

Montana Water Court
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MONTANA WATER COURT, YELLOWSTONE DIVISION
YELLOWSTONE RIVER ABOVE AND INCLUDING BRIDGER CREEK BASIN
BASIN 43B
PRELIMINARY DECREE

* * * * *

CLAIMANT: Drivdahl LLC

CASE 43B-0760-R-2022

43B 39338-00

43B 210798-00

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, conclusion 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 to be added to the 10-day objection period. Rule 6(d), M.R.Civ.P. 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 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

Each of these claims appeared in the Preliminary Decree with the following issue remarks:

THE CLAIMED POINT OF DIVERSION IS IN QUESTION. THE LOCATION OF THE HEADGATE CANNOT BE IDENTIFIED FROM AVAILABLE DATA.

EXISTENCE OF THE CLAIMED RESERVOIR CANNOT BE CONFIRMED WITH AVAILABLE DATA.

The issue remarks were not addressed through the objection process. The Water Court is required to resolve the issues raised by each issue remark. Section 85-2-248, MCA.

Under Section 85-2-248(3), MCA, information in the claim file or other information obtained by the Court can be reviewed to determine if it provides a sufficient basis to resolve the issue raised by a remark and the Court can provide the claimant an opportunity to file additional information or evidence. The July 10, 2023 Order Setting Deadlines Pursuant To Section 85-2-248(5), MCA, set various deadlines for the claimant and the Bozeman Regional Office, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation [“DNRC”] to work together to resolve the issue remarks. On September 22, 2023 the DNRC Memorandum was filed making recommendations. The John Drivdahl August 16, 2023 letter is attached providing additional information. On October 10, 2023 Drivdahl LLC filed its endorsed copy of the DNRC Memorandum. These documents are viewable in the Court’s FullCourt Enterprise case management system.

APPLICABLE LAW

“All issue remarks to claims that are not resolved through the filing of an objection as provided in 85-2-233 must be resolved as provided in this section.” Section 85-2-248(2), MCA.

A properly filed Statement of Claim for Existing Water Right is *prima facie* proof of its content pursuant to section 85-2-227, MCA. This *prima facie* proof may be contradicted and overcome by other evidence that proves, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the elements of the claim do not accurately reflect the beneficial use of the water right as it existed prior to July 1, 1973. This is the burden of proof for every assertion that a claim is incorrect including for claimants objecting to their own claims. Rule 19, W.R.ADJ.R.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. For each claim, the Preliminary Decree states that the point of diversion is in the SESENW section 36, T4N, R12E, SWEET GRASS. The John Drivdahl August 16, 2023 letter confirms the legal description is correct. The DNRC Memorandum states that “[t]he thick vegetation in this area makes it impossible to identify the point of diversion using aerial imagery”, and recommends the point of diversion issue remark be removed as resolved. The point of diversion legal description should not be changed. The point of diversion issue

remarks should be removed as addressed and resolved.

2. Each claim includes a reservoir on the Nels Helleran Ditch. The John Drivdahl August 16, 2023 letter states that Nels Helleran was his father's uncle, that John Drivdahl lived on the Nels Helleran property in his first years, then owned and worked the property from 1960 through 1999, and that the reservoir has not existed since sometime before 1946. As confirmed by Mr. Drivdahl, recommended by the DNRC Memorandum, and agreed to by Drivdahl LLC, the reservoir should be removed from each claim. The reservoir issue remarks should be removed as addressed and resolved.

3. The Preliminary Decree also includes the following remark on claim 43B 39338-00:

THE CLAIMANT DID NOT IDENTIFY THE PERIOD OF DIVERSION FOR THIS RIGHT. A PERIOD OF DIVERSION HAS BEEN ADDED TO MATCH THE PERIOD OF USE. IF NO OBJECTIONS ARE RECEIVED TO THE PERIOD OF DIVERSION OR PERIOD OF USE, THOSE ELEMENTS WILL BE DECREED AS SHOWN ON THIS ABSTRACT AND THIS ISSUE REMARK WILL BE REMOVED FROM THIS CLAIM.

The Preliminary Decree also includes the following remark on claim 43B 210798-00:

ALTHOUGH NOT OBJECTED TO, THE PLACE OF USE WAS CHANGED TO REFLECT THE REDUCTION IN MAXIMUM ACRES IRRIGATED.

These remarks provide notice of changes made prior to issuance of the Preliminary Decree and during the Temporary Preliminary Decree proceedings. They do not raise unresolved issues which need to be addressed. These remarks should be removed as having served their notice purposes.

CONCLUSION OF LAW

The information provided by the claimant and the DNRC Memorandum is sufficient to resolve the issue remarks without evidentiary hearing. Sections 85-2-248(3) and (11), MCA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the above Findings of Fact and Conclusion of Law, this Master recommends that the Court make the changes specified in the Findings of Fact to correct the Preliminary Decree for this Basin. A Post Decree Abstract of Water Right Claim for each claim is served with this Report to confirm the recommended changes have been made in the state's centralized record system.

ELECTRONICALLY SIGNED AND DATED BELOW

Electronically Signed By:
Hon. Judge Kathryn Lambert
Tue, Oct 24 2023 10:18:24 AM

Service via USPS Mail:

Drivdahl LLC
% Rocco Carroccia
617 Wheeler Creek Rd
Big Timber, MT 59011

POST DECREE
ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM
YELLOWSTONE RIVER, ABOVE & INCLUDING BRIDGER CREEK
BASIN 43B

Water Right Number: **43B 39338-00 STATEMENT OF CLAIM**

Version: 3 -- POST DECREE

Status: ACTIVE

Owners:
DRIVDAHL LLC
%ROCCO CARROCCIA
617 WHEELER CREEK RD
BIG TIMBER, MT 59011

Priority Date: MAY 27, 1914

Type of Historical Right: DECREED

Purpose (use): IRRIGATION

Irrigation Type: FLOOD

Flow Rate: 3.50 CFS

Volume: THE TOTAL VOLUME OF THIS WATER RIGHT SHALL NOT EXCEED THE AMOUNT PUT TO HISTORICAL AND BENEFICIAL USE.

Climatic Area: 5 - LOW

Maximum Acres: 61.50

Source Name: NORTH AMELONG CREEK

Source Type: SURFACE WATER

Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:

ID	Govt Lot	Otr Sec	Sec	Twp	Rge	County
1		SESENW	36	4N	12E	SWEET GRASS

Period of Diversion: MAY 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30

Diversion Means: HEADGATE

Ditch Name: NELS HELLERAN DITCH

Period of Use: MAY 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30

Place of Use:

ID	Acres	Govt Lot	Otr Sec	Sec	Twp	Rge	County
1	26.00		SWNE	32	4N	13E	SWEET GRASS
2	28.00		W2SE	32	4N	13E	SWEET GRASS
3	7.50		SESE	32	4N	13E	SWEET GRASS
Total:	61.50						

Remarks:

THE WATER RIGHTS FOLLOWING THIS STATEMENT ARE SUPPLEMENTAL WHICH MEANS THE RIGHTS HAVE OVERLAPPING PLACES OF USE. THE RIGHTS CAN BE COMBINED TO IRRIGATE ONLY OVERLAPPING PARCELS. EACH RIGHT IS LIMITED TO THE FLOW RATE AND PLACE OF USE OF THAT INDIVIDUAL RIGHT. THE SUM TOTAL VOLUME OF THESE WATER RIGHTS SHALL NOT EXCEED THE AMOUNT PUT TO HISTORICAL AND BENEFICIAL USE.

POST DECREE
ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM
YELLOWSTONE RIVER, ABOVE & INCLUDING BRIDGER CREEK
BASIN 43B

Water Right Number: **43B 210798-00** STATEMENT OF CLAIM

Version: 3 -- POST DECREE

Status: ACTIVE

Owners:
DRIVDAHL LLC
%ROCCO CARROCCIA
617 WHEELER CREEK RD
BIG TIMBER, MT 59011

Priority Date: MAY 10, 1918

Type of Historical Right: DECREED

Purpose (use): IRRIGATION

Irrigation Type: FLOOD

Flow Rate: 7.00 CFS

Volume: THE TOTAL VOLUME OF THIS WATER RIGHT SHALL NOT EXCEED THE AMOUNT PUT TO HISTORICAL AND BENEFICIAL USE.

Climatic Area: 5 - LOW

Maximum Acres: 61.50

Source Name: NORTH AMELONG CREEK

Source Type: SURFACE WATER

Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:

ID	Govt Lot	Otr Sec	Sec	Twp	Rge	County
1		SESENW	36	4N	12E	SWEET GRASS

Period of Diversion: MAY 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30

Diversion Means: HEADGATE

Ditch Name: NELS HELLERAN DITCH

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