

THE SUPREME COURT OF MONTANA

MIKE McGRATH  
CHIEF JUSTICE



JUSTICE BUILDING  
215 NORTH SANDERS  
PO BOX 203001  
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-3001  
TELEPHONE (406) 444-5490  
FAX (406) 444-3274

June 24, 2014

Senator Chas Vincent  
Chairman  
Water Policy Interim Committee  
State Capital  
Helena, MT 59620

RE: Water Rights in Montana Report

Dear Senator Vincent:

Enclosed is the final report produced by the Land Use and Natural Resources Clinic at the University of Montana School of Law. The report provides an excellent overview of the current Montana water adjudication system as well as a comparison to other states, and future possibilities for water management in Montana.

As you know, the Supreme Court requested assistance from the Clinic. Specifically, the Clinic was asked to look at the legal framework in place for managing water disputes and possible options for streamlining the process. The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation was involved with the project from the outset. And while not everyone fully agrees with some of the recommendations in the report, we do concur that it provides an excellent starting point for thinking about the future of water law in Montana.

The Court is grateful to the Clinic for the hard work and thought put into this project. I know staff at the Clinic would be willing to answer any questions the Committee might have after reviewing the report. Chief Water Judge Russ McElyea and I are also available to discuss these issues with the Committee.

Thank you for your interest in water adjudication issues in Montana.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike McGrath".

Mike McGrath  
Chief Justice

Enclosure

c: Chief Water Judge Russ McElyea  
Director John Tubbs  
Professor Michelle Bryan Mudd