

# Daily Journal

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## California's Top Real Estate Transactional Attorneys of 2013

### Editor's Note:

If you look around, you'll see a lot of evidence that real estate is on the mend. Far fewer foreclosure sale signs and dead lawns dot neighborhoods and commercial centers. Sales and leasing activity is heating up again in many regions of the state, but post-downturn, the

dealmaking landscape is dramatically different. Banks have tightened lending standards. Deals take a lot more paperwork and time to put together. Many building owners have to comply with longer lists of demands to finalize a sale, such as ensuring that properties include low carbon foot-

prints and creatively designed space.

The lawyers on our top real estate transactional list didn't let such pressures stand in the way of their abilities to complete some of the largest and most significant deals we've seen in years. Persistence pays off.



### Steven J. Levine

Latham & Watkins LLP / San Diego

**Specialties:** infrastructure development and transactions

ficult," Levine said. "But they kept moving forward."

Billed as the largest seawater desalination plant in the Western Hemisphere, Levine said, "It's been groundbreaking in California. It is extremely difficult to develop a project like this on the coast of California because the Coastal Commission has a strong interest in making sure that the coast is protected."

There were many players involved in the project, including NRG, which has ground leased the project site to Poseidon, San Diego Gas & Electric Co., which provides easements and power to the project, and the North County Transit District for the running of pipelines and utilities under the nearby railroad right-of-way.

The plant site occupies about six acres, and additional parcels are being used for mitigation purposes, Levine said.

Estimated to generate up to \$5.3 million per year in increased property and business tax revenues, along with hundreds of jobs, the plant should provide a blueprint for similar projects across the country, Levine said.

"This has been a model for the cooperation between a private entity and government regulators and a utility," he added. "It shows that private and public sectors can actually work together and get things done."

The plant and pipeline are currently under construction, and expected to be up and running by 2016.

— Pat Broderick

Levine has been serving as the lead real estate lawyer for the approximately \$1 billion Poseidon Project, designed to supply San Diego County with 50 million gallons a day of drinkable desalinated seawater.

"It's going to be incredible for San Diego," Levine said. "It's not dependent on rain or snowfall and will be there when there are bad drought years."

For the past dozen years, his client, Poseidon Water, has faced continual hurdles as it navigated through the state's stringent permitting process.

Since then, the Carlsbad-based project has received approvals from various state agencies, including the California Coastal Commission and the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

"The client faced hurdles one after the other, many of which were extremely dif-



Desalination project in Carlsbad.

Courtesy redering