

Montana Water Court
PO Box 1389
Bozeman, MT 59771-1389
(406) 586-4364
1-800-624-3270
watercourt@mt.gov

40A-0286-R-2021

September 17, 2021

Montana Water Court

IN THE WATER COURT OF THE STATE OF MONTANA
LOWER MISSOURI DIVISION
MUSSELSHELL RIVER ABOVE ROUNDUP BASIN (40A)
PRELIMINARY DECREE

CLAIMANT: Town of Ryegate

CASE 40A-0286-R-2021
40A 39881-00

NOTICE OF FILING OF MASTER’S REPORT

This Master’s Report was filed with the Clerk of the Montana Water Court. Please review this Report carefully.

You may file a written objection to this Master’s Report if you disagree or find errors with the Master’s Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, or Recommendations. The above stamped date indicates the date this Master’s Report was filed and mailed. Rule 23 of the Water Right Adjudication Rules requires written objections to a Master’s Report be filed within 10 days of the date of the Master’s Report. Because this Master’s Report was mailed to you, Rule 6(d) of the Montana Rules of Civil Procedure provides an additional 3 days to the 10-day objection period.

If you file an objection, you must mail a copy of the objection to all parties on the Service List found at the end of this Master’s Report. The original objection and a certificate of mailing to all parties on the Service List must be filed with the Water Court. *If you do not file a timely objection, the Water Court will conclude that you agree with the content of this Master’s Report.*

MASTER'S REPORT

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Claim 40A 39881-00 was decreed with the following DNRC issue remark:

THE PRIORITY DATE MAY BE QUESTIONABLE. THIS CLAIM IS FOR A USE RIGHT ON MUSSELHELL RIVER WITH A PRIORITY DATE PREDATING CASE NO. 1148 , GOLDEN VALLEY COUNTY.

2. No objections or notices or intent to appear were filed.

PRINCIPLES AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. A properly filed Statement of Claim for an existing water right is prima facie proof of its content. Section 85-2-227, MCA. This prima facie validity may be overcome by evidence showing that one or more elements of the claim are incorrect. This standard of proof applies to objectors or claimants objecting to their own water right claims. Rule 19, W.R.Adj.R., *Nelson v. Brooks*, 2014 MT 120; 375 Mont.86, 95; 329 P.3d 558, 564.

2. With respect to the priority date of the claims in this Case, the only evidence before the Court is the existence of Case No. 1148 and the resulting issue remark that appeared on the claims. While historical decrees provide some evidence of existing water rights on a given source, they are not conclusive. Decrees were often the result of a specific controversy between water users; thus, rights were adjudicated on a piecemeal basis by the district courts. Further, decrees were usually limited in scope, and often multiple decrees were issued on the same stream. *See Albert Stone, Are There Any Adjudicated Streams in Montana?* 19 Mont. L. Rev. 19 (1957).

In short, there are numerous reasons why the claim in this Case may not have appeared in the District Court decree, but objectors bear the burden of establishing that the priority date should be something other than what was claimed. In this Case, the prima facie proof of priority date has not been overcome.

RECOMMENDATION

1. The issue remark should be removed from claim 40A 39881-00 with no changes to the elements of the claim.

A Post Decree Abstract of Water Right Claim is served with the Report to confirm that the recommended change has been made in the state's centralized record system.

Anika M. Stern
Senior Water Master

Service via USPS Mail:

Town of Ryegate
PO Box 163
Ryegate, MT 59074

**WATER COURT
ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM
MUSSELSHELL RIVER, ABOVE ROUNDUP
BASIN 40A**

Water Right Number: 40A 39881-00 STATEMENT OF CLAIM

Version: 3 -- POST DECREE

Status: ACTIVE

Owners: RYEGATE, TOWN OF
PO BOX 163
RYEGATE, MT 59074

Priority Date: NOVEMBER 24, 1920

Type of Historical Right: USE

Purpose (Use): MUNICIPAL

Flow Rate: 250.00 GPM

Volume: 124.20 AC-FT

Source Name: MUSSELSHELL RIVER

Source Type: SURFACE WATER

Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:

<u>ID</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1		NESESE	6	6N	20E	GOLDEN VALLEY

Period of Diversion: JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

Diversion Means: PUMP

Period of Use: JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

Place of Use:

<u>ID</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1			NWSW	5	6N	20E	GOLDEN VALLEY
2		13		5	6N	20E	GOLDEN VALLEY
3			NESE	6	6N	20E	GOLDEN VALLEY
4		9		6	6N	20E	GOLDEN VALLEY
5		16		6	6N	20E	GOLDEN VALLEY

Remarks:

THE WATER RIGHTS LISTED FOLLOWING THIS STATEMENT ARE ASSOCIATED. THEY SHARE THE SAME POINT OF DIVERSION. 40A 39881-00, 40A 109292-00, 40A 30005500.