



Steven O. Sims

Shareholder

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Denver, Colorado Albuquerque, New Mexico

A sought-after resource on western water law, Steve Sims focuses on water related litigation, appeals, administrative and transactional matters.

In Colorado, Steve represents the City of Aurora in its \$700 million Prairie Waters Project. This work involves complex water rights transactions, water court representation as well as state and local permitting. He also represents Nestle Waters North America on water and land use matters involving their Chaffee County bottling plant. His transactional experience includes representation for investors, lenders and water rights developers in water right purchase transactions.

In Nevada, Steve represents the Southern Nevada Water Authority on its Clark, Lincoln and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project, a 300 mile pipeline carrying 122, 755 acre foot of groundwater from area north of Las Vegas.

In California, Steve represents the Westlands Water District on Endangered Species Act litigation involving the Bay-Delta in California, a case widely considered one of the most complex ESA litigations in the country.

In New Mexico, Steve represents the Interstate Stream Commission in the transfer of water rights on the Pecos River for river augmentation and compact compliance purposes. The case involves 33 rights and is one of the largest transfers in state history.

In addition to the above matters, Steve has extensive experience in general water litigation. He has represented clients in over 500 water litigations and over 20 Supreme Court Appeals in his 30 + year career.

Steve has extensive experience in ground water and surface water conflicts, including the 2013 Pecos River, NM Transfer Hearings, 2012 Tamarack Ranch, Co Recharge Project, 2012 Southern Nevada Groundwater Appropriations for Spring, Cave, Dry Lake and Delamar Valleys, 2011 Colorado Supreme Court case of *Burlington Ditch Reservoir and Land Co. v. Metro Wastewater Reclamation Dist* case, 2002 Amended South Platte Groundwater Rules litigation, the 2000 U.S. Supreme Court original jurisdiction litigation between Kansas, Nebraska and Colorado the Ogallala aquifer in the Republican River Basin.

In addition to current work for Westlands Water District, Steve has significant prior experience with the Endangered Species Act, NEPA, 404 and associated federal permitting. Steve served as the lead negotiator for Colorado on the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program concerning four endangered species. He was lead counsel in litigation concerning recharge water rights for Platte River endangered species.

Steve is the former senior water counsel and first assistant attorney general for the Water Unit of the Colorado Attorney General's Office, where he acted as the primary water law advisor for the State and Division Engineers, the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the Division of Wildlife, the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, and other state agencies with water rights issues.

Practices

Community

- Boulder County Board of Adjustment, 1988-1990
- Boulder County Long Range Planning Committee, 1990-1991
- Boulder County Planning Committee, 1991-1998
- City of Greeley Water and Sewer Board, 2004-2005
- Football Stadium Site Advisory Committee, 1998

Publications & Presentations

- The History of Non-tributary Well Regulation in Colorado, Speaker, American Groundwater Trust Conference, Denver, CO, December 3, 2013
- Transbasin Diversions, Speaker, Western Water Law Conference, Las Vegas, NV, November 15, 2013
- Current Litigation Issues, Speaker, NEPA Litigation Seminar, New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission, June 6, 2012
- FRICO case in Retrospect, Speaker, Denver University School of Law, Denver, CO, April 1, 2012
- Industrial and Commercial Uses: If There is No Water, Will They Come?, Speaker, CLE International, Water Law 2012, Denver, CO, March 9, 2012
- Augmentation, Exchange and Recharge Operations and Issues of the South Platte River Basin, Speaker, Colorado Bar Association Water Court Practice Program, Denver, CO, May 19, 2011
- FRICO Litigations, an Opposers Perspective, Speaker, DARCA (Ditch and Reservoir Company Association) Workshop, Boulder, CO, November 12, 2010
- Water in New Mexico, its Consideration in Land Use Approvals, Speaker, CLE International's Land Use Conference, Albuquerque, NM, November 5 2010
- Water Rights Ramifications of Water Reuse, CWAG 2010 Conference, Colorado Springs, CO, May 7, 2010
- The Colorado Abandonment Process, Speaker, Colorado Bar Association, Water Law Section, Denver, CO, April 8, 2010

Education

- J.D., 1979, University of Puget Sound School of Law
- B.A., 1975, University of Colorado

Admissions

- Colorado
- New Mexico
- U.S. District Court, District of Colorado
- U.S. Supreme Court
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit
- U.S. District Court, District of New Mexico

Recognition

- 5280 Top Lawyers, Water, 2015-2019
- Chambers USA*, 2011-2014
- Appointed by Governor Ritter to Colorado Water and Power Authority Board of Directors
- Best Lawyers in America*, 2010-2019

Colorado Super Lawyers

Membership

Colorado Water Congress State Affairs

Executive Council, Colorado Bar Association, Water Law Section