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OU Law - Ardmore native completes first Master of Laws thesis



Natural resources attorney Trae Gray

NORMAN -- When Trae Gray, founder of LandownerFirm.com, was awarded the Master of Laws (LL.M.) Degree in Natural Resources Law from The University of Oklahoma College of Law on May 9, 2015, he also earned the distinction of being the first LL.M. candidate to complete a thesis for this degree in OU College of Law history.

Gray, who specializes in natural resources law, decided to pursue the Masters of Law degree to advance his knowledge and

legal expertise in this field of law to better serve landowner clients. And while a thesis is not required for this LL.M. degree, Gray made a further commitment to conduct research and to write his thesis on the emerging legal issues concerning “pore space” and property owner rights.

Pore space, or the void spaces between mineral and organic materials underground, is an important consideration to landowners whether something is being extracted from their property (such as oil or gas) or injected (salt water for from oil and gas exploration or Co2 for carbon sequestration).

Written over a three-year period, the thesis is entitled, “A 2015 Analysis and Update on U.S. Pore Space Law – The Necessity of Proceeding Cautiously with Respect to the ‘Stick’ Known as Pore Space.” (Property rights are sometimes referred to as a bundle of ‘sticks’ with each stick representing a right or benefit stream.) The thesis includes an analysis of the 15 U.S. states that are actively addressing

legal issues concerned with pore space.

Gray’s thesis advisor, OU College of Law Professor and Academic Director for the LL.M. Program, Owen L. Anderson, has commented on the issue of pore space and Gray’s thesis.

“A host of legal issues surround pore space law, including ownership, right to use, rights to exclude (trespass) and associated liabilities. Trae’s thesis makes an important contribution to the legal literature addressing this increasingly important area of property law,” Professor Anderson said.

While Gray is now working with the OU College of Law regarding the publication of the thesis, he has already begun a series of platform opportunities to present his findings and opinions on pore space and land-owner rights. On May 7, Gray was a featured speaker on “surface issues” at the 2015 OK NARO (National Association of Royalty Owners) Convention in Tulsa, Okla. where he spoke about the findings of his thesis.

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