



Susan Ryan

Partner

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Susan is a trusted advisor to water users, leveraging judicial experience to provide pragmatic solutions to complex water issues.

PRACTICES

Environmental
Water Resources
Environmental Litigation

EDUCATION

University of Denver Sturm College of Law, J.D., 2005
Water Law Review, Editor-in-Chief (2004-2005), Articles Editor (2003-2004)
College of Law and Charles Brannon Memorial Scholarships
Order of St. Ives

University of Colorado at Boulder, B.S., 2001

BAR ADMISSIONS

Colorado

COURT ADMISSIONS

U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado
U.S. District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma
Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals
U.S. Supreme Court

As a former water court referee with responsibility for resolving disputes in the Colorado River Basin, Susan has a deep understanding of the legal and technical challenges affecting water issues across Colorado, particularly the Front Range and Western Slope. In her role as referee for Water Division 5, Susan issued over a thousand rulings and managed the operation of the water court.

She provides practical guidance on water rights, water law, and related land-use matters to clients, including energy companies, municipalities, water providers, ranchers, private landowners, corporations, and real estate developers. Susan draws from her extensive trial court experience and relationships with the State and Division Engineer's Offices to effectively advocate and develop strategies for her clients.

Susan effectively protects her clients' interests in state and federal court and administrative proceedings to help advance their projects. Her litigation practice includes water law, land use matters, and civil litigation.

Prior to joining Holland & Hart, Susan served as Colorado Water Referee for Division 5 and as a District Court Magistrate for the 9th Judicial District in Colorado. In her role as a District Court Magistrate, Susan presided over numerous dockets, bench trials, and contested hearings in civil cases. She was also a shareholder in the Denver office of Ryley Carlock & Applewhite, and served as a law clerk to Justice Gregory Hobbs of the Colorado Supreme Court and to Judge Russell Carparelli of the Colorado Court of Appeals.

EXPERIENCE

Water Law

Susan guides clients across Colorado and other western states through complex and diverse water law and related land-use matters, including:

- Development and implementation of water supply plans for municipal and private clients, including surface, groundwater, and storage water
- Real estate transactions, including water rights title issues and related land use planning
- Adjudication of new water rights, changes of water rights, plans for augmentation, and exchange projects

- Adjudicatory and administrative hearings before the State Engineer, local government authorities, and ditch company boards
- Issues related to evaluation, assessment, and conveyance of water rights

Litigation

Susan helps clients develop defensible strategies and navigate matters including:

- Water court litigation at the state and federal level
- Complex civil litigation
- Appeals at all appellate court levels, including the Colorado Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court

PUBLICATIONS

"Legal Corner: A Guide to Valuing Water Rights in Colorado," *Water Finance & Management Journal*, February 18, 2022

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

"Colorado Water Law for Elected Officials," Speaker, *Water Education Colorado*, May, 2023

"Colorado Water Law 101," Speaker, *Colorado Municipal League*, October, 2022

"Colorado Water Law 101," Speaker, *Water Education Colorado*, July 2021

"Tips and Tricks for Virtual Court," Speaker, *9th Judicial District Bar Association*, April 2021

"Dependency and Neglect System Reform," Speaker, *Juvenile Law Judicial Institute*, July 2019

RECOGNITION

- Key to Success, Convening on Children, Youth and Families, Excellence in Practice Award, 2019
- Colorado Super Lawyers, Water Law, 2016
- Colorado Super Lawyers, Rising Star, Water Law, 2014-2015
- American Bar Association, Water Law Conference, Best Paper Award, 2013

PROFESSIONAL AND CIVIC AFFILIATIONS

- Board of Directors, Office of the Child Representative, 2023-present (appointed by the Chief Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court)
- Board of Directors, Community Health Services, 2023-present

- American Bar Foundation, Fellow
- Court Improvement Program, Executive Committee, Member, 2019-2021
- Colorado Supreme Court
 - Water Court Committee, Member, 2017-present
 - Judicial Conference Planning Committee, Member, 2021
- University of Denver, Sturm College of Law
 - *Water Law Review*, Advisory Board, Member, 2011-present
 - Adjunct Professor of Law, Water Court Practice, 2016-2020
- American Bar Association
 - Annual Water Law Conference, Chair, 2016
 - Annual Water Law Conference, Planning Committee, 2015
 - Public Service Committee, Co-Chair, 2013-2014
- Colorado Legal Aid Foundation
 - Board of Trustees, Member, 2016
 - Denver Law Firm Campaign Member, 2014-2016