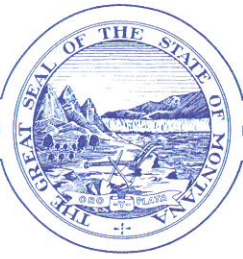


MONTANA WATER COURT



STATE OF MONTANA

(406) 586-4364
1-800-624-3270 (In-State only)
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PO BOX 1389
Bozeman, MT 59771-1389

March 20, 2020

Re: Water Court Status Amidst Coronavirus Pandemic

To: General Public, Distributed Via Montana Water Court Website and List Serve

The Water Court is continuing operations. Changes and objectives for the near term are provided below.

1. Most water masters and the court administrator are working from home, and the schedules of some employees have been modified. Judicial assistants, clerks of court, and the chief judge are maintaining normal business hours. Judge Brown is working remotely.
2. All in-person events will be vacated up to May 1, 2020. All other events will continue as scheduled. We will reevaluate scheduling as events unfold but cannot presently forecast when in-person events will resume. Requests for changes to a schedule must be made by a properly supported motion.
3. We will not schedule any new in-person events until after May 1, 2020.
4. Except for in-person events, our objective is to maintain business as usual.
5. The Water Court staff is temporarily assisting with updates to the database to maintain workflow.
6. Masters will continue their focus on case consolidation, initial status conferences, and scheduling of cases.
7. The Court has temporarily modified application of Local Rule 1 to facilitate remote work by attorneys and stakeholders.
8. The DNRC continues to send us summary reports and we will continue to issue new decrees as summary reports become available.

"... to expedite and facilitate the adjudication of existing water rights."
CH.697 L. 1979

"AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER"

9. Although the public is welcome to visit the Court, we request you evaluate the need for such visits carefully and avoid all non-essential visits. Please conduct business by telephone or email whenever possible. Please do not visit the Court if you are sick or otherwise at risk of transmitting *any* illness.
10. The Water Court staff has taken an all hands-on deck approach to working through recent challenges. Despite rapidly shifting circumstances and an increased workload, they have shown remarkable character, resolve, and good humor. They are an amazing group of people.

As always, the Court is receptive to your suggestions for improvement.

Regards,



Russ McElyea
Chief Water Judge

cc: Chief Justice McGrath
Beth McLaughlin
Representative Zach Brown, Chairman, Water Policy Interim Committee
Jason Mohr, Lead Staff, Water Policy Interim Committee