



Jean Richardson Industry Impact Award

Laura Kerr

partner at Stoel Rives

Environmental attorney Laura Kerr followed in the footsteps of her dad, who practiced law for more than 50 years in Maryland. “I spent countless hours in his office as a kid. I distinctly remember sitting at his desk pretending to call clients and write memos, and begging to go to court with him.”

Kerr received her J.D., magna cum laude, from Lewis & Clark Law School with a certificate in Environmental and Natural Resources Law in 2014. She served as articles editor of the Environmental Law Review and was named Environmental Advocate of the Year in 2014.

Before becoming a lawyer, Kerr served as director of science programs for the Mount St. Helens Institute. She also was a water science instructor at Multnomah Education Service District’s Outdoor School.

Kerr, who became an environmental lawyer in 2014, advises her clients on meeting their environmental goals and complying with federal and state environmental laws. She is one of Oregon’s leading attorneys in the field of brown-field redevelopment, cleaning up contaminated properties and returning them to productive, environmentally safe and sustainable uses. Kerr has worked on the cleanup of some of the most complex and challenging contaminated sites in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

“Laura is an emerging and influential leader in Oregon’s legal and environmental communities,” Todd Hanchett,

the Portland office’s managing partner, said in his nomination of Kerr for a Women of Vision award. “Her innovative work with companies in some of the region’s biggest industries is having a positive impact on the natural and built environment in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest.”

In addition to her environmental law practice, Kerr is engaged in public service dedicated to representing Oregon’s asylum seekers. Nearly 2,000 asylum seekers filled Oregon’s deportation courts with no legal representation and few resources in 2017 when she began her pro bono work with Innovation Law Lab.

To close the representation gap, she helped create the Center of Excellence at Innovation Law Lab, training lawyers in asylum and asylum-related legal protections and creating a hotline linking refugees to pro bono attorneys who provide legal guidance and representation in the justice system.

In recognition, Kerr was awarded the Center of Excellence’s “Pro Bono Champion Award” in 2017 and the Oregon State Bar’s “President’s Public Service Award” in 2018. She continues to represent asylum seekers as a volunteer attorney through the organization.

Dedicated to increasing diversity in the legal profession and at her firm, Kerr co-founded Stoel Rives’ Women Lawyers Affinity Group in 2019 to create a forum for female attorneys in all of its offices to share experiences and provide mentoring and career support. The group has helped shape policies, practices and culture to better support the needs of women and other diverse lawyers at the firm.

Due, in part, to Kerr’s work with the Women Lawyers Affinity Group, 52 percent of Stoel Rives’ lawyers are diverse, 57 percent of top leadership positions are held by diverse lawyers as of March 2022, and women are strongly represented among the partnership.