

From: stephenson@dmsnaturalresources.com
To: [Mohr, Jason](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Geocode Survey
Date: Saturday, December 07, 2019 5:19:39 AM

Jason

I was forwarded this survey from DNRC and told to send my responses to you. My responses are in red text below.

1. What about geocodes do you think WPIC should know? (i.e.: saves time searching on geocode rather than searching section, township and range.)
 - a. My firm is a water right consulting firm. A lot of our work is due diligence and helping buyers in a transactional settings. We do not rely on geocodes to search for water rights. Not all water rights are "geocoded". We also find that water rights that are "geocoded", there is a high level of inaccuracy and incomplete listings in the geocodes that are on water rights. When taking an inventory of water rights associated with a property, we search by legal land description and names.
2. Do you have any suggestions to improve geocoding and the water right ownership update process?
 - a. We don't think geocoding is necessary for water rights. It is not part of how the right is defined and leads to inaccurate ownership updates.
3. Once water rights have had their geocodes validated, is this process easier to locate all water rights pertinent to the property?
 - a. See response to #1 above.
4. Have you found entering a geocode to search for water rights on a property within the DNRC water rights query system efficient?
 - a. See response to #1 above.
5. Could the water right query system be more user-friendly?
 - a. I think the water right query system in MT is great and robust. When compared to other states (we do work in multiple other states as well) the query system in Montana is terrific.
6. Do you feel the DNRC water right records are more up-to-date and accurate regarding legal descriptions, ownerships and geocodes?
 - a. I'm not sure what the original context is for this question, but assume it means since "geocoding" began?
7. If there was one thing that could make ownership updates run smoother, what would you recommend?
 - a. It would be wonderful if ownership updates could be processed quicker. 608 forms typically get processed quickly, but 641 ownership update split forms can sometimes

not get processed and over to the court quickly. In addition, when we notice ownership errors and send a letter explaining the situation, with chain of title supporting documentation, the letters can sometimes go unaddressed for a long time. However, we know everyone is extremely busy and respect that there is a lot going on.

- b. It also is unfortunate when an erroneous owner is added (and/or the real owner removed) by virtue of a DOR update, that often times the real owner has to go through the court to remove the erroneous owner. This can be a very expensive process. When a mistake is noticed, DNRC could inform the erroneous owner saying DNRC added them by mistake and thus DNRC is removing them. DNRC could take responsibility for the errors the DOR updates are creating and correct them. The real owners should not have to bear the cost of fixing the errors.

8. Do you feel you need additional training in how to find water rights by geocode, owner, GWIC, etc.?

- a. No.

Deborah Stephenson

DMS Natural Resources, LLC

602 S. Ferguson Ave., Suite 2

Bozeman, MT 59718

Office: 406-582-4988

Cell: 406-600-1422

stephenson@dmsnaturalresources.com

www.dmsnaturalresources.com [dmsnaturalresources.com]

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