



YELLOWSTONE
Boys and Girls Ranch Foundation

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

December 31, 2024

Via email: rbird@mt.gov

Re: Letter of Support for William C. Fanning

Dear Chief Justice,

I write in support of William C. Fanning's application to serve as the Associate Water Judge for the Montana Water Court. Among a host of well-qualified candidates, I respectfully submit William C. Fanning is the wise choice.

Prior to assuming my current position as President and General Counsel for Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch Foundation, I had an active general law practice in Dillon, MT, emphasizing water law. Mr. Fanning assumed representation of most of my clients, including individual water users, ditch companies and irrigation districts, all of whom indicate satisfaction with his services and high regard for his ethics and competencies.

Mr. Fanning successfully represented the East Bench Irrigation District in the seminal case *In re East Bench Irrigation District v. Open A Ranch, Inc.* (2021 MT 319). The case required a mastery of not only Montana water law, but also an understanding of the interplay between state and federal law, legislative history, principles of contract and real property law, and civil procedure issues involving standing, discovery, choice of law, case consolidation and standards of review. This real-world experience will prove invaluable in succeeding as a jurist.

With a calm yet confident demeanor, humility, and thorough preparation, I have seen Mr. Fanning succeed in building consensus among water users with widely differing interests and opinions. I believe he would bring those same attributes to the Montana Water Court, complimenting the practical and procedural expertise he developed as a Water Master. I support Mr. Fanning's application without reservation.

Sincerely Yours,

William A. Hritsco

"It sure makes a difference when you know somebody cares."