

Androlewicz, Kathleen

To: McLaughlin, Beth
Subject: RE: Public Comment on Stephen Brown's Appointment to Chief Water Judge - Todd Netto

From: Netto, Todd <TNetto@mt.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, October 23, 2024 4:32 PM
To: McLaughlin, Beth <bmclaughlin@mt.gov>
Subject: Public Comment on Stephen Brown's Appointment to Chief Water Judge - Todd Netto

Chief Justice Mike McGrath,

I have had the privilege of working with Judge Stephen Brown in two different professional capacities for the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC or Department). The Department is statutorily obligated to provide technical assistance to the Montana Water Court under § 85-2-243, MCA.

My first role was as the Special Water Process Manager (SWPM), a special assignment dedicated to overhauling the Department's Adjudication and Distribution procedures. This role began in September 2023 and concluded in July 2024. During this time, I collaborated with the DNRC's Water Rights Bureau Chief (who oversaw the Adjudication Program), Chief Judge Russ McElyea, Associate Judge Brown, and Water Court Administrator Sara Calkins. Throughout our interactions, Judge Brown was consistently responsive, practical, and articulate. He remained open and receptive to new ideas and perspectives while working with me to address the difficult topics at play.

In July 2024, I became the Bureau Chief of the DNRC's Adjudication, Enforcement, and Distribution Bureau (AED). In this capacity, I now serve as the primary point of contact and oversee the Department's technical assistance to the Water Court. I have been meeting with Judge Brown to develop and implement what we both hope will be lasting solutions to legacy issues. Together, we have been strengthening communication channels, streamlining existing procedures, better defining our shared responsibilities to the citizens of the State, and working to alleviate longstanding tensions between the Department and Water Court.

Based on my personal experience, I believe the appointment of Judge Brown as Chief Water Judge would greatly benefit the State of Montana and its citizens.



Todd Netto | Adjudication, Enforcement, & Distribution Bureau Chief
Water Resources Division
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
1424 Ninth Avenue, Helena MT 59620
DESK: 406-444-6614 **EMAIL:** tnetto@mt.gov
Website | Facebook | X (Twitter) | Instagram
How did we do? Let us know here: [Feedback Survey](#)