

## MVP: McGuireWoods' Gregory Evans

By Emily Lever

*Law360* (September 27, 2022, 2:56 PM EDT) -- Gregory Evans of McGuireWoods LLP's environmental practice represented Grupo Mexico subsidiary Asarco LLC in a successful bid to recoup cleanup costs for the East Helena Superfund site from Atlantic Richfield Co., earning him a spot as one of Law360's 2022 Environmental MVPs.

### ***HIS BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT OVER THE PAST YEAR:***

Evans, who specializes in matters related to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act — better known as CERCLA or Superfund — led a legal team that represented Asarco against Atlantic Richfield Co. in a dispute over the \$120 million cleanup of a Superfund site at a former lead smelting plant in East Helena, Montana. While Asarco is still responsible for the cleanup, Atlantic Richfield will have to reimburse Asarco for 25% of the cost, a Montana federal judge ruled.

The case clarifies how pollution and toxic waste remediation can get paid for when multiple entities bear responsibility for environmental damage, according to Evans. Where businesses may have tended to litigate to duck the costs of cleanups, the new ruling incentivizes them to settle more quickly by allowing them to later pursue other parties that have contributed to polluting a site.

"The sooner parties acknowledge their environmental impact, the sooner resources can be devoted to clean up those impacts," Evans told Law360. "The communities benefit because that money is otherwise unavailable. The Superfund doesn't have enough money to clean up all of the industrial impacts that occurred in the last few years."

### ***WHY HE'S AN ENVIRONMENTAL ATTORNEY:***

Evans' ambitions to become an environmental lawyer date back to his childhood in Glassell Park, East Los Angeles, a neighborhood that was extensively polluted by the nearby Southern Pacific Railyard.

"The pollution was so severe that it caused disease in my family and impacted our community in so many ways," Evans said. "I've always wanted to be an environmental attorney to show that there are guidelines that can be achieved, alignment that can be achieved between a company's objective, its



social responsibility, and the needs of our community to live in a safe and healthy environment."

Though his work involves defending corporations accused of causing pollution, he says he also tries to guide his clients toward owning up to mistakes and repairing the damage.

"My job as their advocate is not only to help others to understand when they have not impacted the environment, but also to help companies understand when they have, and to understand ways that they can effectively address those impacts and move forward," Evans said.

**WHAT MOTIVATES HIM:**

The kind of objectives Evans works toward are exemplified in Glassell Park, where the site of the railyard that polluted the neighborhood now has a public park with a swimming pool.

"I bring a different perspective into a company's law department or a corporation's board of directors; I can speak with experience about the impacts," Evans said.

Achieving meaningful improvements in people's material conditions can come from incremental work by lawyers, according to Evans, who says he aims to reconcile the interests of his clients with broader environmental objectives.

"My default position isn't one which involves denial and scorched-earth defense tactics," Evans said. "Instead, my approach is to learn and become passionate about my client's business, and to learn and to be very truthful about the impacts that the business may have had — and to be very sober about the advice that I provide, as to what is needed to make a community a safer place so that businesses and communities can thrive together."

— *As told to Emily Lever.*

*Law360's MVPs of the Year are attorneys who have distinguished themselves from their peers over the past year through high-stakes litigation, record-breaking deals, and complex global matters. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2022 MVP winners after reviewing more than 900 submissions.*