

## 2022 RISING STAR

# Jhett Nelson



Kirkland & Ellis LLP partner Jhett R. Nelson co-led a team advising on one of the largest private acquisitions of oil and gas assets in recent years, earning him a spot among the energy attorneys under 40 honored as Law360 Rising Stars.

**His biggest case:**

Nelson said the deal he co-led took the cake as his biggest case. That transaction, in which he helped Hilcorp acquire BP's Alaska operations for \$5.6 billion, was one of the largest private transactions in the energy space in recent years and helped the oil giant with a strategic exit from Alaska after over half a century of operations.

The transaction was bogged down by COVID-19-related delays, which only added to the difficulty and intrigue of the project. In the end, Nelson was able to help his client expand its footprint in the Alaska region, including through the acquisition of upstream and midstream properties that Nelson said involved a lot of moving parts as the pandemic turned commodity prices on their head and stirred up complexities.

"There were a lot of moving pieces," he said. "Once you spend all that time setting up the deal, there was a long regulatory period on the federal and state level. That ended up becoming more interesting because, in the meantime as we set up the deal, COVID struck."

**His proudest moment:**

Every deal has its quirks and interesting components, so choosing one particular case or project as the one that made him proudest

is tough, Nelson said. Instead, he sees his career as a culmination of work and effort that has led him to the place he now finds himself — working as a senior partner for a firm he greatly respects.

"So, if I had to point to one moment it's probably that, but obviously that's not just the culmination of a career," he said. "It's one stop along the way and beyond, and it's kind of hard to pick one particular moment because every deal has its interesting quirks, has interesting satisfactions based on deal size."

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## What motivates him:

For Nelson, being around interesting people and working on engaging challenges are what it's all about. He said he is fulfilled at Kirkland for that very reason, since the firm is full of smart and hardworking people working for great clients and companies.

"One of the lucky things we have here at Kirkland is I'm surrounded by a bunch of very sharp, hardworking and driven people who are trying to do interesting things for themselves and for their clients and for the firm at large," Nelson said. "When you're surrounded by those types of people all pulling in that direction it helps you stay motivated."

## Why he's an energy attorney:

When you start your career in Texas, one of the most active energy markets in the country, it's not hard to gravitate towards energy, Nelson said. He has felt fulfilled working in the industry and seeing the major changes that have come along the way, he said.

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***"Geography is destiny. I started my career in Houston, and it's hard not to be an attorney here and be impacted [by the energy industry]."***

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That's meant working on everything from capital raises to mergers and acquisitions, and now, helping clients navigate the shift towards clean energy, he said.

"I grew up into it, and obviously being in the energy space and advising people in energy has really changed over the years," Nelson said. "Geography is destiny. I started my career in Houston, and it's hard not to be an attorney here and be impacted."

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