



Sean O. Coffey - Partner

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Bio

Sean Coffey is a Practice Leader of the firm's Energy & Infrastructure and Environmental Practice Groups with over 20 years of experience in developing public-private partnerships — helping state and local governments build and modernize wastewater plants, educational facilities, schools, and energy and transportation infrastructure. Throughout his career, Sean has been known for his innovative thinking, consistently transforming ambitious ideas into practical solutions in both public and private sectors.

Sean collaborates with private developers, financial institutions, and government entities on a range of projects across Rhode Island, including hydropower, offshore wind energy, transportation facilities, and mixed-use developments. Many of these initiatives involve environmental representation, land use, and the redevelopment of brownfield sites.

In any new project, Sean focuses on understanding his client's objectives and the regulatory hurdles they may encounter. By aligning client goals with technical and financial strategies, he navigates environmental and permitting requirements to help projects progress smoothly. He describes himself as a “puzzle solver,” constantly energized by the challenge of finding

innovative paths to success.

Outside of his legal practice, Sean is deeply committed to Rhode Island. He recently chaired the Rhode Island House of Representatives' Special Legislative P3 Commission, aimed at enhancing public infrastructure through private investment. His leadership extends to various organizations, having served as President of the Providence Preservation Society, Board Chairman of the United Way of Rhode Island, and a board member of Save the Bay, among others. His contributions have been widely recognized and include honors from organizations such as Common Cause, the ACLU of Rhode Island, and the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Commission.

Practice Areas

- [Environmental](#)
- [Energy & Infrastructure](#)
- [Regulatory & Compliance](#)
- [Commercial Real Estate](#)

Prior Experience

Earlier in his career, Sean served as counsel for the Rhode Island Department of Natural Resources and played a key role in drafting important environmental legislation for the state, covering areas like hazardous waste management, wetlands protection, and air and water pollution control. Additionally, he served as a Rhode Island state senator from 1985 to 1991 and was the past Chair of the Rhode Island Bar Association's Committee on Environmental Law.

Representative Matters

- Represented State of Rhode Island and higher education authority in negotiation of a long-term development lease to transform former power generating facility into high-tech advanced nursing education center.
- Represented major equipment manufacturer and financial investor in development of offshore wind energy and gas-fired energy production facilities.
- Represented municipalities in negotiations with major international companies to design, build and operate new drinking water treatment and upgraded wastewater treatment facilities.

- Represented national brownfield's re-developer in remediation and adaptive reuse of former historic industrial buildings.
- Represented national investors and developers in environmental remediation, coastal permitting and adaptive reuse of former fuel storage facilities for residential and mixed-use development.
- Represented national hotel developer in obtaining municipal tax stabilization agreement to support construction of a hotel.

Insights

- [The Future of U.S. Environmental Regulation: What to Expect in 2025 - via JD Supra, November, 2024](#)

Bar Admissions

- Massachusetts
- Rhode Island
- U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island
- U.S. District Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit
- U.S. Supreme Court

Education

- J.D., Boston University School of Law, 1976
- B.S.F.S., International Relations, Georgetown University, 1972

Accolades

- *The Best Lawyers in America*® Best Lawyer, Environmental Law and Environmental Litigation (1993-2025)
- Lawdragon Green 500: Leaders in Environmental Law (2023-2025)
- Rhode Island Lawyers Weekly Hall of Fame (2022)
- *National Law Journal* – Energy & Environmental Trailblazer (2017)
- Rhode Island Super Lawyers (2007-2011, 2013-2014)

- Providence Preservation Society – 50 Most Influential People (2006)
- United Way of Southeastern New England – Community Volunteer of the Year (1995)
- ACLU of Rhode Island – Civil Libertarian of the Year (1995)
- Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission – Outstanding Leadership Award (1988)
- Providence Preservation Society – Citation for Achievement (1988)