



Colorado Justice: Celebrating 41 years of fair
and impartial courts through merit selection

news

Colorado Judicial Branch
Mary J. Mullarkey, Chief Justice
Gerald Marroney, State Court Administrator

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Water Court Committee of the Supreme Court established

Twenty-one members appointed by the Chief Justice, Justice Greg Hobbs to Chair Committee

DENVER, Colo. – On Dec. 4, 2007, Chief Justice Mary Mullarkey signed an order authorizing the establishment of the Water Court Committee of the Colorado Supreme Court. In keeping with that order, the Chief Justice appointed 21 members to the committee on Dec. 11, 2007, to serve through Aug. 1, 2008.

“Water resource and usage issues are of utmost importance to all Coloradans,” Chief Justice Mullarkey said. “I have empowered a committee of the court to review water court processes and identify ways in which we may improve them.”

Starting in 1879, the Colorado General Assembly assigned state courts the authority to adjudicate the priorities of water rights. In a major reform, Colorado’s Water Right Determination and Administration Act of 1969 established seven regional water courts with direct appeal to the Supreme Court.

Justice Greg Hobbs, who was appointed to chair the committee, said during the past year, several organizations and reports have suggested that the Supreme Court examine possible methods of streamlining water court processes.

Joining Justice Hobbs on the Water Court Committee will be:

- Water Judge O. John Kuenhold
- Water Referee Lain Leoniak
- Justice Michael L. Bender
- State Court Administrator Jerry Marroney
- Retired Water Judge Rebecca Kourlis
- Ms. Casey Shpall, Office of the Colorado Attorney General

- Ms. Alexandra Davis, Deputy Director for Water, Colorado Department of Natural Resources
- Mr. Dick Wolfe, State Water Engineer
- Mr. Steve Witte, Division Engineer, Water Division No. 2
- Ms. Jennifer Gimbel, Executive Director, Colorado Water Conservation Board
- Mr. Robert Sakata, water rights owner and user
- Mr. Bill Trampe, water rights owner and user
- Mr. Doug Clements, practicing water engineer
- Mr. Hal Simpson, practicing water engineer
- Ms. Sherry Caloia, water attorney
- Mr. Mark Hermundstad, water attorney
- Mr. Andy Jones, water attorney
- Mr. David Robbins, water attorney
- Mr. Michael Shimmin, water attorney
- Mr. Jim Witwer, water attorney

“I am confident this committee will work hard over the coming months to identify the issues most critical to the fairness and efficiency of the water court process, and make appropriate recommendations,” Chief Justice Mullarkey said.

The Water Court Committee is charged with reviewing the water court process; identifying possible ways through rule and/or statutory change to achieve efficiencies in water court cases while still protecting quality outcomes; and ensure the highest level of competence in water court participants. Under the Chief Justice’s order, the committee cannot alter or impair existing water use rights of any public agency or private person.

The order requires the committee to make its recommendations to the Chief Justice by Aug. 1, 2008. The Chief Justice will then make the report available to the Colorado General Assembly and Governor Bill Ritter.

The Water Court Committee will hold its first meeting from noon to 2:00 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 20, 2007, in the Supreme Court conference room on the fifth floor of the Colorado Judicial Building (2 E 14th Ave.).