



**NEVADA  
DIVISION OF  
WATER  
RESOURCES**

June 2025

# **ANNUAL NEWSLETTER TO NEVADA'S LICENSED STATE WATER RIGHT SURVEYORS**



**Carson City Office**  
901 S. Stewart St. Suite #2002  
Carson City, NV 89701  
775-684-2800

**Elko Office**  
1250 Lamoille Hwy  
Bldg 10 Suite 1047  
Elko, NV 89801  
775-753-3553

**Southern Nevada Office**  
400 Shadow Lane #201  
Las Vegas, NV 89106  
702-486-2770

**Winnemucca Office**  
815 East Fourth St. #7  
P.O. Box 121  
Winnemucca, NV 89446  
775-623-6562

**Eureka Office**  
461 Main Street  
Eureka, NV 89316  
775-237-6012

# Message From Adam Sullivan, State Engineer

Greetings,

The 2025 Legislative Session brought ambitious proposals and spirited debate on water law, but few water-related bills made it across the finish line. The Nevada Division of Water Resources (NDWR) sponsored and successfully passed Assembly Bill 26, which updates Nevada's dam safety laws to reflect modern practices and industry standards. We also sponsored Senate Bill 31, which aimed to make a narrow but important clarification regarding vested claims held by the U.S. Government. However, as the bill progressed, discussions expanded beyond its original intent—bringing forward broader issues related to sovereign immunity, equal treatment, and the 2027 filing deadline. Ultimately, the bill did not pass.

Other legislative additions include an increase to the budget cap for the Channel Clearance Fund (SB 108), a prohibition on new domestic wells within 1,250 feet of a municipal service line in Las Vegas (AB 104), and a new statutory program to support voluntary water right retirements administered through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (AB 104 and SB 36). NDWR has adopted a simple process to receive any voluntary water right retirements and document them as active permits for a permanent non-use commitment of water.

I'm hopeful that the many discussions around complex water issues during the legislative session will help build a deeper understanding of both the benefits and risks of updating water law. Thoughtful, informed decision-making is essential to managing and protecting Nevada's water resources. As professionals working in daily water rights operations, your insight and engagement in the legislative process are both encouraged and appreciated.

Before the legislative session began, NDWR held several listening sessions in rural communities to hear directly from the public about water resource management. These sessions provided valuable insights into local challenges and concerns. The Division remains committed to addressing complex water issues through ongoing public participation, outreach, and open communication.

Additional updates of note include two recently issued State Engineer orders: Order 1338 which establishes the use of the Death Valley regional ground water flow model in the Amargosa Desert, and Order 1339 which closes Red Rock Basin to new appropriations with some exceptions.

Lastly, a big thank you to NDWR staff for their ongoing efforts this year. From improving internal processes to digitizing and preserving water records and reducing backlogs—these daily contributions to support the larger water resource community and protect water resources truly makes a difference!

Regards,

Adam Sullivan, P.E.

# Water Right Surveyor License Renewals

If your annual renewal is not received on or before the June 30th deadline, your license will expire, and you will be required to submit a renewal form with a \$50.00 filing fee for reissuance of your license. New references will **not** be required if your renewal application is received prior to September 30th. After September 30th, it will be necessary to file a new application with references. After your three references respond, you will be issued a **new** Water Right Surveyor number.

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## Updating Map Guidelines

### Digital Map Submittals

In 2023, Assembly Bill 34 removed the requirement for water right supporting maps to be submitted on mylar, paving the way for digital submissions. Beginning in 2024, NDWR began accepting digital map submittals in support of all filings via email. These digital maps must comply with all guidelines set by the Nevada Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors, including the following:

- All maps submitted electronically must be in a PDF file format.
- Security settings for the document should be the lowest setting allowed by the software. Do not password protect or lock the map.
- Do not use the “certify document” function in the software.
- PDF documents need to be flattened prior to digitally signing and electronically transmitting.
- Engineer and Land Surveyor professionals must use digital signatures per NAC 625.610 in combination with a stamp image, signature image, expiration date, and date of signature.

Eventually, the Online Forms portal will be the hub for all digital map submittals as an attachment to the relevant online form. While the portal is currently only available for submitting digital maps in support of Proofs of Appropriation (Claims of Vested Right), all other digital map submittals can be emailed to [NDWR-MapSubmittals@water.nv.gov](mailto:NDWR-MapSubmittals@water.nv.gov).

### Locating Points of Diversion: Moving Away from Bearing and Distance

After several years of evaluating the need to tie a point of diversion to a physical monument in an increasingly digital world, NDWR has officially determined that GPS coordinates are an acceptable method for identifying the location of proposed diversion works within a subdivision of the Public Land Survey System (PLSS). This change offers several benefits, as it makes diversion locations easier for the public to identify and understand; aligns with the GPS coordinates already included on well logs submitted to the Division; improves field efficiency for staff; and helps eliminate discrepancies between physical monument locations and the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) online PLSS data.



The point of diversion—and the place of use—must still be described within a legal subdivision (e.g., quarter-quarter, lot, or tract). This is a statutory requirement under NRS 533.360, which mandates that published applications describe the point of diversion using legal subdivisions. It is also the primary system used by the Division to organize water right locations, and there are no plans at this time to move away from the PLSS entirely. Including both GPS coordinates and the legal subdivision also allows the Division to verify that the information is consistent.

Some have asked whether it will still be necessary to physically inspect the proposed point of diversion for a new map. The answer is yes—site visits will continue to be required. For new wells or diversion works, this ensures the proposed location is physically suitable and allows a physical marker to be placed if necessary for the works to be properly constructed in the correct location. For existing diversion works, a site visit confirms that the mapped location matches the actual, as-built location. The site visit must be conducted either by the surveyor or by someone acting under their supervision and direction, with the understanding that the surveyor remains fully responsible for the accuracy of the submitted information.

Please note that a tie to a found monument remains an acceptable method for specifying the location of a point of diversion. Either method will be accepted on application or proof of beneficial use forms and supporting maps, provided the information and method used are consistent. Existing maps using bearing and distance may still be used and referenced, and those who prefer to use that method for new maps may continue to do so.

### **New Requirement for Cultural Maps Supporting Proofs of Beneficial Use**

Along with all current requirements, new submitted cultural maps will now be required to include either:

1. A minimum of four points along the boundary of the place of use, labeled with GPS coordinates; or
2. One found corner of the PLSS system within the illustrated map area (does not have to be within or along the edge of the place of use).

If coordinates are used, the points may be anywhere along the place of use boundary, preferably at the corners of a polygon if applicable. For pivots, one of these points may instead show the center of the pivot, with the other three points along the pivot boundary.

### **Reference Section Required for All Supporting Maps**

A reference section will also need to be included on all maps signed by a water rights surveyor describing where any elements or information shown on the map were found if it was not the result of the field survey. For electronic data, this includes the date of access to the database.

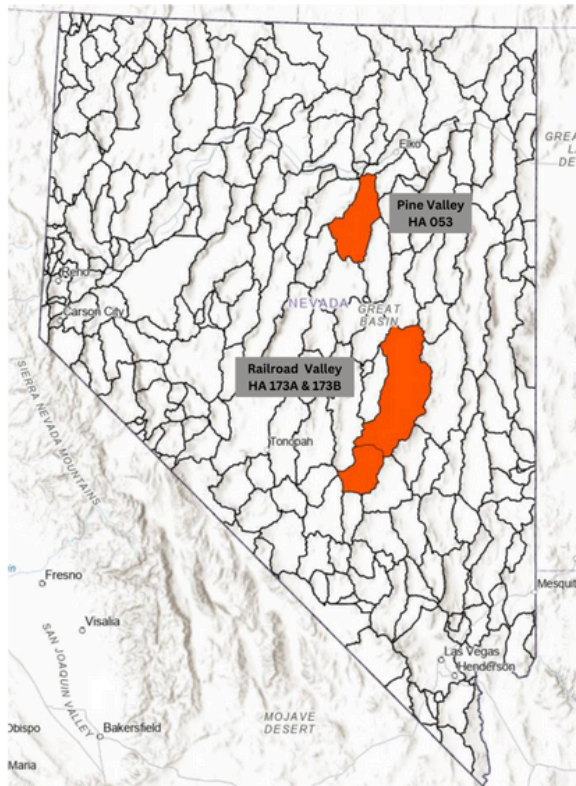


These changes will take effect with the release of the updated Guidelines and Rules for the Preparation of Water Rights Maps, planned for summer 2025.

# NWI: Investing in Nevada's Water Future



Every water right application is evaluated based on water availability and the potential for conflict with existing users. As water demands in Nevada continue to grow, answering these increasingly complex questions requires robust, science-based analysis. The Nevada Water Initiative (NWI) is a collaborative effort between NDWR, the Desert Research Institute (DRI), and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Nevada Water Science Center to support that work.



Phase I of NWI began in 2023 and focuses on developing and refining statewide methods for estimating consumptive use, groundwater discharge and recharge, and subsurface interbasin flow. Full water budget analyses are underway for two demonstration basins: Pine Valley and Railroad Valley.

Phase II will build on the methods established in Phase I to update groundwater availability estimates for the Carson Desert groundwater basin (Fallon area) and the South-Central Marshes Flow System (which includes 14 groundwater basins in the Tonopah region).

Phase I is funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), with funds expected to be fully expended by the end of 2026. Securing additional funding for Phase II and beyond is essential to build on this progress, maximize the value of initial investments, and support Nevada's long-term water security.

**More information is available at:**  
[water.nv.gov/programs/nevada-water-initiative](https://water.nv.gov/programs/nevada-water-initiative)

## Other Recently Funded Projects Advancing Water Resource Management

Over the last three years the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has overseen the allocation of \$100M of ARPA funds for water conservation efforts across Nevada. In addition to several critical water and sewer infrastructure projects and water right retirements, the program also supported:

- County Water Resource Plans: Development of county-level water resource plans as required by NRS 278.0228, including both direct support to rural counties and technical analysis and support from DRI.
- Statewide Demand Projections: Forecasting future water needs based on economic and demographic trends, led by DRI, to be incorporated into the State Water Plan.

- Flood Risk and Infrastructure Tools: The 2023 Nevada Legislature provided funding to improve web-based tools for estimating peak design floods.
  - DRI is nearing completion of its updated estimates of the Probable Maximum Precipitation (PMP), a key design standard for dams and other flood control structures last modeled in 1978.
  - StreamStats has also been updated for Nevada– this web-based tool estimates peak flows at a range of frequencies for rapid flood hazard assessments. The latest updates are available at <https://streamstats.usgs.gov/ss/>

## Extension of Time (EOT) Regulations

Pursuant to Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 533.500, a report was created summarizing NDWR's three-year review of NAC Sections 533.3590 through 533.500, which govern Applications for Extension of Time to file Proof of Completion of Work or Proof of Application of Water to Beneficial Use. To evaluate the effectiveness of these regulations, NDWR conducted a public review process that included a public meeting and written public comment period. During the meeting, the Division presented data and statistics on the changes to the extension of time process since the regulations were adopted on December 22, 2021.

The report summarizes NDWR's findings, public comment received, and actions that the Division may take as a result of this review. This report is available at:

[https://water.nv.gov/uploads/bulletin-board-docs/Three-Year\\_Review\\_of\\_Regulations\\_on\\_Extensions\\_of\\_Time.pdf](https://water.nv.gov/uploads/bulletin-board-docs/Three-Year_Review_of_Regulations_on_Extensions_of_Time.pdf)

## Permit Database Survey



Public Survey on Water Rights  
Data Base Application



As part of NDWR's ongoing efforts to improve water rights management, we are seeking your valuable feedback on the existing water rights database and planned improvements. To participate in the survey, please use this link:

<https://forms.office.com/g/HPkepUZa2g>

Many have already responded to the survey, but input is still welcome. If you have not already done so, please take a few minutes to help inform the Division on the priorities for updating the water rights database to meet your needs.





# Digitization Update

Since November 2023, NDWR has been working to digitize and modernize office procedures. Maps were selected as the initial focus due to the significant physical space they occupied. As a result of this effort, ten map filing cabinets have been cleared from the office, creating room for eight new cubicles—space that was essential to accommodate new positions authorized by the Legislature in 2023.

To date, the digitization team has scanned, indexed, and made publicly available approximately 85,000 maps. The project is about 95% complete, with full completion expected by June 2025.

The team is also finalizing the scanning and digitization procedures for permit files and court hearing files. Court hearing files are estimated to include roughly one million documents and are expected to take about a year to complete. Permit files—NDWR’s most frequently accessed documents—will take several more years to digitize, as there are over 94,000 files. Efforts are also underway to make digitized permit files publicly accessible online. The permit file digitization is scheduled to begin in July 2025.



# Water Right Ownership

If you’ve visited NDWR’s new website recently, you may have noticed updated Guidelines and Forms for the following ownership documents:

- Report of Conveyance
- Abstract of Title
- Notice of Pledge
- Affidavit of Identity
- Scrivener’s Affidavit

There are a few important changes to office procedures to note.

When updating ownership records to reflect a business name, the deed must declare the state in which the business is registered, and the name must match exactly— including all spacing and punctuation—as it appears in the records of the Secretary of State. Please include any relevant documentation from the Secretary of State showing the correct legal business name, at no additional charge.

Additionally, any encumbrances must be removed before NDWR can update ownership records. This requires a copy of the recorded reconveyance stating that the Deed of Trust on file for the water right being conveyed has been paid and released.

NDWR also expects to release a new Relinquishment form and guidelines July 2025. Please watch for that announcement and continue to use the most current forms available.

We appreciate your attention to these updates.

# Spatial Data and PLSS

NDWR has an ArcGIS Online Open Data site to provide the public with access to spatial data. <https://data-ndwr.hub.arcgis.com/>. Using online applications and tools, you can connect, review, and download spatial data in various GIS formats. Many of NDWR's agency-maintained datasets, such as points of diversion and well driller report (well log) locations, are updated every business day ensuring that you have the most up-to-date information available to make water right decisions. For more information about spatial data available at this site, please contact Stephanie Snider at [ssnider@water.nv.gov](mailto:ssnider@water.nv.gov).

NDWR uses the most current version of BLM's PLSS to plot points of diversion (POD) and places of use (POU), based on the bearing and distance provided in the water rights application. The quarter-quarters provided in the PLSS data are also used to determine the sitename of a POD location. Please ensure survey maps submitted for water rights use the most current version of the BLM's PLSS. The BLM provides geospatial data on the Cadastral Survey (PLSS) at their ArcGIS Hub site (<https://gbp-blm-egis.hub.arcgis.com/pages/nevada>).

## Compliance Update

As the number of new Alleged Violation cases continues to rise each year, the Division's Compliance and Enforcement Program remains effective in achieving compliance with statutes, regulations, and State Engineer's decisions under Nevada water law.

Since the program's inception in 2011, a total of 417 Alleged Violation cases have been initiated, with 369 cases resolved and 48 currently active. Between June 1, 2024, and the present, 26 new Alleged Violation cases have been opened, while 25 have been closed. An additional seven active cases are currently in the process of being closed.

## NWRA Water Rights and Surveying Committee

The Nevada Water Resources Association (NWRA) recently created several committees to address a wide range of water-related topics. One such committee—the Water Rights and Surveying Committee—may be of particular interest to water rights surveyors seeking to share their expertise and expand their knowledge.

The committee meets at least quarterly to discuss subjects such as water right accounting, document standards, surveying practices, and measurement techniques. While the current focus is on research, the direction of the committee is shaped by input from all members. The next committee meeting is scheduled for July 15, 2025.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.nwra.org/water-initiative>





# Only 2½ Years Left to File Proofs of Appropriation for Vested Water Rights



## What is the Sunset Date?

Under NRS 533.087, any claimant of a pre-statutory (vested) water right must submit a Proof of Appropriation to the State Engineer no later than December 31, 2027. **Claims not submitted by this deadline will be deemed abandoned by law.**

Licensed Water Rights Surveyors are encouraged to share this information with current and prospective clients of this requirement and begin submitting claims well in advance of the **deadline of December 31, 2027.**

## We Need Evidence!

Supporting documentation is a critical part of filing a claim of vested right. Examples of acceptable evidence include:

- Homestead entry records
- General Land Office records
- Nevada State Land Patents
- Income tax documents
- Branding records
- Deeds
- County tax rolls
- Affidavits
- Published historical accounts

## Online Form Submittal Platform

In October 2024, NDWR added Proof of Appropriation forms to its Online Form Submittal Platform. This system allows the public to submit forms, maps, and fees entirely online—no office visit required. Additional benefits of using the new platform include the ability to apply digital signatures and receive an emailed digital receipt of submitted forms and maps. If corrections are needed, revised documents can be easily re-uploaded through the portal—eliminating the need for office visits or additional mylar. NDWR encourages the use of this platform as part of its continued transition toward a digital future. Since its launch, more than 30 Proofs of Appropriation and supporting maps have already been filed and processed.

## Additional Questions?

If you have any questions regarding the sunset date, or for information on filing proofs, please feel free to contact NDWR at [adjudications@water.nv.gov](mailto:adjudications@water.nv.gov), or call (775) 684-2800 and ask to speak with a member of the adjudications team.





# Contacting NDWR: Use the Right Email for Faster Service

To better serve the public and ensure timely responses, the Division has established topical email addresses monitored by multiple staff. Using these addresses helps avoid delays due to staff changes or reassignments.

Please use the following addresses for specific types of correspondence:

**Annual Reports (monitoring plans)** [ndwrannualreports@water.nv.gov](mailto:ndwrannualreports@water.nv.gov)

**Help with Meters Database** [metersupport@water.nv.gov](mailto:metersupport@water.nv.gov)

**Public Meeting Comments** [ndwrpubliccomments@water.nv.gov](mailto:ndwrpubliccomments@water.nv.gov)

**Pumpage Reports (If not submitted via Meters Database)** [pumpagereports@water.nv.gov](mailto:pumpagereports@water.nv.gov)

**Questions on Adjudications or Decrees** [adjudications@water.nv.gov](mailto:adjudications@water.nv.gov)

**Subdivision Map Reviews (Pre-signing)** [ndwr-subdivisions@water.nv.gov](mailto:ndwr-subdivisions@water.nv.gov)

**Submitting Digital Map** [ndwr-mapsubmittals@water.nv.gov](mailto:ndwr-mapsubmittals@water.nv.gov)

**Submitting Water Conservation Plans** [waterplanning@water.nv.gov](mailto:waterplanning@water.nv.gov)

**Water Level, Spring, or Stream Data** [waterlevels@water.nv.gov](mailto:waterlevels@water.nv.gov)

