.

First developed in the early 1900s, plastic production has grown exponentially. A century later, the petroleum feedstock and varied chemical composition of derived plastics are proving to have detrimental impacts on the climate, the overall environment, and human health. Along with production increases, plastic pollution and its negative impacts have also grown exponentially. Plastics are readily seen on our streets and in our waterways, but they've also permeated the deepest parts of our oceans, the air above our tallest mountains, the food we eat, and our own blood and cells.

Taking stock of the environmental and human health crises that have resulted from our use and failure to adequately recycle and dispose of plastic, world governments have decided to act. Two years ago, at the resumed fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly, 175 nations agreed to develop an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution — negotiations on which are underway.

Both in relation to these talks and on the domestic front, governments at all levels in the United States have been increasing efforts to address the impacts of plastic. ELI has identified significant existing federal authorities to regulate plastic production and pollution. Having some of the most robust environmental laws in the world, and a wealth of resources, the United States is well-poised to tackle this problem.

For example, there are opportunities to regulate plastic particulate matter under the Clean Air Act, list microplastics and contaminants associated with plastics and plastic production for regulation under the Clean Water Act and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, issue government procurement requirements, exercise pollution prevention and cleanup provisions under several statutes and so much more.

That's not to say that more directed and comprehensive legislation, executive orders, regulations, etc., won't be necessary — they absolutely will be. But we have the tools to make a start of it. Now we need the momentum to use and build upon the tools at our disposal so future generations won't be plagued by plastic pollution and its consequences.

As we look toward a global solution, it's apparent that plastic use and pollution is closely linked with the greatest environmental challenges facing our world. In **Reimagining Environmental and Natural Resources Law**, ELI looks at climate change, water pollution, materials use and conservation, ecosystem degradation, and environmental justice — and offers solutions to these challenges. Tactics suggested to address these problems, such as building a circular economy, instituting a price on carbon emissions, and incorporating environmental rights into law, could go a long way in addressing plastic pollution and bettering our world overall.

Interested in learning more? Please click here for ELI's work on plastics.

Member Updates

John Cruden has been elected to the board of the Council on Strategic Risks.

Alexandra Dapolito Dunn was named President and CEO of CropLife America, an association of the nation's pesticide and crop protection companies over 90 years old headquartered in Arlington, VA.

Michael Kavanaugh retired from Geosyntec Consultants and is now a consulting engineer and engaged with various pro bono activities with the National Academy of Engineering (NAE).

Chris Locke has joined Marten Law as the head of their new San Francisco office.

Kirsten Nathanson was elected as a Fellow of the American College of Environmental Lawyers (ACOEL).

As a member of the Leadership Council, you are a leading supporter of the Environmental Law Institute and recognized as one of the most prominent environment, energy, and natural resource professionals in the nation. **We depend heavily on the generosity of donors like you to sustain our work.** ELI needs your support today to continue our dedicated advancing of our vision for a healthy environment, prosperous economies, and vibrant communities founded on the rule of law.

There are many ways to provide support; see below or donate online.
Please give before December 1!

- **Send a contribution directly to ELI; donations are tax-deductible.** Send a check to the Environmental Law Institute, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036 or contribute online.
- **Give appreciated stock**. Giving appreciated securities may reduce your after-tax cost of giving by almost 30% as compared to giving cash (ELI can provide broker information).
- **Make a Charitable Distribution from your IRA.** This is for those age 70½ and older. Please email the contact below for information.

Please contact Kathy Wei at wei@eli.org if you have questions.

Members of the Leadership Council

Anonymous
Lynn Bergeson
Kenneth Berlin
Marisa Blackshire
J. Tom Boer
Marisa Buchanan
Laurie Burt
Leslie Carothers
RuthAnn Castro
Loyti Cheng
Lily N. Chinn
Nadira Clarke
James H. Colopy
Ann E. Condon
John C. Cruden
Paul A. Davies
Beth Deane
H. Jordan Diamond
Jay Duffy
Alexandra Dunn
Amy L. Edwards
Mason Emnett
David R. Erickson
Adeeb R. Fadil
Linda Fisher
Sally R. K. Fisk
C. Scott Fulton
J. William Futrell
Michael B. Gerrard
Michael Goodstein
Carol Green
Paul E. Hagen
Stacey Halliday
Daniel Hemel
Margaret A. Hill
Robert "Buzz" Hines
Charles Howland
Brian D. Israel
J. Scott Janoe
Carrie Jenks
Carol Jones
Michael C. Kavanaugh
Gwendolyn Keyes Fleming
Laurence S. Kirsch
Robert C. Kirsch
Adam M. Kushner
Elliott Laws
Richard Leahy
Lawrence Liebesman
Christopher Locke
John Lovenburg
Raymond Ludwiszewski
Jane C. Luxton
Michael Mahoney
Elizabeth Malone
Byron Marchant
Martha Marrapese
Roger R. Martella, Jr.
Bradley M. Marten
Craig Mathews
Keith Matthews
David E. Menotti
Thomas H. Milch
Stacey H. Mitchell
Tom Mounteer
Kevin Murray
Grant Nakayama
Kirsten L. Nathanson
Peggy Otum
Vickie Patton
Margaret E. Peloso
John Pendergrass
Robert Perciasepe
Robert V. Percival
Kevin J. Poloncarz
Ann Powers
Judith M. Praitis
Davina Pujari
Martha L. Rees
Christopher Reynolds
Kathy B. Robb
Nicholas Robinson
Shailesh Sahay
John P. and Virginia B. Sall
Justin A. Savage
Scott Schang
Ethan Shenkman
Margaret Spring
Donald W. Stever
Margaret N. Strand
Heather L. Ross and
Edward L. Strohbehn Jr.
Robert A. Sussman
Mark Templeton
William L. Thomas
Hilary Tompkins
Michael Traynor
Kimberly Udovic
Alex Wang
Benjamin F. Wilson

Names in **bold are members of the ELI Leadership Council Steering Committee*