



DECARBONIZATION
AND
ADAPTATION

CLIMATE-
CONSCIOUS LEGAL
PRACTICE

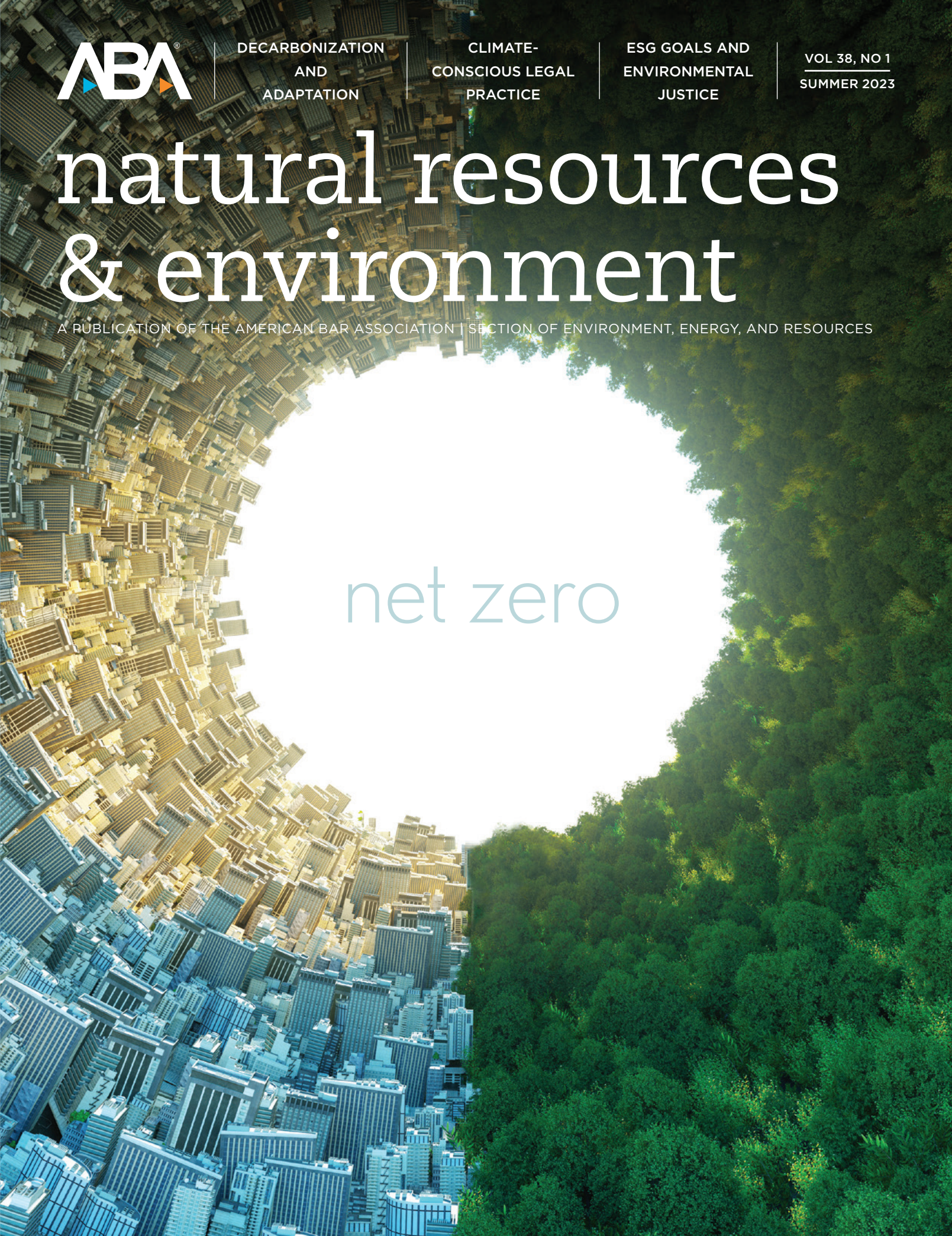
ESG GOALS AND
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JUSTICE

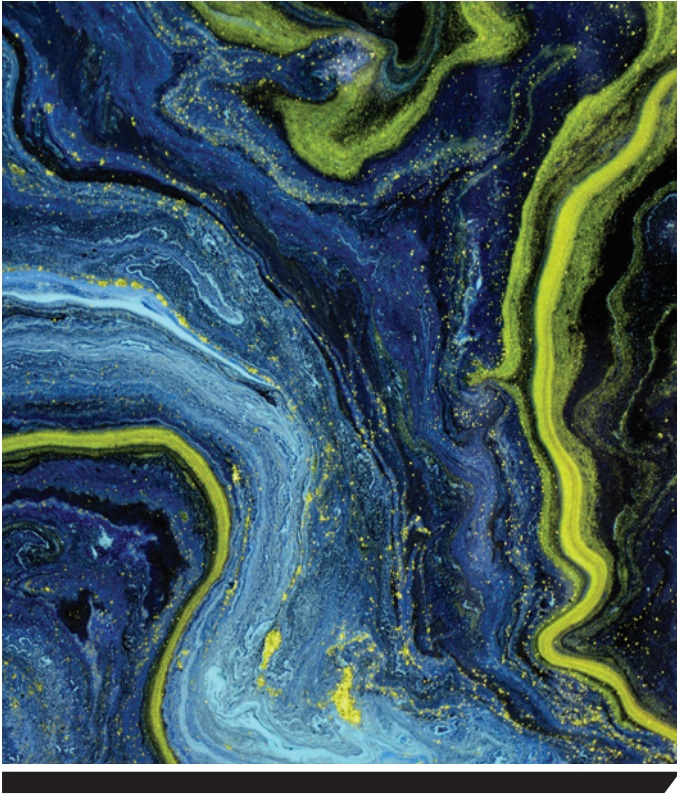
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perspectives

Be Present

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About five years ago, my family adopted a St. Bernard puppy named Wally. We had rescued Wally from a facility (which we later worked to shut down) that was keeping the puppies in small pens and unsanitary conditions. Wally was life-threateningly ill when we brought him home, and spent the first months of his young life in pain, fighting to get well. During this time, we quickly discovered that frequent walks gave him the greatest happiness. As a young puppy, everything was new to him, and he was captivated by butterflies, birds, bumblebees, *but most of all flowers*. He would take the time to smell each flower, and to this day even the aroma of flowers causes him to bounce with joy. During his fight to heal, he found a small thing that brought happiness.

The troubling mental health statistics of lawyers are well documented. Many people are facing difficult mental and personal challenges, which have been compounded in recent years by such things as a pandemic, nearly constant and exhausting political turmoil, and increasingly frequent natural disasters. Although we're often told that enduring these types of

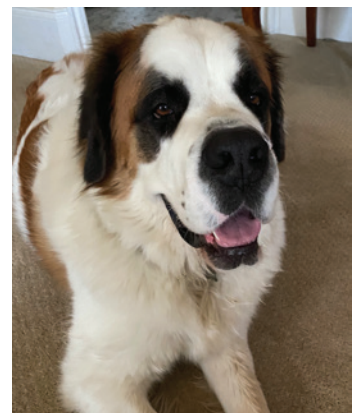
hardships will make us stronger, the intent of this piece is to emphasize an ever-important corollary to merely enduring trials—finding joy in the present. At the risk of appearing overly simplistic, the proposition is that we find a way to recognize and experience something in the present that brings happiness, rather than always looking forward to the future or simply riding the passage of time.

A cycling instructor I've worked with often begins her sessions by asking, "Can you find joy in the smallest things?" It is her way of stating that the ride is about to get difficult, so look for things to keep you going. She will advise the group to look for the joy in being there, in spite of the pain. It is good advice. For Wally, the present joy is the walk, the aroma of the flowers, and the wonder of nature. The smell of a flower did not eliminate his discomfort, but it did bring a degree of happiness.

Many of us in the profession are so focused on future objectives that we often fail to live in the present. We can't wait to get a negotiation over, get through a call, finish a hearing; we are focused on the next client, the next paycheck, the next victory. We take pride in working on vacations and holidays, constantly check our phones and email, and, in the process, fail to enjoy the present. The pattern of ignoring the present with a focus on the past or future can exacerbate mental stress.

I am by no means a mental health expert, and do not mean to diminish the severity and reality of the struggles faced by so many, but have discovered that my own mental health can be nudged a bit by looking for those small kernels of joy in the present. Here are some things that have worked for me:

- Focus on the now. Find something positive in the present.
- Pay attention to the small things. Notice the world around you.
- Strive for optimism. Focus on at least one positive thing a day.
- Smile. Although this may seem silly, studies suggest it is not.
- Find ways to serve, and perform random acts of kindness.
- Cut down the screen time.
- Increase meditation, breathing, or take a short walk.
- Find time for the people and things you enjoy.
- Carpe diem: It means pluck the joy, seize the day.



Be present and enjoy what you can of today rather than wishing for time to pass and bring joy in a week, a month, or years from now. Small things can bring meaningful joy in the present. 🌱

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