

PRACTICES

Water Resources
Environmental
Environmental Litigation
Climate Change
Site Remediation
Environmental Health and Safety
Environmental Transactions

INDUSTRIES

Renewable Energy and Storage
Mining
Oil and Gas
Conventional Power

EDUCATION

S.J. Quinney College of Law, University of Utah, J.D., 2015
Certificate in Environmental and Natural Resources Law

University of Utah, B.A., 2011
Environmental Studies
summa cum laude

BAR ADMISSIONS

Utah

COURT ADMISSIONS

U.S. District Court for the District of Utah
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit

Melissa Reynolds

Partner

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Melissa draws from her experience with government agencies to counsel clients on permitting enforcement and compliance issues involving natural resources, with an emphasis on water quality and water rights.

She works with a variety of clients to provide counsel on water quality and environmental compliance issues that may arise during project development, operation, and closure. Melissa also leverages her knowledge of Utah water law and state agencies to guide clients in obtaining and protecting their water rights. This often includes representing clients in hearings before the State Engineer. Melissa's depth of experience means she is well positioned to represent clients from the water rights application stage through any judicial appeals related thereto.

Prior to joining Holland & Hart, Melissa worked for the Utah Attorney General's Office: Natural Resources Division, where she acted as counsel to the State Engineer and developed a comprehensive understanding of Utah's water rights statutes. Melissa employs her first-hand knowledge of state statutes to provide excellent legal service to a variety of clients navigating complex water rights issues as they pursue any number of projects, including mine acquisitions, renewable energy development projects, and both small and large scale real estate developments in the west.

Clients navigating challenges associated with complex water rights, water quality, and other environmental compliance and enforcement issues will benefit from Melissa's in-depth experience.

EXPERIENCE

Water Rights in the West

Melissa helps clients with a wide array of water rights issues in the West, including:

- Navigating general adjudications of water rights to ensure clients protect their rights to the fullest extent possible
- Guiding clients through water rights due diligence for mining, renewable energy, and development projects
- Negotiating water rights transactions, including purchase and sale agreements, lease agreements, and option agreements
- Providing legal support to clients updating water right ownership records with the State Engineer

- Delivering sophisticated water rights advice for clients seeking to pursue small and large scale development projects
- Representing clients in water right proceedings related to applications to appropriate and change applications, including hearings before state agencies and subsequent judicial appeals

Water Quality and Environmental Compliance

Clients rely on Melissa’s counsel regarding a variety of water quality and environmental compliance issues:

- Permitting under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and equivalent state programs
- Assisting development, mining, and renewable energy clients with permitting under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act
- Negotiating settlement agreements with state and federal agencies to resolve alleged violations of water quality statute

CLIENT RESULTS

- Representation of large water provider before the Utah Court of Appeals and Utah Supreme Court in defending appeal related to the State Engineer's denial of application to appropriate water rights
- Representation of water right owner in negotiations with the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands to come to a reasonable agreement regarding water rights and mineral leasing issues
- Representation of client seeking to overturn the Army Corps of Engineer's determination that property constituted jurisdictional wetlands
- Representation of recreational development project developer pursuing strategies to comply with permitting requirements under Clean Water Act
- Representation of several developers in negotiating terms of water right purchase and sale agreements and change applications to allow development projects to proceed in southern Utah
- Representation of energy company in permitting underground injection control well on tribal land
- Representation of oil and gas company in negotiating Stipulated Compliance Orders to resolve alleged water quality violations, resulting in penalties and corrective actions which were acceptable to client company as well as state and federal agencies

PUBLICATIONS

"New WOTUS Proposal Would Further Shrink Federal Jurisdiction Over Streams and Wetlands," *Water Law Update*, September 15, 2026

"Receding Waters: How the New WOTUS Definition Reduces Clean Water Act Jurisdiction," *Environmental Law Update*, November 20, 2025

"Key Takeaways from the EPA and the Corps' New WOTUS Guidance Memo," *Environmental Update*, March 17, 2025

"Supreme Court Invalidates "End-Result" Provisions in Clean Water Act Discharge Permits," *Environmental Update*, March 10, 2025

"Groundbreaking Lawsuit Challenges Utah's Management of Great Salt Lake," *Holland & Hart Legal Update*, September 7, 2023

"US Supreme Court Upends Wetlands Regulatory Regime ," *Holland & Hart Client Alert*, May 26, 2023

"Back to the Future: The Biden Administration Releases Final WOTUS Rule," *Holland & Hart Client Alert*, January 5, 2023

"The Colorado River in Utah: Past, Present, and Future," *Holland & Hart News Update*, 11/02/2022

"More Uncertainty Ahead – WOTUS, SCOTUS and What it Means for Your Project," *Holland & Hart News Update*, February 4, 2022

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

"2026 Salt Lake City In-House Counsel CLE," Salt Lake City, Utah, May 19-20, 2026

"Environmental Issues in Solar Energy Projects," *Panelist, Strafford CLE Webinar*, March 27, 2025

"Great Salt Lake and Water Scarcity in the West," Moderator, *2023 Environment & Natural Resources Summit*, October 27, 2023

RECOGNITION

- *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch in America*®, Environmental Law, 2025-2027
- Mountain States Super Lawyers® Rising Stars, Environmental Litigation, 2023-2025
- *Utah Business Magazine,* Utah Legal Elite, Up & Coming, 2021; Environmental, 2022; Environmental & Natural Resources, 2026

PROFESSIONAL AND CIVIC AFFILIATIONS

- S.J. Quinney College of Law, Adjunct Professor, Pace Moot Court Team, 2019-present
- American Bar Association, Section of Environment, Energy & Resources, Case Summary Editor, 2018-present
- S.J. Quinney College of Law, Young Alumni Association, Board Member, 2018-2019; Vice President, July 2019-June 2021; President, June 2021-present
- Young Lawyers Division, Social Activities Committee, 2017-2019; Fit2Practice Committee, July 2019-present

- Women Lawyers of Utah, Career Advancement Committee, 2016-present
- Leadership Council on Legal Diversity, Pathfinder, 2024