

# MONTANA WATER COURT



STATE OF MONTANA

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December 27, 2024

The Honorable Cory Swanson  
Chief Justice  
Montana Supreme Court

Re: Associate Water Judge

Dear Justice Swanson:

Congratulations on your election to Chief Justice.

My purpose in writing is to offer you perspective on candidates for Associate Water Judge. My perspective is based on a 35-year career in water law, including nearly thirteen years as a water judge.

All six candidates for Associate Water Judge have solid water law experience. I have worked with all of them for at least 5 years and several for much longer. Two candidates stand above the rest. They are Bina Peters and Julia Nordlund.

Bina and Julia both work hard. They write well and have fluency with water law from inside the water court and from private practice. They bring practical experience and common sense to the resolution of water cases. They know from firsthand experience the toll water litigation takes on its participants and appreciate the value of timely, clear decisions from a judge. Bina and Julia are both good people. They are kind, thoughtful, generous, attentive, and perceptive.

Most importantly, they have the courage to be fair and to make tough decisions based solely on the facts and the law. Neither has an agenda they will carry to the bench, and both understand the importance of precedent. Montana is fortunate to have candidates of this quality seeking a position on the court. I recommend them both without reservation.

Best wishes on your new venture.

Russ McElyea  
Chief Water Judge  
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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Russ McElyea".

*"... to expedite and facilitate the adjudication of existing water rights."*  
CH.697 L. 1979

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