

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

IN THE WATER COURT OF THE STATE OF MONTANA
CLARK FORK DIVISION
KOOTENAI RIVER BASIN (76D)
PRELIMINARY DECREE

CLAIMANTS: Stephen T. Webb; Charles Johnson

CASE 76D-0592-R-2024
76D 141502-00

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, 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

Mining claim 76D 141502-00 appeared in the Preliminary Decree for this Basin with an issue remark concerning point of diversion.

Issue remarks result from Department of Natural Resources and Conservation ("DNRC") claims examination. Claims examination confirms the historical use of water right claims and identifies issues with claims. If claims examination cannot confirm some aspect of a claim, an issue remark is added to the claim.

Montana law requires the Water Court to resolve issue remarks. Claimants failed to complete the issue remark process. DNRC also contacted potential owner Stimson Lumber Co. Potential owner Stimson Lumber Co. did not respond to DNRC's contact.

Issue

What is the historically accurate point of diversion and is the point of diversion issue remark resolved?

Findings of fact

1. On May 28, 2024, DNRC filed a Memorandum concerning claimants' lack of participation and completion of the issue remark resolution process. DNRC explained that the point of diversion issue remark did not overcome the prima facie statement of claim.

2. The Preliminary Decree abstract identifies the historically accurate point of diversion.

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. 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.

4. If the Montana Water Court cannot resolve issue remarks based upon information in the claim file or information available to the Court, claimants shall be required to confer with the DNRC to attempt resolution of the issue remarks. Claimants shall file documentation to resolve the issue remarks, and the DNRC shall submit recommendations regarding disposition of the issue remarks. Section 85-2-248(5), MCA.

5. 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

Historical point of diversion and point of diversion issue remark resolution

Claimants were ordered to meet with the DNRC to attempt resolution of the point of diversion issue remark appearing on mining claim 76D 141502-00. DNRC reported it reviewed the claim file and a 1961 aerial photo. DNRC validated the legal land description claimed by statement of claim 76D 141502-00.

The DNRC Memorandum and its attachments may be viewed on the court’s case management system, FullCourt Enterprise, at document sequence 2.00.

Conclusions of law

Based upon the DNRC’s discussion, the point of diversion issue remark does not

overcome prima facie statement of claim 76D 141502-00. The issue remark should be removed from the abstract.

Recommendations

Mining claim 76D 141502-00 accurately reflects historical use. No changes to the elements of the claim should be made.

The point of diversion issue remark should be removed from the claim abstract.

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

ELECTRONICALLY SIGNED AND DATED BELOW.

Service via USPS Mail

Charles Johnson
PO Box 400
Troy MT 59935
(mail undeliverable)

Stephen T Webb
PO Box 511
Troy MT 59935
(mail undeliverable)

Courtesy Copy Potential Owner:

Stimson Lumber Co
9400 SW Barnes Rd Ste 530
Portland, OR 97225-6608

Service List Updated 7/1/2024

\\JUDHLNSRV-DATA\Share\JUDGALH2OSRV (Datavol)\Share\WC-BASIN FOLDERS\76D PD\76D Cases\76D-0592-R-2024\MR--76D-592R sjs.docx 7/1/24

**POST DECREE
ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM
KOOTENAI RIVER
BASIN 76D**

Water Right Number: 76D 141502-00 STATEMENT OF CLAIM
Version: 3 -- POST DECREE
Status: ACTIVE

Owners: CHARLES JOHNSON
PO BOX 400
TROY, MT 59935-0400

STEPHEN T WEBB
PO BOX 400
TROY, MT 59935

Priority Date: JUNE 16, 1958

Type of Historical Right: USE

Purpose (Use): MINING

Flow Rate: 112.20 GPM

Volume: THIS RIGHT IS LIMITED TO THE VOLUME OF WATER HISTORICALLY USED FOR MINING PURPOSES.
THE USE OF THIS WATER APPEARS TO BE LARGELY NONCONSUMPTIVE.

Source Name: UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF RUBY CREEK

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		NENESE	36	32N	35W	LINCOLN

Source Name: UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF RUBY CREEK

Period of Diversion: MAY 1 TO NOVEMBER 30

Diversion Means: HEADGATE

Period of Use: MAY 1 TO NOVEMBER 30

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			NWNWSW	31	32N	34W	LINCOLN