



**Policy 2014-01**  
**(Amended March 2019 & October 2025)**  
**CONCERNING THE DIVISION OF WATER RESOURCES'**  
**RESPONSE TO COMPLAINTS REGARDING WATER USE FOR**  
**WHICH THE DIVISION HAS ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITY**

**Objective**

This policy describes Division of Water Resources ("DWR") staff responsibilities when receiving complaints from the public, including those forwarded through the governor's office, legislators, other state agencies, those received by individual employees by phone or email, and those received in writing or through website feedback. For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is a request from the public for DWR to investigate or correct the improper use of groundwater or surface water, expressing concerns with the safety of dams, or expressing concerns with well construction. Routine daily inquiries or notice of issues with or between water users are not considered complaints subject to this policy.

As a regulatory agency, DWR takes seriously the fact that water users will be knowledgeable when it comes to water administration and the use of water in the state. Water users that comply with the provisions of their water rights or well permits, or have gone to the time and expense to obtain plans for augmentation, will expect some response if they see that other water users are able to use water without the same accountability to water administration. While DWR has limited resources to investigate complaints, we do have a responsibility to evaluate complaints and where discretion allows, investigate complaints or at a minimum provide feedback to citizens that have observed water users' actions that are out of compliance with the law or detrimental to the water resources of the state.

The objective of this policy is to guide DWR staff in taking complaints and to ensure that, while not all complaints can be investigated, we do, at a minimum, provide timely response to citizens that have brought valid concerns to our attention.

**Policy**

A central log of all complaints falling under this policy will be maintained by the DWR Hearing Officer, primarily relying on the database of complaints and responses maintained by the AskDWR tool. The log is generated automatically when DWR staff or the public use AskDWR to submit complaints. The Hearing Officer and other DWR staff specified in the database are notified by AskDWR when a complaint is submitted. AskDWR saves the text of the complaint and the DWR response to the complaint in HydroBase. Attachments submitted through AskDWR are transmitted in the original notice email to the Hearing Officer and other DWR delegates. The attachment will be preserved in a folder of complaint attachments by



the Hearing Officer, as it is not saved in HydroBase.

### **Hearing Officer's responsibility and routing of complaints**

Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Hearing Officer will address the complaint, or coordinate with the other DWR staff who will provide an appropriate response. A written response will be completed through HBDMC and any phone response will be noted in HBDMC, resulting in a complete record of the complaint and response.

AskDWR submissions in the Water Use Complaints topic are automatically routed to the Division Engineer (if a particular division is specified), the Hearing Officer, and the Deputy Director. Re-routing will generally occur as follows:

- Groundwater & well permits: re-route to the geographically-appropriate Denver Water Supply team lead, who may re-route as appropriate.
- Surface water: re-route surface water use complaints to the geographically-appropriate river operations coordinator, if one exists, and if not, the water commissioner.

Division office staff may request assistance from Denver office employees in investigating or resolving water use complaints as necessary. If a water user alleges improper water administration by a staff member, those complaints should generally be re-routed to the Division Engineer, if the Division Engineer was not on the original list of recipients.

The Hearing Officer will coordinate with the State Engineer or Deputy Director for all complaints received through or likely to result in notification of legislators, the Governor's Office, or the media.

### **Information to be provided by Complainants**

DWR staff may receive complaints in person, over the phone, and through written correspondence received by mail or email. The DWR contact will create a record of complaints received in the AskDWR system as either a general water use complaint or a Board of Examiners well construction complaint. The DWR contact should enter the complainant's name, contact information, and the details of the situation. Hard copy and emailed complaints should be added as an attachment in AskDWR.

Complainants' may file a complaint without leaving their name and contact information (anonymous complaint). DWR will investigate the matter at its discretion but feedback to the complainant will not occur.

All complaint information, including the complainant's name and contact information are subject to disclosure in accordance with the Colorado Open Records Act (CORA).

### **Making the decision to investigate a complaint**

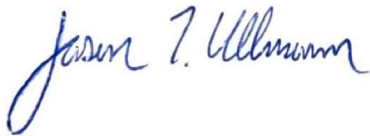
In the case of a complaint regarding the improper use of water, the Division Engineer, Water Supply team lead, or other delegated staff will make the decision whether to investigate a complaint. The decision to investigate a complaint will be based on the type of diversion and the amount of water involved weighed against the workload of staff and their availability to spend time investigating the complaint. If staff decides not to investigate a complaint, the person making the decision shall respond to the complainant as soon as possible to inform them that our current staffing levels and workload do not allow DWR to investigate the complaint and such response shall be logged within AskDWR.

In the case of complaints concerning the safety of dams, the Chief of Dam Safety will make the decision whether to investigate the complaint, taking into account the severity of the matter with due regard for current workload. For complaints concerning well construction, staff of the Board of Examiners shall follow the Board's published [Complaint Process and Procedure](#), using AskDWR as the tracking tool.

Policy 2014-01 originally became effective January 1, 2014 (replacing Policy 2001-4), it was updated in 2019 to direct the use of AskDWR as the tracking tool, and was further updated to reflect roles and responsibilities in 2025.

#### Approval

This policy may only be modified or revoked in writing by the State Engineer.  
Approved as amended this 31st day of October 2025.



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Jason T. Ullmann, P.E.  
State Engineer/Director