FILED
01/22/2025
Sara Calkins
CLERK
Montana Water Court
STATE OF MONTANA
By: D'Ann CIGLER
41S-0785-R-2024

Stern, Anika

5.00

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

IN THE WATER COURT OF THE STATE OF MONTANA LOWER MISSOURI DIVISION JUDITH RIVER BASIN (41S) PRELIMINARY DECREE

CLAIMANTS: Charles L. Hedrick; D & M Ranch Inc.; M-P Livestock

CASE 41S-0785-R-2024 41S 10540-00 41S 10546-00 41S 171004-00 41S 171010-00 41S 171013-00

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

FINDINGS OF FACT

- 1. D & M Ranch Inc. is the record owner of claims 41S 10540-00 and 41S 10546-00; Charles L. Hedrick is the record owner of claims 41S 171010-00 and 41S 171010-00; and M-P Livestock Trust is the record owner of claim 41S 171013-00.
 - 2. Claims 41S 10540-00, 41S 171010-00, and 41S 171013-00:

Claim 41S 10540-00:

- THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF ACRES CLAIMED ON THE ORIGINAL STATEMENT OF CLAIM IS 135.00 ACRES. THE DNRC'S RE-EXAMINATION WAS OF THESE ORIGINAL CLAIMED ACRES.
- FLOW RATE MAY REQUIRE MODIFICATION BASED ON RESOLUTION OF MAXIMUM ACRES ISSUE.
- THE TYPE OF HISTORICAL RIGHT, PRIORITY DATE, AND FLOW RATE MAY BE QUESTIONABLE. THE CLAIMS FOLLOWING THIS STATEMENT USE THE SAME FILED APPROPRIATION TO DOCUMENT THE RIGHT. THE COMBINED FLOW RATE FOR THIS GROUP OF CLAIMS EXCEEDS THE TOTAL OF THE ORIGINAL APPROPRIATION. 41S 10540-00, 41S 10546-00, 41S 171004-00, 41S 171013-00.
- THE CLAIMED POINT OF DIVERSION IS IN QUESTION. THE LOCATION OF THE HEADGATE CANNOT BE IDENTIFIED FROM AVAILABLE DATA.
- THE JUDITH BASIN COUNTY WATER RESOURCES SURVEY (1963) APPEARS TO INDICATE 0.00 ACRES IRRIGATED.
- USDA AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH NO(S). 30045-279-35 , DATED 09/18/1979 , APPEARS TO INDICATE 0.00 ACRES IRRIGATED.
- THE PRIORITY DATE MAY BE QUESTIONABLE. THIS CLAIM IS FOR A FILED APPRPRIATION ON WOLF CREEK WITH A PRIORITY DATE PREDATING CASE NO 003, FERGUS COUNTY. IF NO OBJECTIONS ARE FILED TO PRIORITY DATE OR TYPE OF HISTORICAL RIGHT, THESE ELEMENTS WILL BE DECREED AS SHOWN ON THIS ABSTRACT AND THIS REMARK WILL BE REMOVED.
- THE MAXIMUM COMBINED ACRES FOR THIS GROUP OF SUPPLEMENTAL CLAIMS MAY REQUIRE MODIFICATION PENDING RESOLUTION OF MAXIMUM IRRIGATED ACRES ISSUE.

Claim 41S 10546-00:

• THE TYPE OF HISTORICAL RIGHT, PRIORITY DATE, AND FLOW RATE MAY BE QUESTIONABLE. THE CLAIMS FOLLOWING THIS STATEMENT USE THE SAME FILED APPROPRIATION TO DOCUMENT THE RIGHT. THE COMBINED FLOW RATE FOR THIS GROUP OF CLAIMS EXCEEDS THE TOTAL OF THE ORIGINAL APPROPRIATION. 41S 10540-00, 41S 10546-00, 41S 171004-00, 41S 171013-00.

Claim 41S 171004-00:

• THE TYPE OF HISTORICAL RIGHT, PRIORITY DATE, AND FLOW RATE MAY BE QUESTIONABLE. THE CLAIMS FOLLOWING THIS STATEMENT USE THE SAME FILED APPROPRIATION TO DOCUMENT THE RIGHT. THE COMBINED FLOW RATE FOR THIS GROUP OF CLAIMS EXCEEDS THE TOTAL OF THE ORIGINAL APPROPRIATION. 41S 10540-00, 41S 10546-00, 41S 171004-00, 41S 171013-00.

Claim 41S 171010-00:

- FLOW RATE MAY REQUIRE MODIFICATION BASED ON RESOLUTION OF MAXIMUM ACRES ISSUE.
- 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.
- RESERVOIR RECORD WAS MODIFIED AS A RESULT OF DNRC REVIEW UNDER MONTANA WATER COURT REEXAMINATION ORDERS. IF NO OBJECTIONS ARE FILED TO THIS CLAIM, THESE ELEMENTS WILL REMAIN AS THEY APPEAR ON THIS ABSTRACT AND THE REMARK WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE CLAIM.
- THE JUDITH BASIN COUNTY WATER RESOURCES SURVEY (1963) APPEARS TO INDICATE 0.00 ACRES IRRIGATED.
- USDA AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH NO(S). 30045-279-31, DATED 09/18/1979, APPEARS TO INDICATE 0.00 ACRES IRRIGATED.
- THE MAXIMUM COMBINED ACRES FOR THIS GROUP OF SUPPLEMENTAL CLAIMS MAY REQUIRE MODIFICATION PENDING RESOLUTION OF MAXIMUM IRRIGATED ACRES ISSUE.
- THE CLAIMED VOLUME APPEARS TO BE EXCESSIVE FOR THE CLAIMED PURPOSE. THE CLAIMED VOLUME EQUALS 105 TIMES THE CAPACITY OF THE RESERVOIR.

Claim 41S 171013-00:

- FLOW RATE MAY REQUIRE MODIFICATION BASED ON RESOLUTION OF MAXIMUM ACRES ISSUE.
- THE TYPE OF HISTORICAL RIGHT, PRIORITY DATE, AND FLOW RATE MAY BE QUESTIONABLE. THE CLAIMS FOLLOWING THIS STATEMENT USE THE SAME FILED APPROPRIATION TO DOCUMENT THE RIGHT. THE COMBINED FLOW RATE FOR THIS GROUP OF CLAIMS EXCEEDS THE TOTAL OF THE ORIGINAL APPROPRIATION. 41S 10540-00, 41S 10546-00, 41S 171004-00, 41S 171013-00.
- SOURCE NAME WAS MODIFIED AS A RESULT OF DNRC REVIEW UNDER MONTANA WATER COURT REEXAMINATION ORDERS. IF NO OBJECTIONS ARE FILED TO THIS CLAIM, THESE ELEMENTS WILL REMAIN AS THEY APPEAR ON THIS ABSTRACT AND THE REMARK WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE CLAIM.
- THE POINT OF DIVERSION MAY BE INCORRECT. THE LOCATION OF THE HEADGATE CANNOT BE IDENTIFIED FROM AVAILABLE DATA.
- THE JUDITH BASIN COUNTY WATER RESOURCES SURVEY (1963) APPEARS TO INDICATE 0.00 ACRES IRRIGATED.
- USDA AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH NO(S). 30045-279-35, DATED 09/18/1979, APPEARS TO INDICATE 0.00 ACRES IRRIGATED.
- THE PRIORITY DATE MAY BE QUESTIONABLE. THIS CLAIM IS FOR A FILED APPRPRIATION ON WOLF CREEK WITH A PRIORITY DATE PREDATING CASE NO 003, FERGUS CO. COUNTY. IF NO OBJECTIONS ARE FILED TO PRIORITY DATE OR TYPE OF HISTORICAL RIGHT, THESE ELEMENTS WILL BE DECREED AS SHOWN ON THIS ABSTRACT AND THIS REMARK WILL BE REMOVED.

3. Claims 41S 10540-00, 41S 10546-00, 41S 171004-00, and 41S 171014-00 claim the same Robert Skelton May 31, 1886 appropriation for 160 miner's inches (1,795.20 gallons per minute/4.00 cubic feet per second) of Dry Wolf Creek:

Claim Number	Record Owner	Decreed Flow
41S 10540-00	D&M Ranch Inc.	1.13 cfs (507.14 gpm)
41S 10546-00	D&M Ranch Inc.	no quantified flow
41S 171004-00	Charles L. Hedrick	26.93 gpm
41S 171013-00	M-P Livestock Trust	3.41 cfs (1,530.40 gpm)
	TOTAL:	4.6 cfs (2,064.47 gpm)

Initially, the Robert Skelton appropriation was overclaimed by .6 cfs. Because resolution of the other issue remarks may resolve the over-filing issue, the other issue remarks were addressed first.¹

- 4. Charles M. Hedrick, D & M Ranch Inc., and M-P Livestock were ordered to confer with the Lewistown Regional Office of the DNRC to resolve the unresolved issue remarks decreed on claims in this Case. (Doc.²1.00).
- 5. DNRC Water Resource Specialist Carli Bluhm filed a Memorandum stating "The DNRC spoke to Charles Hedrick over the phone on October 4, 2024, and met with David Hill as a representative for D&M Ranch Inc. on November 12, 2024." (Doc. 2.00). Ms. Bluhm indicated she reviewed scanned claim files, the Judith Basin County Water Resource Survey, aerial photos, and a motion to amend³ to prepare the Memorandum. A map and proposed abstracts were attached to the Memorandum.
- 6. **41S 10540-00:** Ms. Bluhm identified the point of diversion in the NENESE of Section 13; additionally, Ms. Bluhm confirmed 74.56 acres of irrigation. Ms. Bluhm recommended the following modifications be made to claim 41S 10540-00:

¹ See Finding of Fact No. 8 for resolution of this issue remark.

² "Doc." numerical references correlate to case file docket numbers in the Water Court's Full Court case management system.

³ No motion to amend was included with the Memorandum, it is unclear what motion to amend Ms. Bluhm is referring to.

Maximum Acres:	74.58	74.58 110.00								
Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:										
<u>ID</u>		Govt Lot	Qtr Sec	Sec	Twp	Rge	County			
1		NENESE	SWNWSW	13	16N	11E	JUDITH BASIN			
Place of Use:										
<u>ID</u>	Acres	Govt Lot	Otr Sec	Sec	Twp	Rge	County			
<u>ID</u> 4	Acres 6.00	Govt Lot	Otr Sec NENENW	Sec 43	<u>Twp</u>	Rge 11E	County JUDITH BASIN			
		Govt Lot		_						
4 2	6.00	Govt Lot	NENENW	43	16N	11E				
4 2	6.00 24.00	Govt Lot	NENENW NWNE	43 43	46N 46N	11E 11E	JUDITH BASIN JUDITH BASIN			

- 7. **41S 171010-00:** Ms. Bluhm found no historical irrigation at the claimed place of use and recommended the claim be dismissed.
- 8. **41S 171013-00:** Ms. Bluhm found no historical irrigation at the claimed place of use and recommended the claim be dismissed.

The proposed dismissal of claim 41S 171013-00 would resolve the over-filing of the Robert Skelton May 31, 1886 appropriation for 160 miner's inches.

9. An Order was issued to determine if Charles M. Hedrick (41S 171010-00) and authorized representatives of D&M Ranch, Inc. (claim 41S 10540-00), and M-P Livestock (claim 41S 171013-00) agreed or disagreed with the proposed modifications (41S 10540-00) and dismissals (41S 171010-00 and 41S 171013-00). The Order indicated that if nothing were filed by the deadline, this Master will conclude the Claimants agree with the recommended modifications to claim 41S 10540-00 and the dismissal of claims 41S 171010-00 and 41S 171013-00 and a Master's Report will be issued. The following language was included in the Order:

Failure to comply with the terms of this Order may result in sanctions, <u>up to and including entry of default and termination of a water right claim or dismissal of objections</u>. Rule 22, W.R.Adj.R.

Nothing was filed.

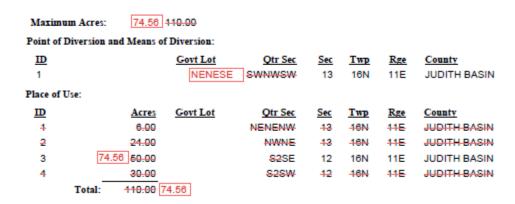
PRINCIPLES AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Water Court must address all issue remarks decreed on a claim. Sections 85-2-247, and 85-2-248, MCA.

- 2. 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.
- 3. Pursuant to Rule 22, W.R.Adj.R., if a claimant, objector, or intervenor fails to appear at a scheduled conference or hearing or fails to comply with an order issued by the Water Court, the Water Court may issue such orders of sanction with regard thereto as are just.
- 4. The issue remark decreed on claims 41S 10540-00 indicating the "maximum combined acres for this group of supplemental claims may require modification..." is not relevant because supplemental rights remarks no longer include a quantified acreage figure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Claim 41S 10540-00 should be modified as follows:



No modifications are required to the elements of claims 41S 10546-00 or 41S 171004-00.

- 2. The issue remarks should be removed from claims 41S 10540-00, 41S 10546-00, and 41S 171004-00.
 - 3. Claims 41S 171010-00 and 41S 171013-00 should be dismissed.
 - 4. The multiple use remark decreed on claims 41S 171004-00 should be

removed as claim 41S 171013-00 will no longer be an active claim if Recommendation No. 3 is implemented.

Abstracts are attached for review.

ELECTRONICALLY SIGNED AND DATED BELOW.

Service via USPS Mail:

Charles L. Hedrick PO Box 359 Stanford, MT 59479-0359

D & M Ranch Inc. PO Box 149 Stanford, MT 59479-0149

M-P Livestock 824 Broken Arrow Rd Stanford, MT 59479

ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM

JUDITH RIVER

BASIN 41S

Water Right Number: 41S 10540-00 STATEMENT OF CLAIM

Version: 3 -- POST DECREE

Status: ACTIVE

Owners: D & M RANCH INC

PO BOX 149

STANFORD, MT 59479-0149

Priority Date: MAY 31, 1886

Type of Historical Right: FILED

Purpose (Use): IRRIGATION

Irrigation Type: FLOOD

Flow Rate: 1.13 CFS

*Volume: THE TOTAL VOLUME OF THIS WATER RIGHT SHALL NOT EXCEED THE AMOUNT PUT

TO HISTORICAL AND BENEFICIAL USE.

Climatic Area: 3 - MODERATE

Maximum Acres: 74.56

Source Name: WOLF CREEK

Source Type: SURFACE WATER

Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:

ID Govt Lot Otr Sec Sec Twp Rge County

1 NENESE 13 16N 11E JUDITH BASIN

Period of Diversion: APRIL 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30

Diversion Means: HEADGATE

Period of Use: APRIL 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30

Place of Use:

ID Acres Govt Lot Otr Sec Sec Twp Rge County

1 74.56 SE 12 16N 11E JUDITH BASIN

Total: 74.56

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.

10539-00 10540-00

THE WATER RIGHTS FOLLOWING THIS STATEMENT ARE ASSOCIATED WHICH MEANS THE RIGHTS SHARE THE SAME PLACE OF USE.

10540-00 107298-00

THE WATER RIGHTS FOLLOWING THIS STATEMENT ARE ASSOCIATED WHICH MEANS THE RIGHTS SHARE THE SAME PLACE OF USE.

10539-00 10540-00 107298-00

THE WATER RIGHTS LISTED FOLLOWING THIS STATEMENT ARE MULTIPLE USES OF THE SAME RIGHT. THE USE OF THIS RIGHT FOR SEVERAL PURPOSES DOES NOT INCREASE THE EXTENT OF THE WATER RIGHT. RATHER IT DECREES THE RIGHT TO ALTERNATE AND EXCHANGE THE USE (PURPOSE) OF THE WATER IN ACCORD WITH HISTORICAL PRACTICES.

10540-00 10546-00

ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM

JUDITH RIVER

BASIN 41S

Water Right Number: 41S 10546-00 STATEMENT OF CLAIM

> Version: 3 -- POST DECREE

> > **Status: ACTIVE**

Owners: D & M RANCH INC

PO BOX 149

STANFORD, MT 59479-0149

Priority Date: MAY 31, 1886

Type of Historical Right: FILED STOCK Purpose (Use):

*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.

THIS RIGHT INCLUDES THE AMOUNT OF WATER CONSUMPTIVELY USED FOR *Volume:

> 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.

UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF WOLF CREEK **Source Name:**

Source Type: SURFACE WATER

Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:

<u>ID</u>	Govt Lot	Qtr Sec	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	Rge	County
1		NENENW	13	16N	11E	JUDITH BASIN
Period of Diversion:	JANUARY 1 TO	DECEMBER 31				
Diversion Means:	LIVESTOCK DIR	ECT FROM SO	URCE			
2		NWNWNE	13	16N	11E	JUDITH BASIN
Period of Diversion:	JANUARY 1 TO	DECEMBER 31				
Diversion Means:	LIVESTOCK DIR	ECT FROM SO	URCE			
3		S2SE	12	16N	11E	JUDITH BASIN
Period of Diversion:	JANUARY 1 TO	DECEMBER 31				
Diversion Means:	LIVESTOCK DIR	ECT FROM SO	URCE			
Period of Use:	JANUARY 1 TO	DECEMBER 31				

Place of Use:

<u>ID</u>	<u>Acres</u>	Govt Lot	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1			NENENW	13	16N	11E	JUDITH BASIN
2			NWNWNE	13	16N	11E	JUDITH BASIN
3			S2SE	12	16N	11E	JUDITH BASIN

Remarks:

THE WATER RIGHTS LISTED FOLLOWING THIS STATEMENT ARE MULTIPLE USES OF THE SAME RIGHT. THE USE OF THIS RIGHT FOR SEVERAL PURPOSES DOES NOT INCREASE THE EXTENT OF THE WATER RIGHT. RATHER IT DECREES THE RIGHT TO ALTERNATE AND EXCHANGE THE USE (PURPOSE) OF THE WATER IN ACCORD WITH HISTORICAL PRACTICES.

10540-00 10546-00

ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM

JUDITH RIVER

BASIN 41S

Water Right Number: 41S 171004-00 STATEMENT OF CLAIM

Version: 3 -- POST DECREE

Status: ACTIVE

Owners: CHARLES L HEDRICK

PO BOX 359

STANFORD, MT 59479-0359

Priority Date: MAY 31, 1886

Type of Historical Right: FILED

Purpose (Use): STOCK

Flow Rate: 26.93 GPM

*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: SPRING, UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF WOLF CREEK

Source Type: GROUNDWATER

Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:

ID Govt Lot Otr Sec Sec Twp Rge County

1 SENENW 13 16N 11E JUDITH BASIN

Period of Diversion: APRIL 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30

Diversion Means: LIVESTOCK DIRECT FROM SOURCE

Period of Use: APRIL 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30

Place of Use:

<u>ID</u>	<u>Acres</u> <u>G</u>	ovt Lot Qtr	<u>Sec</u> <u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	County
1		NE	NW 13	16N	11E	JUDITH BASIN
2		NV	VNE 13	16N	11E	JUDITH BASIN

ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM

JUDITH RIVER

BASIN 41S

Water Right Number: 41S 171010-00 STATEMENT OF CLAIM

Version: 3 -- POST DECREE

Status: DISMISSED

Owners: CHARLES L HEDRICK

PO BOX 359

STANFORD, MT 59479-0359

Priority Date:

Type of Historical Right:

Purpose (Use): IRRIGATION

Flow Rate:

Volume:

Source Name: UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF WILLOW CREEK

Source Type: SURFACE WATER

Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:

Period of Use: Place of Use:

Remarks:

THIS CLAIM WAS DISMISSED BY ORDER OF THE WATER COURT.

ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM

JUDITH RIVER

BASIN 41S

Water Right Number: 41S 171013-00 STATEMENT OF CLAIM

Version: 3 -- POST DECREE

Status: DISMISSED

Owners: M - P LIVESTOCK TRUST

824 BROKEN ARROW RD STANFORD, MT 59479

Priority Date:

Type of Historical Right:

Purpose (Use): IRRIGATION

Flow Rate:

Volume:

Source Name: UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF WOLF CREEK

Source Type: SURFACE WATER

Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:

Period of Use: Place of Use:

Remarks:

THIS CLAIM WAS DISMISSED BY ORDER OF THE WATER COURT.