

A., J.D., University of
California, Davis

Courses Taught

Property, Toxic and Hazardous
Substances, Natural Resources
Law, Community Property

Private Sector

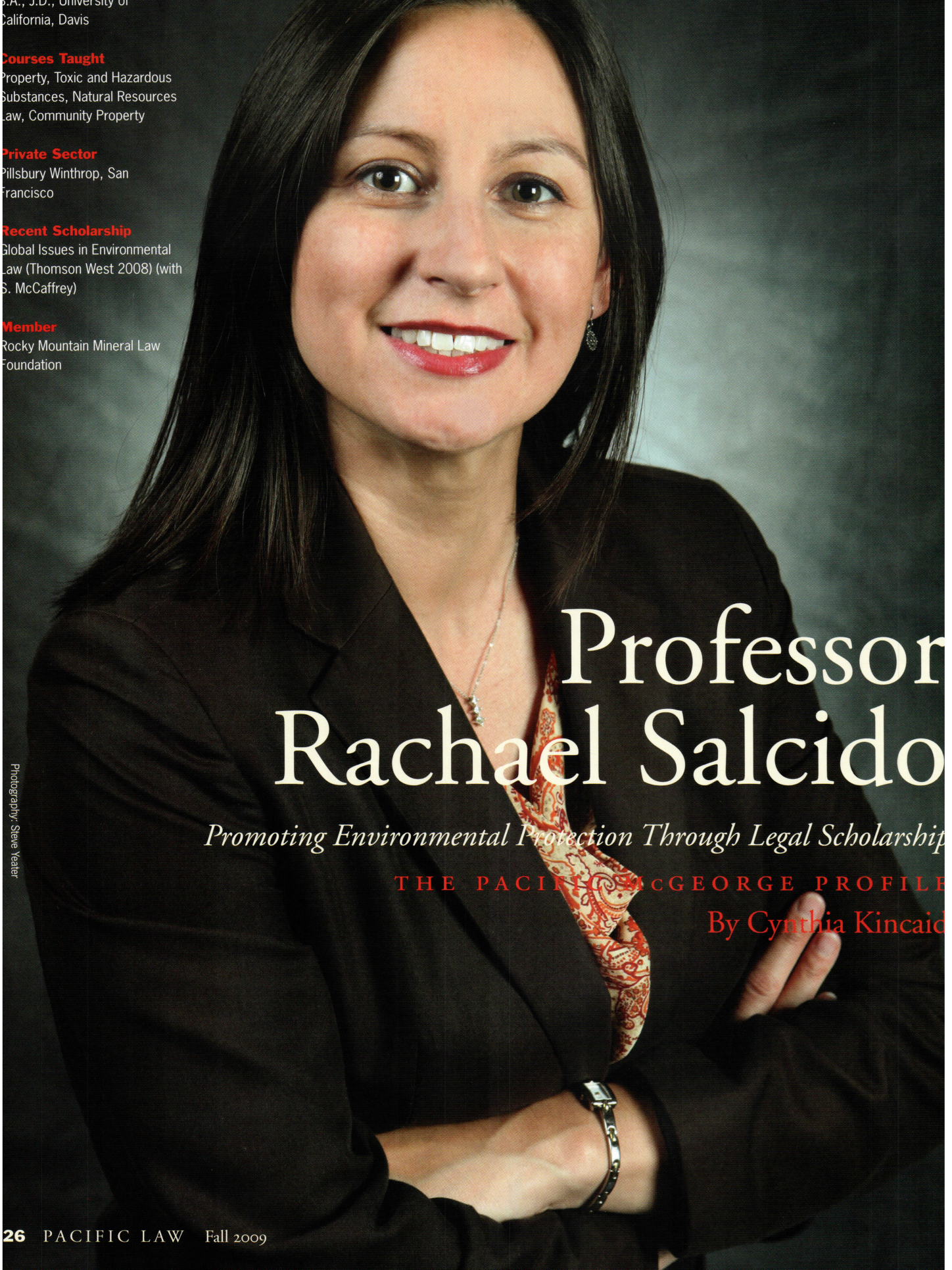
Pillsbury Winthrop, San
Francisco

Recent Scholarship

Global Issues in Environmental
Law (Thomson West 2008) (with
S. McCaffrey)

Member

Rocky Mountain Mineral Law
Foundation

A professional portrait of Professor Rachael Salcido. She is a woman with long, dark hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a black blazer over a red and white patterned scarf. Her arms are crossed, and she is wearing a watch on her left wrist. The background is a dark, textured grey.

Professor Rachael Salcido

Promoting Environmental Protection Through Legal Scholarship

THE PACIFIC MCGEORGE PROFILE

By Cynthia Kincaid

Photography: Steve Yeater

When associate law professor Rachael Salcido was growing up, her parents made sure she had great respect and a deep emotional connection to the natural world. They instilled the importance of preserving and protecting nature within their daughter by taking her to national parks and visiting the northern coastal waters of the Bay Area, where she grew up.

“My mother said I should consider being an environmental lawyer,” says Salcido. “It wasn’t that I went to law school with that in mind because I had several things that I was considering, but my mother was hopeful that I would look into it.”

After taking a few classes centered in environmental law, and garnering the support of mentors, Salcido oriented herself into a law career based on the protection and preservation of our most natural and threatened resources, particularly ocean and coastal waters. An area of particular focus for her has been the conversion of offshore oil rigs into artificial reefs. Her goal has always been the achievement of a win-win for these older decommissioned platforms.

“There are a lot of people on shore who can benefit from this, and these [platforms] operate as habitat, even when they are in production,” she says. But, she also believes that we have to be constantly asking if turning these rigs into artificial reefs is benefiting the habitat or taking away from something that might be better habitat.

In her work as both an environmental lawyer and environmental activist, Salcido frequently finds herself playing a role as natural resource referee. “There’s a lot of tension between what states may want for their offshore areas and what the federal government is willing to do to help with or thwart those objectives,” she says. “There will be more attention to this as we do more offshore exploring with aquaculture. A lot of developments are looking to go just beyond the three-mile mark to get into federal waters because they see the federal process as being friendlier to development than the states might be, although that’s not always the case.”

Before Salcido finished law school at UC Davis, she had aspirations to be a law professor. A professor and mentor at UC Davis told her to keep her eyes and ears open and stay abreast of her areas of interest. Another professor, who consulted for Pillsbury Winthrop, the San Francisco law firm where Salcido worked for three years, asked her to write a paper and speak on a panel geared toward continuing legal education.

“I presented this paper I just got the bug,” she says. “Law professors research an area of the law, help educate other people about changes in the law, and go to conferences. I was hooked. I also knew I wanted to help students.”

Since Salcido joined the faculty at Pacific McGeorge in 2003, her research has concentrated on ocean wave energy and technology, and she is encouraged that offshore wave energy will be renewable, greener, and not contribute to global warming.

“Environmentalists are being cautious as to whether this is green technology, or if it’s just the oil industry getting their nose under the tent,” she says. She would like to see government play a more active role with academia in funding some of the basic research needed to help grow greener technologies, and do it in a way that the communities who are involved feel included.

Recently, Salcido presented on ocean wave technology at a conference in Portland, Oregon, where she emphasized ocean wave energy as a viable green and sustainable energy. She also discussed the future regulations that we might come to expect around this technology, as well as the direct and indirect environmental impacts.

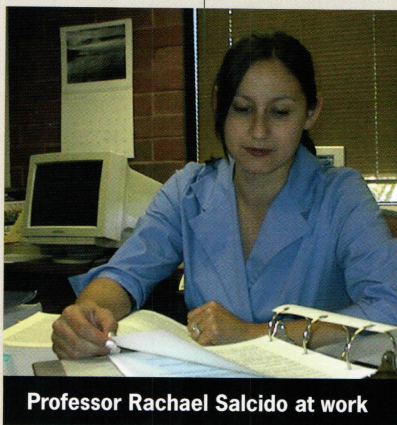
“We are all optimistic, but there are still so many questions out there about how much capacity we can get from ocean waves,” she says.

Salcido says she is pleased with the direction she sees the Obama administration taking toward the environment in supporting renewable and green technologies. “I think their biggest impact has been in showing an interest in moving climate change legislation and appointing people who have a track

record of expertise on environmental and natural resource stewardship,” she says. “He just put together an ocean resources task for us, which will coordinate a lot of different agencies with their hands in the cookie jar. I think all these steps are in the right direction.”

Ultimately, Salcido would like to see a mindset change toward the environment, a realization that we are all in this together, and her goal is to translate that recognition to the students she teaches.

“I try to get my students to understand how dynamic this area of the law is,” she says. “Every lawyer is a lifelong student, and they can carry their skills forward and continue to teach themselves. It will keep them engaged with their clients and with a community of other lawyers, who are helping to build laws that work for us, the people, and for the environment.”



Professor Rachael Salcido at work

This is the twelfth in a series of Pacific Law articles on members of the Pacific McGeorge faculty who pursue excellence inside and outside the classroom.