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March 10, 2025

Via Email

Chief Justice Cory Swanson
Montana Supreme Court
215 N. Sanders Street
Helena, MT 59601
rbird@mt.gov

RE: Recommendation of Judge Brown for Chief Water Judge

Dear Chief Justice Swanson:

I am writing to provide my strong and enthusiastic recommendation for Judge Stephen R. Brown's appointment as Chief Water Judge of the Montana Water Court. As a water rights attorney in private practice who routinely appears before the Water Court, I have had the privilege of practicing before Judge Brown and have witnessed firsthand his deep expertise in water law, his unwavering commitment to fairness, and his exceptional judicial temperament.

Judge Brown's experience and leadership make him uniquely qualified to continue in this critical role. His decades of legal practice, including his tenure as both Associate and Chief Water Judge, reflect a career dedicated to ensuring Montana's water rights are adjudicated with precision, consistency, and integrity. His ability to navigate the complexities of Montana's water adjudication system, while ensuring that all litigants—whether experienced counsel or self-represented individuals—receive fair and thoughtful consideration, is a testament to his judicial skill and professionalism.

Judge Brown's thorough and well-reasoned decisions demonstrate a mastery of water law. His leadership in issuing statewide procedural orders and working collaboratively with stakeholders, including attorneys, water users, and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, ensures that Montana's adjudication process continues to move forward effectively.

Beyond his legal acumen, Judge Brown is able to manage a complex docket while maintaining an open and accessible courtroom. His even-handed approach to decision-making and his dedication to public outreach and procedural transparency are qualities that will serve the Water Court well in the years to come.

For these reasons, I give Judge Brown my highest recommendation for reappointment as Chief Water Judge. His leadership, expertise, and judicial integrity make him an outstanding candidate, and I am confident that he will continue to serve Montana's water law system with distinction. Thank you for your consideration of his appointment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Breeann M. Johnson". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Breeann M. Johnson