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TRAILBLAZERS

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL

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PIONEER SPIRIT Both of Peter Hsiao's parents are chemical engineers, and he has worked in a variety of research laboratories, nuclear facilities and industrial plants as well as published papers on using precision lasers to remove tritium from heavy water. Drawing upon his science background, he became a trial lawyer in the U.S. attorney's office in Los Angeles, trying cases in environmental and natural resources law. "Having the combination of trial experience and technical expertise is invaluable in litigating a complex environmental case."



TRAILS BLAZED The Los Angeles Aqueduct has diverted the Owens River for a century, which created the dried Owens Lake bed, the largest source of particulate air pollution in the country. Last year, local residents were warned to stay indoors 22 times. Representing the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District, Hsiao has won five federal and state court cases in the last three years, requiring the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power to implement control measures to attain the federal air pollution standards. The LADWP will also be allowed to use an experimental control method to till the soil with a backup of shallow flooding, to more efficiently conserve water. "When completed, the controls will remove 76,000 tons (the weight of 38,000 cars) of harmful pollutants each year and turn some of the nation's dirtiest air into some of its cleanest."

FUTURE EXPLORATIONS Hsiao believes the public needs a better understanding of the balance between innovation and risk. "The first rule of ecology is 'everything is connected to everything else.'" He believes that environmental lawyers have an important role to play. "We need to help people understand the relationship between risk and benefit."