WATER POLICY INTERIM
COMMITTEE 2019-20

January 6, 2020

Exhibit 18

From: Mary Ann Nicholas
To: Mohr, Jason
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Geocoding Input for WPIC
Date: Monday, December 16, 2019 11:52:55 AM

From: Austin, Lenore <Lenore.Austin@mt.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, December 03, 2019 2:22 PM
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Subject: Geocoding Input for WPIC

The Montana DNRC, Water Resources Division would like to gather some input regarding your geocoding experiences for ownership updates. The Montana Legislature's Water Policy Interim Committee (WPIC) will be meeting on December 11th, via conference call. They are specifically meeting about geocodes and whether they serve a valuable purpose or not, and what can be improved with the process.

Please take a moment and think about how you use geocodes.

1. What about geocodes do you think WPIC should know? (i.e.: saves time searching on geocode rather than searching section, township and range.)

The geo code process is adding names to water rights IN ERROR. This process is adding new property owners without a way, seemingly, to confirm that person actually has a water right. This system is adding names to abstracts because ownership shows up in the 'grid' overlay, it appears.

1. Do you have any suggestions to improve geocoding and the water right ownership update process?

The geo code grid process is adding new names to a water right without substantiating whether they have an actual water right. It is creating new ' owners' to a water right that are in error. It is instead, adding new names to the right based on an overlay, as I understand it. These errors are costing the actual water right holders a great deal of money to correct and have the potential to delay closings and complicate, unnecessarily, the due diligence process. And it is extremely difficult to get corrected. It is not a solution to notify them, if this is being done, that a new name has been added. The burden should not be on the water right owner, to correct their existing water right.

1. Once water rights have had their geocodes validated, is this process easier to locate all water rights pertinent to the property?

It seems the problem is that they are not being validated ?

1. Have you found entering a geocode to search for water rights on a property within the DNRC water rights query system efficient? Could the water right query system be more user-friendly?

1. Do you feel the DNRC water right records are more up-to-date and accurate regarding legal descriptions, ownerships and geocodes?

Ownership errors have been an issue. We have discovered numerous mistakes on water abstracts, where new names have been added that have never had a water right, And trying to get the error corrected is not straightforward and is expensive. It is placing an undue burden on the actual water right holder through no fault of their own. It seems a nightmare to be adding new people to a water right without substantiating that there is an actual right. Is there not a way to flag the process that is adding names to an abstract that were previously not on it?

1. If there was one thing that could make ownership updates run smoother, what would you recommend?

Take the grid approach off or have a way to check it against the actual existing right and insure it's accurate. It is putting a burden on existing water users that is due to an error in the system.

1. Do you feel you need additional training in how to find water rights

Always up for more training.

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