

**“Green” pro bono is an integral part of Ropes & Gray’s commitment to practice with purpose. What does it encompass? Supporting organizations that pursue sustainability, protect natural resources and remedy other environmental issues. In this issue, we interview new pro bono committee member Jim Davis, who is spearheading work in this area, and learn about some of our green efforts, including a novel fund we created to help preserve the forests of Maine and our continuing work with the Green Tech Legal Collaborative in London. We also highlight other recent pro bono successes, such as advocating for a small business owner in Boston and tackling a number of global matters for the Public International Law & Policy Group.**

## Spotlight on Green Pro Bono

Partner Jim Davis has recently been appointed a member of the Pro Bono Committee.



Jim Davis

**Q:** How did you get involved in “green” pro bono?

**A:** I have long had a passion for the outdoors and the environment, but was looking for ways to do green pro bono work. After some searching online, I found Stanford Law School’s Lawyers for a Sustainable Economy (LSE) and asked the firm if we can join. LSE is a law firm-led initiative. In the past five years, 20 firms, including Ropes & Gray, have provided help to more than 160 startups and nonprofits interested in advancing sustainability. In 2023, these firms collectively provided over \$26 million in pro bono work on sustainability matters. **David Chun, Megan Baca** and I serve as liaisons to LSE for the firm.

**Q:** Can you give us some examples of other recent work we are doing in this space?

**A:** A cross-office team recently helped the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association develop training materials related to Zimbabwean wildlife laws for enforcement officials and judicial officers. We are providing regulatory advice to Apis Energy Technologies, a developer of telemetering and energy management solutions for public and utility companies. And for OpenAQ, a nonprofit environmental

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tech organization that aggregates and shares air quality data from across the globe, we are helping with questions around intellectual property rights and licensing arrangements. Our partners also serve as board and committee members for organizations such as the Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy and many others.

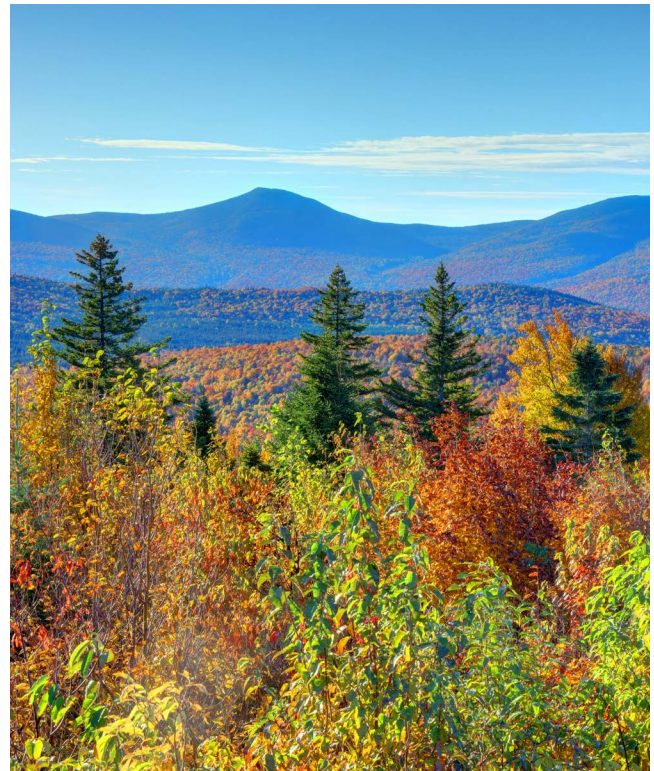
**Q:** What stands out about our work in this area?

**A:** The breadth of the work is really impressive. We offer support in so many practice areas—asset management, mergers & acquisitions, life sciences, intellectual property, real estate, tax and more. We are also on the cutting edge of many environmental initiatives. For example, in London, we were a founding member of the Green Tech Legal Collaborative, together with Bloomberg, Imperial College and Willkie Farr & Gallagher. The program provides pro bono legal support to green tech startups from Imperial College's Enterprise Lab. For this collaboration we were named joint winner of the "Most Effective Pro Bono Partnership Award" at the LawWorks Pro Bono Awards 2023.



Pro Bono Counsel Felicity Kirk (far right) at the LawWorks Pro Bono Awards with representatives from Imperial College, Bloomberg and Willkie Farr.

## Green Pro Bono Partners



## Conserving Maine's Forests for Years to Come

The mountains of Maine's Appalachian Corridor, also called the Mountains of the Dawn, span 250 miles. Their forests are home to diverse wildlife and ecosystems, serve as a playground for tourists, and are integral to the local timber industry. The Maine Mountain Collaborative, a coalition of statewide, regional and national conservation and forestry organizations, is looking to protect and conserve these forests. They have adopted a unique approach called "exemplary forestry," which prioritizes the long-term health of the forests while also allowing for current uses.

To help the collaborative generate both environmental and financial returns, Ropes & Gray advised on the creation of a new Exemplary Forest Investment Fund initiative (EFIF). The EFIF seeks to raise \$90 million of public, private and philanthropic capital to acquire and manage 100,000 acres of Maine forests.

The inaugural fund vehicle has completed purchase of the 3,000-acre Scammon Ridge Headwaters forestland in Greenville, Maine. The project, first introduced to the firm by retired partner **Chris Klem**, was the culmination of more than seven years of hard work, during which the client relied on us to come up with the fund structure and navigate many novel issues, including the manager's tax-exempt status and its focus on land management. We expect to have a continuing role to play as the client forms other fund vehicles to acquire more land.

This summer, our team members will be honored along with our client and the greater EFIF team by the New England Forestry Foundation for exemplifying excellence and dedication to forest conservation and sustainable forest management.

The team: Partner **Justin Kliger** led the team, which includes counsel **Amy Olson** and associates **Nick Coppola**, **Taylor Gorman** and **Ningzhou Shen**, as well as many alumni over the years.

#### WHY IT MATTERS

“We wouldn’t be here without Ropes & Gray.”

— Bryan Wentzell, Executive Director,  
Maine Mountain Collaborative

## Green Tech Legal Collaborative Spotlight: Resting Reef

Ropes & Gray pioneered the Green Tech Legal Collaborative in 2021 with Bloomberg, Imperial College and Willkie Farr to support climate action and sustainability startups by offering pro bono help.

One startup that Ropes & Gray has been supporting is Resting Reef. Founded by two women with advanced degrees in global innovation design, the organization provides a “sustainable death care service that meaningfully commemorates past lives, whilst building new life.” Resting Reef uses ashes and crushed oyster shells to create reef memorial structures that are placed in marine sites and provide new habitats for marine life. Ropes & Gray provides Resting Reef with tax and corporate advice.

The team: Associate **Clara Melly** led the team, which includes partners **Chris Agnoli** and **Angela Becker** and associates **Padraic Daly**, **Nicholas Matthew**, **Nicholas Tallon** and **Charlie Voisey**.



Ropes & Gray's Boston office hosted nonprofit Green Pro Bono for panel in February.

## Firm Hosts Panel for Green Pro Bono

In February, we hosted a panel on behalf of pro bono client Green Pro Bono. The event featured journalists, lawyers and filmmakers involved in climate change activism. We are proud of our alum Stephanie Demetry, who is the executive director of this nonprofit focused on pairing environmental “change makers” with pro bono lawyers.

## Lawyers in Asia Contribute to a Range of Matters for PILPG

For the past few years, Ropes & Gray has been providing assistance to the [Public International Law and Policy Group](#), a global pro bono law firm that provides free legal assistance to parties involved in peace negotiations, post-conflict constitution drafting, transitional justice processes and war crimes prosecution. Along with team members from other offices, lawyers in our Hong Kong, Seoul and Shanghai offices have contributed to a number of research projects for PILPG in recent months, including one with an environmental focus.

In international law, ecocide is defined as “unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by

## Doing Good by the Numbers – 2023

**95**

Percentage of lawyers who gave time

**2,100+**

Timekeepers

**135,000+**

Pro bono hours

**5**

Practice groups with all lawyers meeting 20-hr goal

**3**

Offices where all lawyers met 20-hr goal



those acts.” Currently, ecocide is not recognized as a crime by the International Criminal Court. If it were, PILPG asked us to look at whether certain of Russia’s attacks on Ukraine would fall within the definition of ecocide—in particular, the destruction of the Kakhovka dam, which led to widespread damage to the surrounding area.

Other PILPG projects to which Asia lawyers have contributed are: researching the timing of elections after military occupation of territories or armed conflict (Ukraine); writing a book chapter to help pro-democracy civilian representatives engage in peace negotiations (Sudan); and identifying best practices for establishing a governmental regional mediation support unit (Kenya).

Asia lawyers who participated in the above matters include: partner **Jaewoo Lee**, counsel **Keun Shin**, and associates **Slava Iavorskyi**, **Lan Jiangzhou**, **Ethan Kim**, **JC Kim**, **Linghan Wang** and **Ziyou Zhu**.

## Innovative Pilot Program with KIND Gains Momentum

In the last issue of *Pro Bono News*, we featured a new collaboration with Kids in Need of Defense to help certain undocumented youth apply for legal status in the United States. Two aspects of the pilot were innovative in the pro bono world. The first is how we partnered with KIND to develop a new way for legal service organizations and law firms to work together. In this instance, we handled one discrete element of the application, which was obtaining a state court determination that a youth cannot be reunified with parents due to abuse, neglect or abandonment, and that a return to their home country was not in their best interest. Tackling this aspect was a great help, as it is vital to the application and legally cumbersome. Internally, we also established a new way for attorneys in our California and Asia offices to collaborate on pro bono matters. The project was so successful that the firm was asked to present at a pro bono conference and is being recognized along with KIND as an expert in program design. We also were offered another clinic with KIND, which kicked off in early April.

### WHY IT MATTERS

“This is something that I will never forget. . . . This is a turning point for me, and you all are part of it.”

—Andres Gutierrez, Owner and Founder,  
JP’s Massage Therapy Center, Inc.

## Surprising Discovery Made During a Routine Lease Renewal

Andres Gutierrez of JP’s Massage Therapy Center came to our real estate team for help negotiating a lease renewal and resolution of a claim for flood damage to his business premises. In our team’s review, we discovered that our client had been overcharged on operating expenses over five years. Initially, the landlord refused to acknowledge the overcharges or resolve the flood damage claim, and then subsequently refused to renew the lease. Our client relocated his business to temporary space with a colleague, and we brought in our litigation team to sue his former landlord. We successfully settled the matter for over \$58,000, an amount equal to more than a year’s net income for our client. We are now representing Mr. Gutierrez in negotiating a new lease for a permanent space.

The team: Led by counsel **Laurie Nelson**, the team included partner **Dan Ward** and associates **John Landzert**, **Niko Paladino** and **Twinkle Patel**.

## More Than 80 Legal Clinics in 2023



Ropes & Gray lawyers and alumni join Project Citizenship for clinic.

Legal clinics are a great way to help many clients in a short time, and they often don’t require deep legal specialization. We coordinated and participated in a record number of clinics in 2023—over 80—and have continued doing more this year. Here are a few examples:

- **Cancer Patients:** We hosted an immigration clinic through New York Legal Assistance Group’s Cancer Advocacy Project. The clinic assisted 11 vulnerable cancer patients in the U.S. seeking medical assistance under a visa, who need to file extension applications prior to their current visas’ expiration to continue accessing lifesaving healthcare.

- **New Citizens:** Ropes & Gray attorneys, clients and alumni joined longtime firm pro bono partner Project Citizenship at a workshop to help eligible legal permanent residents complete and review applications for naturalization. We helped a total of 40 citizens from 12 countries.
- **Asylum Seekers:** We joined the City of New York, local universities, corporations, nonprofits and law firms in running a first-of-a-kind collaboration to help migrants apply for asylum and obtain work authorizations. According to the city, more than 37,500 migrants have applied for asylum and work authorization through the New York City Asylum Application Help Center as of early March.
- **Client Partnership Clinics:** We hosted two remote immigration clinics with Bloomberg, providing assistance to survivors of domestic violence who are filing self-petitions for immigration relief, and doing initial intakes for Legal Services NYC to determine if potential clients are eligible for immigration relief. We also hosted a transgender name change clinic virtually with Pfizer and the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund.

Expanding Our Reach

Ropes & Gray supports important legal work and talented lawyers by funding legal fellowships at public service organizations, often by using fee awards generated in significant public interest litigation. In 2023, we created the Ropes Impact Fellowship, a public-interest fellowship with nonprofit Equal Justice Works, a longtime partner of the firm in advancing public interest work.



Alexis Picard



Corina Scott

This summer, we will host an event at Ropes & Gray with two Ropes & Gray-sponsored fellows. Inaugural Ropes Impact Fellow **Alexis Picard** will discuss her work with the ACLU of Illinois’ Corrections Reform Project on litigation against juvenile detention centers in Illinois. **Corina Scott** will talk about providing post-conviction legal services and legislative advocacy on behalf of incarcerated survivors of domestic violence who are eligible for resentencing or a new trial in New York.

Our Team Pro Bono Committee

<b>Christopher P. Conniff</b> Co-Chair	<b>Chris Agnoli</b>	<b>Ben Morris</b>	<b>Douglas H. Hallward-Driemeier</b> Policy Committee Liaison to the Pro Bono Committee
<b>Andrew J. Dale</b> Co-Chair	<b>Allie Alperovich</b>	<b>Emily Oldshue</b>	<b>Rosalyn Garbose Nasdor</b> Director & Pro Bono Counsel
<b>Amanda N. Raad</b> Co-Chair	<b>Greg Bauer</b>	<b>Chong Park</b>	<b>Felicity Kirk</b> Pro Bono Counsel
<b>Jennifer Rikoski Whitney</b> Co-Chair	<b>Nicholas M. Berg</b>	<b>Scott Pinarchik</b>	<b>Marianne Staniunas</b> Pro Bono Immigration Counsel
	<b>Kellie Combs</b>	<b>Stephen A. Warnke</b>	<b>Byrne Harrison</b> Senior Pro Bono Analyst
	<b>Jim Davis</b>	<b>Joel Wattenbarger</b>	<b>Natallya Velev</b> Manager of Pro Bono
	<b>Jay Freedman</b>	<b>Christian Westra</b>	<b>Evelin Morales</b> Pro Bono Coordinator
	<b>Robert Haak</b>	<b>Eric Wu</b>	<b>Nicky Trimble</b> Corporate Social Responsibility Specialist
	<b>Amy Jane Longo</b>	<b>Alex Zeltser</b>	
	<b>Matt McGinnis</b>		



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