

**From:** [Ryan McLane](#)  
**To:** [Bird, Rob](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Letter of Recommendation for Stephen R. Brown, Chief Judge Montana Water Court  
**Date:** Friday, March 7, 2025 2:36:47 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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October 15, 2024

Hon. Chief Justice Cory Swanson  
Montana Supreme Court  
c/o Rob Bird, Office of the Court Administrator  
**via email only to:** [rbird@mt.gov](mailto:rbird@mt.gov)

Re: Nomination of Stephen R. Brown as Chief Water Court Judge

Your Honor:

I respectfully submit this letter of recommendation in support of Stephen R. Brown's re-appointment as Chief Water Judge of the Montana Water Court. I can truly think of no one better suited to be Montana's Chief Water Judge.

I have had the privilege of appearing in front of Judge Brown during his tenure as the Associate and as the Chief Water Judge. I am primarily a water attorney, and I appear in water matters frequently. From personal experience I can attest that Judge Brown is knowledgeable, well-prepared, and fair. His performance as a judge has been exemplary.

Judge Brown is well-suited to water law. The practice of water law is procedurally complex, often relies on long-stale or incomplete facts, and usually involves multiple parties (frequently pro se). Thus, the nature of the Water Court appears to be mostly triage, with frequent bouts of intense, complex, and precedent-setting litigation. Judge Brown's knowledge of the cases, and the issues that underly them, result in well-reasoned and durable opinions.

Most importantly, Judge Brown shows genuine respect to those appearing and practicing before him. Water disputes between neighbors on a stream are usually very difficult for the parties involved. It is difficult to have to litigate against your neighbors. Having a water judge that genuinely respects all of the parties is invaluable for keeping cases calm.

I unreservedly recommend Judge Brown for re-appointment as Chief Water Judge.

Sincerely,  
Franz & Driscoll, PLLP



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