THE EUGENE KUNTZ CONFERENCE ON

NATURAL RESOURCES LAW AND POLICY

Friday, November 6, 2026

Presented by
The University of Oklahoma College of Law and the Oklahoma Bar Association's Energy and Natural Resources Law Section.

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THE EUGENE KUNTZ CONFERENCE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND LAW POLICY

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2026 Kuntz Conference Schedule

9-9:10 a.m.	**Welcome and Moderator Remarks**	**Michael Brady**
9:10-10 a.m.	**Annual Case Law Update**	**Joseph A. Schremmer**
10-10:50 a.m.	**Who Owns What? Mineral Interests, Surface Interests, and Newly Discovered Substances**	**Timothy C. Dowd**
10:50-11 a.m.	**Break** (*10 minutes*)	
11-11:50 a.m.	**What You Don't See Can Still Bind You: Unrecorded Agreements in Oil and Gas Transactions**	**Scott R. Verplank, Jr.**
11:50 a.m.-12:10 p.m.	**Break** (*20 minutes*)	
	Grab lunch in the lobby and return to your seat for the next session.	
12:10-1 p.m.	**Lunch Session: Uses of AI by Land Teams and Lawyers in Oil and Gas Operations**	**Chuck Yates and Piper Hampton**
1-1:10 p.m.	**Break** (*10 minutes*)	
1:10-2 p.m.	**Beneath the Surface: The Emerging Law of Produced Water and Its Valuable Constituent Elements**	**John Berry and Cody McPherson**
2-2:50 p.m.	**Recent Developments in Oklahoma Royalty Litigation: Interest and Post-Production Costs**	**Reagan Bradford and Patrick Stein**
2:50-3 p.m.	**Break** (*10 minutes*)	
3-3:50 p.m.	**Five Things You Didn't Know About Professional Responsibility**	**Melissa D. Mortazavi**
4 p.m.	**Adjourn**	

Speakers



JOSEPH A. SCHREMMER

Professor Joe Schremmer holds the Eugene Kuntz Chair of Law in Oil, Gas, and Natural Resources. He teaches courses on oil and gas, energy, natural resources, and first-year property and contract law. His scholarly work focuses on property rights in natural resources, especially subsurface natural resources. Schremmer's recent articles examine correlative rights, waste, subsurface trespass, property in pore space, and issues involving split estates. He has authored multiple books on oil and gas law, including *Advance Introduction to U.S. Oil and Gas Law* (Edward Elgar 2026) and *The Law of Oil and Gas: Cases and Materials* (Schremmer, Martin, Kramer, Hall, & Righetti) (Foundation Press). As of 2024, he is the sole update and revision author of *Kuntz, A Treatise on the Law of Oil and Gas* (Matthew Bender). Schremmer is also the faculty director of the College of Law's Oil and Gas, Natural Resources, and Energy Law Center and the Energy and Natural Resources Graduate Program.

Before joining OU Law in 2023, Schremmer was the Judge Leon Karelitz Oil and Gas Law Professor at the University of New Mexico School of Law. Before that, he practiced law in Wichita, Kansas, for six years, where he was recognized multiple times as a Rising Star by Super Lawyers. His practice involved most aspects of upstream oil and gas production, including title examination, transactional work, practice before the state conservation commission, and civil litigation. In law school, Schremmer served as the editor-in-chief of the *Kansas Law Review* and received the Samuel Mellinger Award recognizing the top overall graduate in the areas of scholarship, leadership, and service.



TIMOTHY C. DOWD

Timothy C. Dowd is an attorney with Elias, Books, Brown & Nelson, P.C., in Oklahoma City. Dowd is a past president of the Oklahoma City Mineral Lawyers Society (1996-97). Dowd is past Chairperson of the Oklahoma Bar Association Mineral Law Section (2005-06). Dowd is listed in the Best Lawyers in America - Oil & Gas Law.

Dowd is the author of the Oklahoma chapter of AAPL's Nationwide Comparison of Laws on Leasing, Exploration and Production (2011) and the chapter on Oil and Gas Titles in West Publishing Company's Oklahoma Real Estate Forms and Practice.

Dowd is admitted to practice in the states of New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma and West Virginia.

Dowd has written numerous articles for publication, including: *Surface and Subsurface: Common Split Estate Issues, 2024 No. 4 FNREL Inst. 4 (2024); Statutory Pooling and the Unleased Mineral Owner, 65 Rocky Mt. Min L. Inst. 13-1 (2019); Wellbore Assignments of Oil and Gas Leases, 2019 No. 6 RMMLF - Inst. 6 (2019); Trespass in the Age of Horizontal Drilling Under State Conservation Statutes, 63 Rocky Mt. Min. L. Inst. 6A-1 (2017); Current and Emerging Issues in Oil and Gas Title Examination, 2 Oil & Gas, Nat. Resources & Energy J. 505 (2017); Oil and Gas Title Law – A Review of 50 Common Problems –North Dakota, 90 N.D. L.REV 289 (2014); Clearing Title of Long-Lost Mineral Owners, 54 Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Institute 30-1 (2008); and Costs That Can Be Charged In Calculation of Risk Penalties Under Forced Pooling Actions and Non-Consent Penalties Under Operating Agreements, 25 Energy & Min. L. Inst. Ch 10. (2005).*

Dowd's primary area of practice is oil and gas law, including the rendering of title opinions, probate and title curative.

Speakers



SCOTT R. VERPLANK, JR.

Since earning his Juris Doctor from the University of Oklahoma College of Law, Scott R. Verplank, Jr. has focused his career on the oil and gas industry. As a litigator at Mahaffey & Gore, Verplank has represented individual landowners and Oklahoma's largest operators alike in complex disputes involving royalty payments, joint operating agreements, operations, title disputes, and other matters arising from all aspects of the exploration and production of oil and gas resources. With a thorough understanding of both the legal principles governing the oil and gas industry and the practical realities facing clients operating in an evolving regulatory and business environment, he is dedicated to helping clients chart their path to their goals and around any challenges that they may face.

Verplank is honored for the opportunity to participate in the 2026 Eugene Kuntz Conference on Natural Resources Law and Policy and looks forward to engaging with fellow attorneys and industry professionals on current developments affecting the oil and gas sector. He appreciates the opportunity from the University of Oklahoma College of Law and is excited to contribute to discussions that advance the practice of energy law and strengthen the legal profession.



CODY MCPHERSON

Cody McPherson is a shareholder with the firm, Mahaffey & Gore, P.C. in Oklahoma City. McPherson represents oil and gas producers, mineral owners and surface owners. His practice involves oil and gas litigation, with a focus on land and surface use issues, quiet title and oil and gas contract disputes. McPherson resides in Washington, OK, with his wife, Ericka, and their three children, John, Joseph and Mia. The McPhersons own and operate an agribusiness in southern Oklahoma where they raise cattle, alfalfa, cotton and small grains.



JOHN BERRY

John Berry is a litigation attorney at Mahaffey & Gore focusing on oil and gas-related matters, environmental issues, real property disputes, and general litigation. As an associate attorney with the firm, Berry represents producers, mineral owners, and landowners in a wide range of complex oil and gas issues.

A native of Seiling, Oklahoma, Berry attended law school at the Oklahoma City University School of Law, graduating in 2024 in the top 5 of his graduating class. While attending law school, Berry earned the CALI Award for the highest grade in seven different courses, including Oil & Gas Law, Oil & Gas Regulation, and Trial Practice. Berry served as staff editor of the *Oklahoma City University Law Review*, competed on the ABA Appellate Advocacy Moot Court team, and was treasurer for the Energy Law Association. Berry was awarded the Judge Alfred P. Murrah Sr. Outstanding Academic Performance Award and the Charles Nesbitt Energy Law Award for these academic achievements.

Speakers



REAGAN E. BRADFORD

Reagan E. Bradford has been a leading advocate for royalty owners, resulting in significant recoveries for his clients. His law firm, Bradford & Wilson PLLC, has litigated dozens of class actions on behalf of royalty owners in Oklahoma, Wyoming, and North Dakota. Prior to representing royalty owners, Bradford served as deputy general counsel and assistant corporate secretary for one of the nation's largest oil-and-gas producers. Bradford currently serves on the boards of the National Association of Royalty Owners and its Oklahoma chapter and serves as an advisor to the Royalty Owners Coalition of Oklahoma. Bradford also serves on the OU Law Board of Visitors and was awarded the Regents' Alumni Award for his service to the university and the Order of the Parliamentarian for his legal accomplishments.



PATRICK L. STEIN

Patrick L. Stein is a trial lawyer whose practice is primarily focused on complex litigation, with an emphasis on representing clients in the upstream and midstream sectors of Oklahoma's oil and gas industry. A substantial part of Stein's practice is defending producers and first-purchasers in class actions involving alleged underpayment of royalties and seeking unpaid statutory interest on alleged late payments. He also defends clients in lawsuits alleging damages from pollution, induced seismicity and subsurface trespass, among others. Among other accolades, Stein's achievements have earned him inclusion in the prestigious Chambers USA Guide to America's Leading Lawyers for Business, where he holds the distinction of being ranked nationally in the field of oil and gas litigation.



MELISSA D. MORTAZAVI

Melissa D. Mortazavi is a professor of Law, a Second Century Presidential Professor, and is appointed to the Lou and Connie Miller Professorship in Law at the University of Oklahoma College of Law, where she teaches and writes about legal ethics, torts, administrative law, and food law and policy. Her articles on legal ethics and professional responsibility have appeared in the Fordham, UCLA, and Cardozo law reviews, among others. Mortazavi served as chair of the American Association of Law Schools Professional Responsibility Section in 2023 and is currently the chair of the Section on Torts and Compensation Systems. Prior to joining the legal academy, Mortazavi clerked for the Honorable Beverly B. Martin of the Northern District of Georgia and litigated at Debevoise & Plimpton L.L.P. There, her practice included cases involving products liability, professional ethics, corporate governance, food and drug law, and sustainable resource and energy management.

2026 Eugene Kuntz Award Winner



JUSTICE JAMES R. WINCHESTER
SUPREME COURT JUDICIAL DISTRICT 5

Governor Frank Keating appointed James R. Winchester to the Supreme Court of Oklahoma in 2000, where he later served as Chief Justice from January 2007 to December 2008.

A Clinton, Oklahoma, native, Justice Winchester earned his bachelor of arts degree from the University of Oklahoma and his juris doctorate from Oklahoma City University.

Following law school, Winchester practiced in Western Oklahoma until his appointment as associate district judge for Caddo County in January 1983. Later that year, Governor George Nigh appointed the 30-year-old Winchester as district judge for the Sixth Judicial District, making him one of Oklahoma's youngest district judges. He also served as a U.S. administrative law judge in Oklahoma City and New Orleans for two years.

Winchester's career achievements include being named Outstanding State Trial Court Judge, serving as president of the Oklahoma Judicial Conference, and receiving the Justice Marian P. Opala Award for Lifetime Achievement in Law from Oklahoma City University. He is a Leadership Oklahoma graduate and a recipient of the Boy Scouts of America Silver Beaver Award.

He lives in Chickasha with his wife, Susan, and their son, Davis.

Winchester has authored 184 majority opinions for the Oklahoma Supreme Court, shaping state jurisprudence on several landmark issues:

- Smith v. Marshall Oil Corp., 2004 OK 10 (termination under habendum clause; ownership of equipment left on leased premises)
- Krug v. Helmerich & Payne, Inc., 2013 OK 104 (class action re implied covenant and royalties)
- Landra v. New Dominion, LLC, 2015 OK 53 (OCC jurisdiction and induced seismicity)
- Stat ex re. Comm'rs of the Land Office v. Stephens & Johnson Operating Co., 2020 OK 84 (surface damages act)
- Farris v. Masquelier, 2022 OK 91 (water rights)
- Royal Hot Shots Invs., Inc. v. Keeton, 2024 OK 70 (oil and gas corporate law)
- Strack v. Cont'l Res., Inc., 2021 OK 21 (attorney fee calculation in class action royalty litigation)

Among his notable district court decisions was *Forest Oil Corp. v. ONEOK, Inc.* (a take-or-pay contract dispute).

EUGENE KUNTZ AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP IN NATURAL RESOURCES LAW AND POLICY

Award Recipients

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R. Clark Musser

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R. G. "Jack" Horner

1999
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2001
Barth P. Walker

2002
Charles E. Daniel

2003
James George

2004
James C.T. Hardwick

2005
Duke R. Ligon

2006
H. B. "Hank" Watson

2007
Mark D. Christiansen

2008
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The Honorable Marian P. Opala

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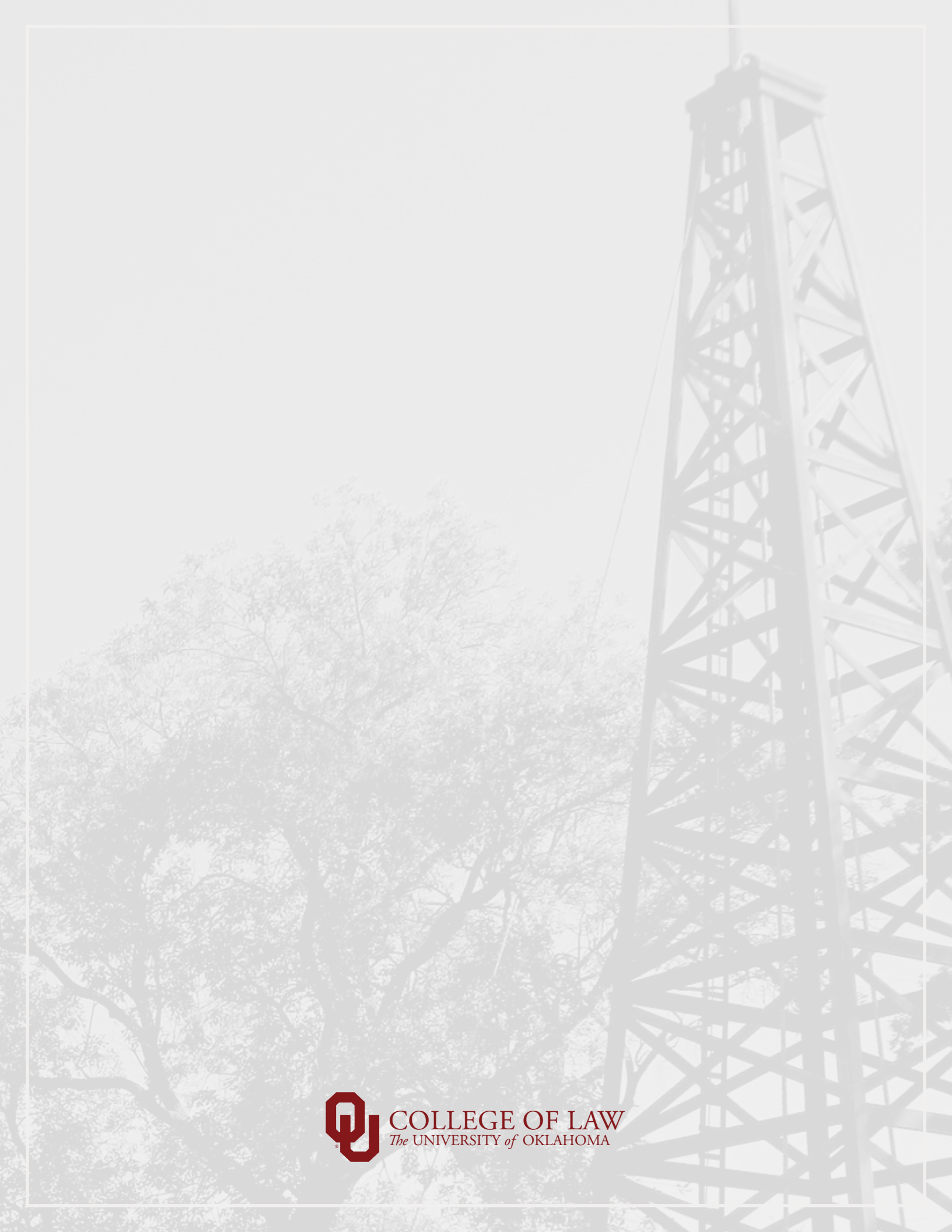
Session Sign-In

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The Eugene Kuntz Conference 2026 Attendee Survey

Scan to evaluate the conference, speakers and topics.



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