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## Joseph D. Hughes | Partner

Joe Hughes is a water lawyer with 30 years of practical, hands-on experience tackling real-world water issues, and leads the Water and Public Agency practice group. With a background in civil litigation, he brings a comprehensive perspective to strategically advise clients in navigating complex water-related transactions and disputes.

Joe's clients include water agencies and private entities seeking to obtain, develop, manage, and transfer water and water rights. He has extensive experience advising a wide range of water districts, including those reliant on the State Water Project and Central Valley Project, regarding water rights, water supply planning, and regulatory compliance. He excels at negotiating and drafting complex water transfer and exchange agreements, achieving successful outcomes for his clients.

As General Counsel for one of the largest water rights holders in California, Joe possesses extensive experience with both pre-1914 and post-1914 surface water rights. He also has significant experience representing clients in groundwater adjudications, protecting their water rights in those complex legal proceedings. He provides expert guidance to several Groundwater Sustainability Agencies and landowners navigating the complexities of SGMA implementation, including GSA formation, plan development, and compliance.

Joe has demonstrated leadership in the community and the profession by service as managing partner of one of the largest law firms in the Central Valley, a Trustee by appointment of the Board of Supervisors for the Kern County Employees Retirement Association, a \$5 billion pension fund, and past President of the Kern County Bar Association.

Recognized for his expertise, Joe holds an AV® rating from Martindale-Hubbell, the highest level of distinction.

**Practice Focus**

Water and Public Agency Law

**Bar Admissions**

State Bar of California, 1993  
U.S. District Court Northern District of California, 1993  
U.S. District Court Eastern District of California, 1994  
U.S. District Court Central District of California, 1998

**Education**

Bachelor of Arts, University of California at Santa Barbara, 1990  
-Political Science and Communication Studies  
Juris Doctor, Santa Clara University School of Law, 1993

**Community Involvement and Leadership**

Kern County Museum Foundation  
-Member of the Board of Trustees, 2013-2021  
-Chairman, 2017-2021  
Alta Sierra Mutual Water Company  
-Member of the Board of Directors, 2014-2021  
-President, 2017-2021  
Kern County Employees Retirement Association  
-Member of the Board of Trustees, 2004-2012; 2021- Present  
-Chairman, 2009  
Kern County Law Library  
-Member of the Board of Trustees, 2002-2017  
Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance, Inc.  
-Member of the Board of Directors, 2000-2011  
Judge Pro Tem, Small Claims, Kern County Superior Court, 2001-2004

**Professional Experience**

Klein, DeNatale, Goldner, Cooper, Rosenlieb & Kimball, LLP, 2006-Present  
-Managing Partner, 2014-2018, 2019-2024  
Kuhs, Parker & Hughes, Associate & Partner, 1995-2005  
Kern County Counsel, Deputy County Counsel, 1994