

Montana Water Court  
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IN THE WATER COURT OF THE STATE OF MONTANA  
LOWER MISSOURI DIVISION  
MILK RIVER ABOVE FRESNO RESERVOIR (BASIN 40F)  
INTERLOCUTORY DECREE

\* \* \* \* \*

CLAIMANTS: Julie AS Young; Mark E. Young

**40F-0002-I-2023**

40F 30128032

OBJECTORS: Blackfeet Tribe; United States of America (Bureau of Indian Affairs)

**NOTICE OF FILING OF MASTER'S REPORT**

This Master's Report was filed with the Montana Water Court on the above stamped date. Please review this report carefully.

You may file a written objection to this Master's Report within **10 days** of the stamped date if you disagree or find errors with the Master's findings of fact, conclusions of law, or recommendations. Rule 23, W.R.Adj.R. If the Master's Report was mailed to you, the Montana Rules of Civil Procedure allow an additional 3 days be added to the 10-day objection period. Rule 6(d), M.R.Civ.P. If you file an objection, you must serve a copy of the objection to all parties on the service list found at the end of the 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

### Statement of the case

The Blackfeet Tribe and the United States of America (Bureau of Indian Affairs) filed an objection to all elements of stock claim 40F 30128032.

Claim 40F 30128032 appeared in the Interlocutory Decree with a notice issue remark concerning the lack of its inclusion in the previous 40F decree. Issue remarks result from Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (“DNRC”) claims examination.

On September 14, 2023, the parties filed a Stipulation for the Resolution of Objections.

Montana law requires the Water Court to resolve objections and issue remarks.

### Issues

1. Should the court accept the stipulated terms?
2. Is the notice issue remark on claim 40F 30128032 resolved?

### Finding of fact

The historically accurate priority date for stock claim 40F 30128032 is May 3, 1923.

### Principles of law

1. A properly filed Statement of Claim for Existing Water Right is *prima facie* proof of its content. Section 85-2-227, MCA. *Prima facie* proof may be overcome by other evidence that proves, by a preponderance of the evidence, that an element of the *prima facie* claim is incorrect. This is the burden of proof for every assertion that a claim is incorrect. Rule 19, W.R.Adj.R. A preponderance of the evidence is a “modest standard” and is evidence that demonstrates the fact to be proved is “more probable than not.” *Hohenlohe v. State*, 2010 MT 203, ¶ 33, 357 Mont. 348, 240 P.3d 628.

2. The Montana Water Court is permitted to use information submitted by the

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the statement of claim, information from approved compacts, and any other data obtained by the Court to evaluate water right claims. Section 85-2-231(2), MCA.

3. Settlement, including the documents filed by a claimant where the claimant is the only party, is subject to review and approval by the Water Court. Rule 17(a), W.R.Adj.R.

4. The Water Court may accept a settlement agreement that reduces or limits an element of a claim and need not determine whether the burden of proof is met unless there is an unresolved issue remark on the claim. Rule 17(c), W.R.Adj.R.

5. When resolving issue remarks, the Montana Water Court must weigh the information resulting in the issue remark and the issue remark against the claimed water right. Section 85-2-247(2), MCA.

6. The Montana Water Court has the authority to resolve issue remarks when the claim file and information available to the Court provide a sufficient basis to do so. Section 85-2-248(3), MCA.

## **Analysis**

### **Issue 1 – acceptance of stipulated terms**

The parties stipulated to a reduced priority date for claim 40F 30128032.

### **Conclusions of law**

The evidence entered into the record is a reduction within the parameters of statement of claim 40F 30128032, justifies the modification to the claim, and resolves the objections to the claim. The stipulated terms should be accepted by the court.

### **Issue 2 – notice issue remark resolution**

Claim 40F 30128032 appeared in the Interlocutory Decree with the following issue remark:

THIS CLAIM NUMBER WAS NOT INCLUDED IN THE BASIN 40F DECREE ISSUED 12/12/2013.

Water users were given the opportunity to review the claim and file an objection.

The deadline to file objections expired. These proceedings resolve the only objections filed to the claim.

### **Conclusion of law**

The referenced issue remark served its notice purpose.

### **Recommendations**

Stock claim 40F 30128032 should be modified as follows to accurately reflect historical use.

**PRIORITY DATE:** JANUARY 1, 1920 **MAY 3, 1923**

The notice issue remark should be removed from the claim abstract.

A Post Decree Abstract of Water Right Claim accompanies this report to confirm implementation of the recommendations in the state's centralized water right record system.

### **ELECTRONICALLY SIGNED AND DATED BELOW.**

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**POST DECREE**  
**ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM**  
**MILK RIVER, ABOVE FRESNO RESERVOIR**  
**BASIN 40F**

**Water Right Number:** **40F 30128032 STATEMENT OF CLAIM**

**Version:** 2 -- POST DECREE

**Status:** ACTIVE

**Owners:**  
MARK E YOUNG  
PO BOX 211  
AUGUSTA, MT 59410 0211

JULIE AS YOUNG  
PO BOX 211  
AUGUSTA, MT 59410 0211

**\*Priority Date:** MAY 3, 1923

**Type of Historical Right:** USE

**Purpose (use):** STOCK

**\*Flow Rate:** A SPECIFIC FLOW RATE HAS NOT BEEN DECREED BECAUSE THIS USE CONSISTS OF STOCK DRINKING DIRECTLY FROM THE SOURCE, OR FROM A DITCH SYSTEM. THE FLOW RATE IS LIMITED TO THE MINIMUM AMOUNT HISTORICALLY NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN THIS PURPOSE.

**\*Volume:** THIS RIGHT INCLUDES THE AMOUNT OF WATER CONSUMPTIVELY USED FOR STOCK WATERING PURPOSES AT THE RATE OF 30 GALLONS PER DAY PER ANIMAL UNIT. ANIMAL UNITS SHALL BE BASED ON REASONABLE CARRYING CAPACITY AND HISTORICAL USE OF THE AREA SERVICED BY THIS WATER SOURCE.

**Source Name:** MILK RIVER, DRY FORK

**Source Type:** SURFACE WATER

**Source Name:** UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF MILK RIVER, DRY FORK

**Source Type:** SURFACE WATER

**Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:**

<u>ID</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1		E2	32	36N	12W	GLACIER

**Source Name:** MILK RIVER, DRY FORK

**Period of Diversion:** JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

**Diversion Means:** LIVESTOCK DIRECT FROM SOURCE

2		E2	32	36N	12W	GLACIER
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**Source Name:** UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF MILK RIVER, DRY FORK

**Period of Diversion:** JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

**Diversion Means:** LIVESTOCK DIRECT FROM SOURCE

**Period of Use:** JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

**Place of Use:**

<u>ID</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1			E2	32	36N	12W	GLACIER
2			E2	32	36N	12W	GLACIER

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**Remarks:**

THIS WATER RIGHT IS LOCATED, IN WHOLE OR IN PART, WITHIN THE BOUNDARY OF THE BLACKFEET INDIAN RESERVATION.