

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RE: Albert Lea attorneys, Matt Benda & Stephanie Haedt, recognized as “Attorneys of the Year” for their work on the Fountain Lake Restoration Project.

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The Albert Lea law firm of Peterson, Kolker, Haedt & Benda, Ltd. is pleased to announce that the state-wide legal publication *Minnesota Lawyer* has named attorneys Matt Benda and Stephanie Haedt as “Attorneys of the Year” for 2018. Benda and Haedt were one of two teams recognized by their peers in the Minnesota legal community. The focus of the team recognition was the leadership shown by the firm of Peterson, Kolker, Haedt & Benda in spearheading the efforts of the Shell Rock River Watershed District through multiple levels of complicated negotiations with local and state government.

Honorees for the Attorney of the Year award are chosen based on the following criteria: leadership in the profession, involvement in major cases or other newsworthy events, excellence in corporate or transactional services and public service. Nominations are submitted by judges, bar groups, clients, and fellow attorneys. Honorees come from diverse practice groups including criminal law, litigation, intellectual property, and in-house legal service.

The Benda and Haedt team were nominated by District Administrator Andy Henschel who stated in his nomination, “As District Administrator for the Shell Rock River Watershed District, I had the honor of working shoulder to shoulder with Matt and Stephanie in bringing this historic project to fruition. This project would not have been possible without the extraordinary efforts of this duo as our attorneys and strategic advisors.”

Benda’s role included obtaining, extending, and renewing the local option sales tax, assisting with obtaining funding from the Minnesota Legislature and working through the intricacies of issuing a local bond to fund the project. Benda was the primary negotiator in working with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in obtaining the permits needed to proceed with the Fountain Lake Project. According to Henschel, “Pretty much every inch of this lake has been negotiated. It was Matt Benda that led this negotiation and advocated tirelessly for our project.”

Meanwhile, Stephanie Haedt worked behind the scenes to prepare the District to implement the best-value bidding and contracting needed to complete the Fountain Lake

Restoration Project. Henschel added, “Stephanie’s calm demeanor and attention to detail were instrumental in leading us through the bidding and contract process and the ultimate award of the nearly \$5.1 million dredging contract, consisting of over 2,000 pages.”

In his nomination submission, Henschel concluded, “Matt’s ability to help with big-picture strategy and Stephanie’s relentless attention to detail, have been invaluable to the success of our project. They are a great team!”

Upon receiving the award Benda stated, “It was an honor to be able to take a community vision, collaborate state-wide, and see it through to implementation. As attorneys, and as a law firm, it’s been very rewarding and amazing to see the end result.”

A list of the award recipients can be found here –

<https://minnlawyer.com/2019/02/14/attorneys-of-the-year-2018/>

Shown in the photo is the team from Peterson, Kolker, Haedt & Benda, Ltd. – (L to R) Matt Benda, with the DNR Public Waters Permit to dredge Fountain Lake; Ashley Olson, with the Edgewater Bay project map; Kristin Vogelsang, with the Environmental Assessment Worksheet Findings; Eythan Frandle, with the City of Albert Lea Conditional Use Permit; and Stephanie Haedt with the Fountain Lake Restoration bid and contract documents.