



## Patrisha "Trisha" Smith

### SENIOR COUNSEL

MILWAUKEE, WI

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### OVERVIEW

Drawing on her experience as a utility's former manager of state regulatory affairs and associate general counsel, Trisha combines legal acumen with real-world perspective to address clients' challenges.

A lifelong environmental steward, Trisha's early exposure to residential passive solar heating and the Girl Scouts' "Leave No Trace" principles sparked a passion for conservation that shapes her energy law practice. Today, with decades of public utility experience and a thorough understanding of the regulatory scheme and players, she helps Wisconsin utilities secure permits and land rights to legally construct, operate, or modify their facilities in compliance with environmental, safety, property, and utility laws and regulations.

Trisha began her career by addressing utilities' extensive environmental permitting needs within a Washington, DC, law firm's environmental group. Soon thereafter, she returned to her home state of Wisconsin, joining a recently established electric transmission company eager to expand its in-house services—an opportunity that, over a span of 20 years, exposed her to both utility and business operations and culminated in her leadership of the utility's state and federal regulatory affairs functions.

She experienced firsthand the challenges of a regulated monopoly serving essential public needs under federal, state, and local oversight. Trisha achieved approvals for dozens of infrastructure projects, guiding the company from project concept to regulatory applications and hearings and then to permit compliance during

### Industry

Energy & Natural Resources

### Services

Electric Transmission

Energy Regulation

Environmental

construction. Her legal experience includes multi-owner projects and the negotiation and drafting of necessary agreements between the owners. Additionally, for four years, she led the utility's environmental department—which was responsible for the natural and cultural resource assessments and permitting for the utility's construction and maintenance activities—as well as its waste recycling and disposal programs.

Her passion for environmental stewardship—to make the world a better place—fuels her work. She recognizes clients' commitment to delivering reliable, essential services and focuses on securing permits that respect all stakeholders while managing costs. As a trusted adviser, Trisha first seeks to understand each client's end objective and the parameters of their authorization, then offers multiple paths for achieving their objective when appropriate. She understands the client's perspective, having worked as in-house counsel managing millions of dollars annually in law firm charges. With a steady, inclusive hand, she brings together diverse teams to move complex, multiparty projects forward and deliver meaningful results for clients.

### Experience

- Achieved local, state and federal approvals for dozens of infrastructure projects vital to society and the transition to renewal energy by drafting applications, testimony and briefs; answering data requests; responding to discovery; and presenting and cross-examining witnesses in state administrative hearings, primarily before the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin.
- Served as lead counsel for the development and permitting of two large, more than \$500 million, multistate transmission line projects with multiple utility owners.
- Directed electric utility company defense in multiparty, complex litigation in state and federal courts challenging project authorizations, including district courts and appellate courts.
- Advised executives and board of directors on environmental, regulatory, partnership, litigation, and legislative issues and strategies.
- Negotiated and drafted ownership, development, construction, and maintenance agreements.
- Counseled electric utility company on land rights, easement disputes, and the condemnation process, and oversaw eminent domain litigation.
- Oversaw the quality and accuracy of millions of dollars annually in outside counsel expenditures.

## Education

- J.D., George Washington University Law School
  - with high honors
  - *The George Washington Law Review*, Articles Editor
- B.A., Marquette University
  - *magna cum laude*
  - Sen. Herb Kohl, Les Aspin Center for Government, Congressional Intern

## Admissions

- Wisconsin
- District of Columbia
- U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Wisconsin

## Clerkships

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Enforcement & Compliance Assurance

## Community Leadership

- Kids Matter Inc., Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), 2025-present
- Girl Scouts of Wisconsin Southeast
  - Board Development Committee Chair, 2024-present
  - Board Development Committee, 2023-present
  - National Council Delegate, 2020-2023
  - Troop Leader, 2010-2022
- Unity Lutheran Church, ELCA Congregation, Council Member and Stewardship Chair, 2023-2025