



**Melissa Reynolds**

Partner  
801.799.5875  
Salt Lake City  
melreynolds@hollandhart.com



**Jody Williams**

Senior Counsel  
801.799.5965  
Salt Lake City  
JLWilliams@hollandhart.com

# Practical Guide to Navigating Utah's Water Rights Adjudication Process

**Insight — 03/25/2021**

In an age of increasing demand and decreasing supply, obtaining and protecting valid water rights is essential for ranchers, agribusiness, energy companies, and private landowners. Equally important is understanding the attributes of those rights, including their authorized points of diversion, places of use, and types of use, as well as their volume or flow limitations. In Utah, the process for identifying and confirming valid water rights and their attributes is known as a general adjudication of water rights. The State Engineer conducts general adjudications following a series of steps set forth by statute. An adjudication is a judicial process—at its conclusion, the valid water rights in a specific area are finally determined and decreed by a court.

Holland & Hart's experienced team of water rights attorneys developed a practical, step-by-step guide to help water rights owners, including developers, irrigation companies, municipalities, and individuals, navigate the water rights adjudication process. This valuable resource provides insider tips and explains what to expect at every stage of the process, from summons to claim filing, list of unclaimed rights, and proposed determination.

[Click here to access the practical guide to Utah's Water Rights Adjudication Process.](#)

## About the Authors:

Melissa Reynolds draws from her experience with government agencies to counsel clients on enforcement and compliance issues involving natural resources, with an emphasis on water quality and water rights. Prior to joining Holland & Hart, Melissa worked for the Utah Attorney General's Office: Natural Resources Division, where she acted as general 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 legal service to a variety of clients navigating complex water rights issues.

Jody Williams helps clients navigate the complexities of doing business in the Mountain West, with a special focus on, and a national reputation for, water law. Jody understands the complex, competing demands for water across the region and the political, economic, and social contexts in which disputes arise. Her clients include industrial, commercial, and residential developers; water conservancy districts; energy and mining companies;

ranchers; and water companies.

Steve Vuyovich helps clients resolve complex water rights issues so that they can achieve their business goals. He counsels a variety of clients on evaluating, buying, selling, changing, protecting, and transferring water rights. As a ranch owner and former operator of a commercial cattle operation in eastern Oregon, he has a hands-on understanding of the critical land and water issues facing many of his clients throughout the West.

---

*This publication is designed to provide general information on pertinent legal topics. The statements made are provided for educational purposes only. They do not constitute legal or financial advice nor do they necessarily reflect the views of Holland & Hart LLP or any of its attorneys other than the author(s). This publication is not intended to create an attorney-client relationship between you and Holland & Hart LLP. Substantive changes in the law subsequent to the date of this publication might affect the analysis or commentary. Similarly, the analysis may differ depending on the jurisdiction or circumstances. If you have specific questions as to the application of the law to your activities, you should seek the advice of your legal counsel.*