

MONTANA WATER COURT



STATE OF MONTANA

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Via email

Chief Justice Mike McGrath
Montana Supreme Court
215 N. Sanders St.
Helena, MT 59601

Re: Anna M. Stradley
Associate Water Judge Application, Montana Water Court

Dear Chief Justice McGrath:

I am grateful for the opportunity to apply for Associate Water Judge. For the past 11 years I have served as a Senior Water Master at the Montana Water Court. In total, I have over 18 years of experience adjudicating Montana water rights. As the second longest serving Senior Water Master in the Water Court's history, I am uniquely qualified to help bring the adjudication to a timely conclusion.

I grew up on a small family ranch near Choteau, Montana. I understood from an early age the importance of water. As a result, in law school I took every water law class available to me. Now, each day at the Montana Water Court, I have the pleasure of combining my love for water law and my love for my home, the great State of Montana.

My body of work for the Water Court includes:

- thousands of case proceedings, including evidentiary hearings,
- thousands of written decisions concerning the beneficial use of water, abandonment, and federal and Indian reserved water rights, with the vast majority of these decisions adopted summarily by a Chief Water Judge or an Associate Water Judge,
- numerous public meetings describing and explaining the adjudication process to water users,
- public speaking engagements including: the presentation of continuing legal education materials; information concerning the Confederated Salish and Kootenai-Montana Compact; and a panelist for Dividing the Waters at the National Judicial College,
- mentoring work colleagues,
- helping self represented litigants as my position allows,

- building and maintaining ongoing relationships with colleagues at the Water Court, the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the public, and attorneys who appear before me,
- and brainstorming improvements to Water Court processes thereby moving the adjudication along.


My time with the Montana Water Court provides me with a deep knowledge of Montana's historical pre-July 1, 1973 water law, Water Court precedent and rules, and Water Court processes. To maintain uniformity in Water Court decrees, deference must be given to Montana's historical water law and to Montana Water Court precedent established over the past several decades. However, Water Court history demonstrates that well supported legal arguments for clearly distinguishable fact patterns on issues of first impression are not ignored. I write timely, clear, thorough, and consistent opinions and would continue the Water Court's history of applying the proper precedent and analyzing any issues of first impression in a thoughtful manner, culminating in well-reasoned decisions.

I am well prepared for all levels of court proceedings. Through strength of character, self-confidence, the ability to listen and respond in an appropriate manner, and a reassuring, quiet, and steady demeanor, I build a rapport with self represented litigants and attorneys. I provide those that appear before me with confidence and trust in my knowledge and capability to efficiently run case proceedings in a fair and reasonable manner.

I am acutely aware of the challenges facing Montana water right owners. I am vested, as this is my life's work, in seeing through the completion of Montana's adjudication. As Montana's Associate Water Judge I will provide efficiency and continuity to the process. I will welcome the challenge and responsibility of moving from a Senior Water Master position and applying my experience and skills to different facets of the adjudication process, and expanding into Montana Administrative Procedures Act appeals, District Court and Department of Natural Resources and Conservation certification cases, and any other new responsibilities assigned to me.

I am honored to join the other applicants and wish to continue my public service to this great State as the Associate Water Judge. My hope is the culmination of many years of Water Court work will be a high-quality product and a legacy that serves the people of Montana for many years and generations to come.

Thank you for your time.



Anna M. Stradley
Senior Water Master
Montana Water Court