



Spencer Fane Team Presents Multiple Sessions at Firm-Sponsored SME Minnesota Conference

Spencer Fane was pleased to [return](#) as a sponsor for the annual SME Minnesota Conference on April 14-16 in Duluth, Minnesota. Attorneys [Karen D. Olson](#) and [John L. Watson](#) presented at the event – which serves as the industry’s leading regional minerals forum – across three different technical sessions.

For their first presentation, Minnesota Environmental Rights Act (MERA) – Overview of the Law and Key Cases, Karen explored the ins and outs of MERA, including its history, scope, past use, and available defenses, and what remedies may be imposed. She also summarized key cases over the years that have further developed the law.

The team guided attendees through an Update of Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) and State Dredge and Fill Programs. This presentation addressed both the EPA’s and the Army Corps of Engineers’ November 2025 proposed regulations regarding wetlands and WOTUS following the May 2023 decision in *Sackett v. EPA*, and the status of state dredge and fill programs in Michigan, New Jersey, Florida, Illinois, New Mexico, Minnesota, and Colorado.

Finally, John led the session titled The “New” NEPA – Federal Agencies Overhaul Their Procedures. He discussed the revisions to federal agency National Environmental Policy Act procedures announced in July 2025 following recent court rulings, including the Supreme Court’s May 29, 2025, decision in *Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County, Colorado*, and the issuance of the President’s Executive Order 14154. John addressed the impact of the revisions and outlined the implications of the changes and the current status of NEPA rulemaking with an emphasis on specific agency approaches.

Through their extensive presence at the SME Minnesota Conference, Karen and John showcased the extensive knowledge and experience harnessed by the Spencer Fane Environmental Law practice group. Not only does the team remain agile amid rapidly evolving federal and state regulations, they also help clients across a wealth of industries – including [mining](#) – to overcome their most pressing environmental challenges and to maximize business goals.

Learn more about the Spencer Fane Environmental Law practice [here](#).