

CATALYST HITS THE GROUND RUNNING IN 2026 ON A STRONG MIX OF CLIENTS AND STATE & LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Catalyst Environmental Solutions Corporation (Santa Monica) is a full-service environmental consulting firm working at the intersection of science, engineering, risk, regulation, and decision-making. We specialize in energy, land development/management, water resources management, and sustainability strategy and planning. Our key services include environmental planning and permitting, regulatory compliance, liability management, and structured decision support. As trusted advisors, we employ an interdisciplinary approach to problem-solving that synthesizes the work of our scientific, economic, engineering, and regulatory experts to create practical solutions for our clients' environmental and natural resource management issues.

David (Chip) Blankenhorn, President, Catalyst Environmental Solutions Corporation: Mr. Blankenhorn is a State of California Professional Geologist with more than three decades of experience in environmental consulting, project delivery, business strategy, and organizational leadership. He has worked in all aspects of the business including delivering complex, interdisciplinary projects; preparing and executing focused business development plans and strategies; and, leading various operating units ranging from start-up teams to a national division of a global engineering and environmental services firm. His work spans a broad range of markets across the United States including oil and gas, power generation and transmission, water management and supply, and land development and management. He utilizes his diverse, interdisciplinary background to develop, execute, and deliver cost-effective solutions to our clients.

EBJ: How has business been so far in 2026 and what external factors have played into your short- or long-term business planning and strategy here in Q2 2026?

Chip Blankenhorn: Our business has been quite robust this year. We hit the ground running at the start of the year with both real-time project work as well as a strong backlog, and our workload is only getting busier as the year progresses.

Given our mix of public- and private-sector clients, a variety of external factors have affected our short- and long-term planning and strategy. In the public sector, we have leveraged our expertise and experience to support state, regional, and local sustainability-related initiatives including solid waste minimization and recycling programs, invasive species monitoring and management, and water reclamation and reuse programs. Most of these initiatives are in the early stages and we are working with our clients to transform recently promulgated policies into implementable projects and practices. With regard to the private sector, we are seeing significant

growth in the renewable energy sector as well as brownfield redevelopment, and we have made several hires this year to help support those portfolios of work.

EBJ: How would you rank which have been the largest or recently impactful drivers of your work as this federal 'de-regulatory' transition evolves: State initiatives; local programs; private sector investment to minimize future liabilities; private sector investment to minimize future exposure to climate risk; private sector investment to anticipate future environmental compliance costs; infrastructure development; energy development for centralized systems; energy development for distributed or behind-the-meter systems; horizontal infrastructure for energy & power; others?

Blankenhorn: While changes in federal policies have affected our industry, our experience has been that those changes have impacted the approach for delivering projects, but not necessarily the elimination of investment in projects. For example, most of our federal work is related to the Na-

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tional Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and we continue to see a stable pipeline of work in this area, though our approach to these projects has evolved in accordance with the much more streamlined policies now being implemented by federal agencies.

As far as other drivers, we are experiencing many of the factors outlined in your question. For example, we have a significant portfolio of renewable energy project work which is largely driven by state mandates aimed at reducing fossil fuel-based generation. In addition, much of our work in the water resources sector is associated with state and local water reclamation/reuse initiatives as well as water quality enhancement programs through which we are working with our municipal clients to transition from septic to sewer-based treatment systems.

Another example is our work related to vapor intrusion mitigation systems (VIMS), which is driven by state and local regulatory requirements as well as private sector investment to minimize future liabilities associated with brownfield redevelopment projects.

EBJ: How have you managed pricing strategy or contract mechanisms, and any resulting rate increases over the last few years as inflation, wage increases and personnel retention pressures have increased?

Blankenhorn: Our business-related costs have certainly increased over the past several years primarily due to rising insurance costs and wage increases to keep up with the escalating cost of living as well as to reward our staff on merit as they grow professionally. To offset these cost increases, we have raised our rates where we can

and employed fixed-pricing where appropriate. In regard to rate increases, we have been fortunate as many of our clients have been understanding and appreciate the value that we bring to the table. That said, we are mindful of their increasing costs as well, so we have worked with them to find an appropriate balance. For our fixed-price projects, we have utilized daily rates for field work and lump-sum pricing for other deliverables, creating a balanced approach to shared risk allocation.

EBJ: How has your implementation of an artificial intelligence strategy or deployment on selective projects impacted how you charge on time & materials projects or how you expect to bid projects or negotiate master service agreement projects in the future?

Blankenhorn: In regard to AI, our first step was to develop a corporate policy and an associated AI-use manual. The policy and manual were developed by our internal AI committee that is comprised of staff across various aspects of our business. With that in-place, we have been very mindful about how we have used AI in delivering our project work. Specifically, we understand that our clients hire us for the experience and expertise of our practitioners, so we are selective in where we use AI-enabled tools.

Our AI tools are tailored to the specific engagement and are used to complement the judgment, knowledge, and expertise of our professionals. In that regard, we have been successful in incorporating AI-enabled approaches to streamline workflows and reduce costs for project delivery. The landscape is changing rapidly in this space, and we are continuing to evolve our strategy as we better understand how best to use AI to efficiently and effectively support our clients.

EBJ: What areas has your company focused on in energy and power: planning & permitting, community outreach, design, CM/PM implementation management or civil/geotech building infrastructure design implementation and management?

Blankenhorn: Our services in the energy and power sectors are primarily fo-

cused on environmental planning and permitting where we use our experience to support our clients from the initial siting analysis phase through to construction and startup. Much of our work is related to geothermal, solar, and battery storage projects that leverage the expertise of our biological and cultural resources teams in assessing current conditions and developing streamlined pathways for project permitting and approvals.

EBJ: As a California based company, how insulated or isolated do you believe the market is, particularly for planning & permitting and natural resource issues related to transportation infrastructure, property/land development and other areas your company focuses on?

Blankenhorn: California is definitely a unique market with respect to its policies and regulations as well as its mix of regulatory oversight agencies at the state, regional, and local levels. For example, in regard to natural resource issues, our clients not only have to address federally listed endangered species, but also state listed sensitive and endangered species, several of which are newly listed which makes mitigation challenging as the policies are evolving in real-time. In relation to property development, the governing regulatory oversight agency for contaminated sites can vary from the Regional Water Quality Control Board, DTSC, or a local CUPA agency depending on the site's location and risk profile. Each of these agencies has their own approach and process, so it's important to work with our clients to develop an appropriate strategy tailored to the specific governing oversight agency.

EBJ: With energy security, energy dominance and energy independence with less reliance on the grid driving business today, what is your current involvement and long-term perspective on these categories: Electrification of transportation & EV fleet charging and regional networks; the development, transportation and export of traditional fossil fuels in oil and natural gas; behind the meter distributed or independent power generation for private clients or government infrastructure?

Blankenhorn: We are doing a lot of work with renewable energy developers on the power generation side of things, but we also have a strong portfolio of battery storage projects and EV charging clients in the retail and fleet electrification markets. We continue to see growth in battery storage projects, but our work in the EV charging market has slowed in response to the changes in federal policies.

In regard to fossil fuels, we are working with our oil and gas clients to navigate the changes in California policies and regulations which are making it more challenging for our clients to operate. Along those lines, we are supporting our clients with the redevelopment of oil fields for housing and other land use alternatives. In addition, we are working with various municipalities to explore and assess the affects of post-oil field operations on the local economy and land use.

EBJ: What was your original inspiration to get into the industry in the first place, and what circumstances led to you taking on a senior management role?

Blankenhorn: I was drawn to the industry by its unique blend of business, science, and engineering, and the opportunity to apply this mix of disciplines to help clients navigate their natural resource management challenges and comply with environmental regulatory requirements. Early in my career, I expected to specialize in a particular niche, but I quickly discovered that I enjoy working across a diverse range of projects. The interdisciplinary nature of the work has given me the opportunity to continuously expand my knowledge across many areas of the field, which I find especially rewarding.

With regard to my path to a senior management role, I've been fortunate to have mentors throughout my career who played an instrumental role in creating opportunities for my professional growth. Equally important, I've had the privilege of working alongside exceptional teams whose support and collaboration have contributed greatly to my success. ▣