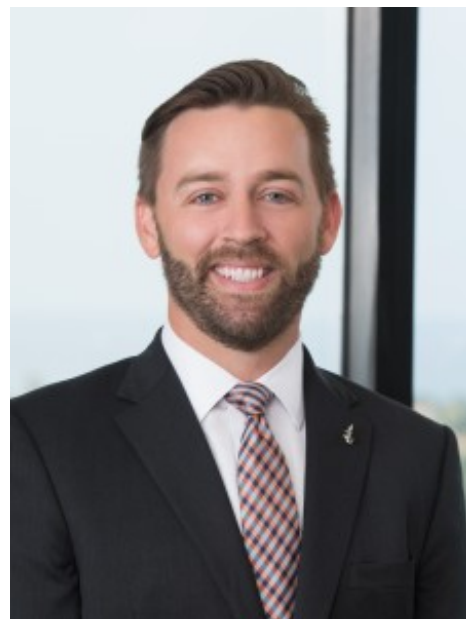


Trade associate member update – Lewis, Longman & Walker

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Questions and answers with Chris Johns of the law firm of Lewis, Longman & Walker, P.A.

– Chris Johns comes from a long line of Florida farmers. His father, Frank Johns, was a former chairman of FFVA. Chris uses his background in agriculture to advantage when working for his clients. We talked with him about the law firm Lewis, Longman & Walker, and the various ways he and his colleagues serve the Florida agriculture industry.



What areas of your practice most apply to agricultural producers?

Our firm's practice focuses on environmental, land-use and government law. We can handle virtually any legal issue that involves regulation of the environment, regulation of natural resources, or the use and ownership of land. These areas frequently intersect with issues agricultural producers encounter. We have extensive experience with both federal and state environmental law, including Clean Water Act issues involving Waters of the U.S., dredge-and-fill permitting, and other wetlands issues. In addition, we do extensive work involving special districts, such as drainage districts, and local governments. We regularly handle environmental permitting matters, including consumptive use permits and environmental resource permits. We handle land transactions and issues involving land use, zoning approvals and easements such as drainage or conservation easements.

Under what sort of circumstances would someone in agriculture be looking to use your services?

There are many situations where an agricultural firm might use our services. We handle permitting and compliance issues involving agencies such as the Army Corps of Engineers, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the water management districts. We are well-suited to handle any kind of wetland issue at the state and the federal levels. We can also represent the agricultural community in dealing with pesticide and other types of chemical regulation and cleanup. We can negotiate and draft conservation easements. We can negotiate use agreements or other kinds of agreements or leases with special districts, local governments or regulatory agencies. We can acquire land use or zoning approvals for packing facilities, processing plants or distribution centers, and we have extensive experience in land use and zoning throughout Florida.



LLW positions itself as being different because so many of the attorneys have been government counsel, scientists, and others working in fields where having insider knowledge is important. Can you comment on this and maybe give us some examples as to how that has worked to a client's advantage?

Many of our attorneys have experience working for state, regional, and local governments where they gained significant experience in dealing with both the regulators and the regulated community, including the agricultural community. Two of our attorneys have served as general counsel for water management districts. Several others have worked for the Department of Environmental Regulation or Department of Environmental Protection, and others have worked for various counties, including Palm Beach County and Martin County. We have an attorney who is also a certified land planner. He is skilled in the use of Geographic Information Systems, which he has used

to overlay historic aerials with permit and site plan data to demonstrate the evolution of shoreline and development patterns to protect clients' property rights. We have environmental attorneys who were scientists and engineers and who used that background in one instance to successfully argue to eliminate the need for over \$1 million in remediation of secondary contaminants that posed no risk to human health or the environment.

Anything else you'd like to add as to why someone should come to you with their specific legal needs?

My personal experiences and background growing up on, and eventually helping manage, my family's potato farm gives me perspective on the unique issues and needs of people within the ag community. I come from a long line of farmers. My brother and I (before I decided to pursue a legal career) represent the fifth generation in our family to farm. My dad was president of the UF Alpha Gamma Rho chapter and a longtime FFVA member. As a result I have strong ties to Florida agriculture and I have an intimate understanding of what it takes to run a successful farming operation in today's economy. I understand the numerous pressures that ag faces, whether it's from economic competition, environmental or other regulatory pressures, or changing social trends. I understand the anxiety and stress that come from knowing that the operation you have built and dedicated your life to is only one wrongly attributed foodborne illness news story away from ruin. That experience and understanding are rare outside the ag industry. I bring that to the table for our firm and our clients, and when those things are combined with our firm's resources, legal knowledge and experience, we can provide value and peace of mind to agricultural clients so they can spend more time out on the land doing what they love.

Learn more about LLW on the firm's website at <http://www.llw-law.com/>. Offices are in Jacksonville, Bradenton, Tallahassee and West Palm Beach.

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