

Rob Eberhardt



As part of a \$2.3 billion debt financing project, Rob Eberhardt of Kirkland & Ellis LLP led a team that shepherded Vineyard Wind through the process of creating the first U.S. commercial-scale offshore wind farm, earning him a spot among *Law360*'s 2022 Project Finance MVPs.

His biggest accomplishment:

Eberhardt considers the Vineyard Wind deal his biggest accomplishment in the last year.

Kirkland said the debt financing project is the first financing for a commercial scale offshore wind farm in the United States to close and is one of the largest investments in a single renewable energy project in the country. The site is 15 miles off the coast of Martha's Vineyard.

Eberhardt said he has worked on the project since 2017. Aside from it being the first of its kind, he said it was also an accomplishment to help a longtime client through a transaction that could set the stage for future offshore wind development projects in the U.S.

Eberhardt added that he had expected a traditional environmental

law career, but a post-law school internship at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency changed that.

"It was actually a permit application that came across my desk for a U.S. offshore wind project that led me to learn about the offshore wind industry," he said.

In 2004, he said, the industry was just starting to take shape in Europe and was not widespread in the U.S.

"Seeing that application piqued my interest, something clicked, and I decided to pursue the practice that I ultimately have," he said. "Eighteen years later, to be involved in this closing was just really satisfying personally."

His biggest challenge:

While the Vineyard Wind project provided plenty of challenges in the

last year, Eberhardt said one of his biggest difficulties was related to the February 2021 winter storm in Texas that caused the state's power grid to fail.

Eberhardt has helped clients over the years with energy hedges, but the failure in Texas led to a whole new type of work, he said.

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“Apart from all the sort of personal suffering that everyone had, it led to a lot of financial distress for renewable projects in Texas. I was advising a lot of clients on how to navigate that situation. I think it led to me acting in insolvency situations or in litigation situations that were new to me and new to a lot of clients that I was acting for, so that was a challenge,” he said.

What motivates him:

Working on projects that are environmentally beneficial has been a motivator for Eberhardt over the years. But he comes to find that day-to-day work can be a motivator as well.

That includes the satisfaction of working with lawyers over an extended period, which brings with it the opportunity to watch attorneys learn to become talented practitioners and gain valuable experience. Working with clients themselves also keeps him coming back each day.

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continue to provide assistance as they grow and as they achieve success, and that’s just super satisfying, and it’s also created opportunities to provide advice with real understanding of their business and real experience working with them,” he said.

His advice for attorneys just starting out:

Eberhardt said it’s important that less experienced attorneys find a way to add value to a team from the start of a project and watch more experienced attorneys manage the deal and handle challenging situations.

“There’s really no substitute for working with experienced lawyers

on high-profile deals,” he said. “The advice I would give would be to find a practice area where you find the clients’ business interesting. Find a team of experienced lawyers helping those clients on their most challenging deal. ... You learn from them, and you find opportunities later to emulate them, and eventually you find a practice area and a style of practice that suits you.”

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