

Montana Water Court
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IN THE WATER COURT OF THE STATE OF MONTANA
LOWER MISSOURI DIVISION
BIG DRY CREEK - BASIN (40D)
PRELIMINARY DECREE

CLAIMANTS: Dana G. Phipps; Timothy A. Phipps;
Snowbelt Angus Ranch Co.

CASE 40D-0280-R-2023
40D 38827-00

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

Claim 40D 38827-00 appeared in the Preliminary Decree for the Big Dry Creek (Basin 40D) with issue remarks resulting from pre-decree examination by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). The claim did not receive objections, counterobjections, or notices of intent to appear. To address the issue remarks, the Water Court consolidated the claim into case 40D-0280-R-2023.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Claim 40D 38827-00 received the following issue remarks:

THE PLACE OF USE APPEARS TO NEED MODIFICATION BASED ON THE DNRC CORRECTION TO THE POINT OF DIVERSION. THE CORRECT PLACE OF USE LEGAL LAND DESCRIPTION APPEARS TO BE THE SENESE SEC 4 TWP 15N RGE 34E GARFIELD COUNTY.

POINT OF DIVERSION 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.

2. Claimants were given a deadline of December 15, 2023, to file evidence resolving the place of use issue remark. If nothing was filed, the Court stated it would change the abstract to match what the remark recommended.

3. No response was filed.

4. The new place of use for claim 40D 38827-00 is as follows:

<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			SENESE	4 5	15N	34E	GARFIELD

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Water Court has exclusive jurisdiction to determine the extent of all water rights in Montana as they existed prior to July 1, 1973. *In re Deadman's Basin Water Users Ass'n*, 2002 MT 15, ¶ 15; Section 3-7-501, MCA.

2. The Water Court must resolve all issue remarks not resolved through the objection process. Section 85-2-248(2). The Court has 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.

3. When resolving issue remarks, the Court must weigh the issue remark and the information resulting in the issue remark against the claimed water right. Section 85-2-247(2), MCA. The Water Court is permitted to use information submitted by DNRC, 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.

4. A properly filed Statement of Claim for Existing Water Right is prima facie proof of its content. Section 85-2-227, MCA. This prima facie status may be overcome by a preponderance of the evidence showing that an element of the claim is incorrect. Section 85-2-227, MCA; Rule 19, W.R.Adj.R. A preponderance of the evidence is evidence that shows a fact is “more probable than not.” *Hohenlohe v. State*, 2010 MT 203, ¶ 33.

5. 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 Court, the Court may upon motion or its own initiative, issue such orders of sanction with regard thereto as are just. Rule 22, W.R.Adj.R.

6. Sanctions for a claimant’s failure to comply with an order issued by the Court in its review of issue remarks include: 1) amending elements of the claim to conform with information in the claim file, 2) amending element of the claim to conform with information obtained by the court, or 3) removing the issue remark. Section 85-2-248(9), MCA; Rule 22, W.R.Adj.R.

7. Claimants failed to respond to the Water Court’s Order Setting Filing Deadline. Therefore, it is proper for the Water Court to resolve the issue remarks and amend the claim.

8. The remaining issue remark is for notice purposes only, does not overcome the prima facie status of the claim, and should be removed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the changes specified above should be adopted. A Post-decree abstract of the claim accompanies this

Order to confirm the changes have been made in the State's centralized water right record system.

ELECTRONICALLY SIGNED AND DATED BELOW.

Service via USPS mail:

Phipps, Dana G.
Phipps, Timothy A.
461 Boxcar Rd
Brusett, MT 59318-9604

Snowbelt Angus Ranch Co.
461 Boxcar Rd
Brusett, MT 59318-9604

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**POST DECREE
ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM
BIG DRY CREEK
BASIN 40D**

Water Right Number: 40D 38827-00 STATEMENT OF CLAIM

Version: 3 -- POST DECREE

Status: ACTIVE

Owners: SNOWBELT ANGUS RANCH CO
461 BOXCAR RD
BRUSETT, MT 59318-9604

Priority Date: OCTOBER 29, 1981

Type of Historical Right: USE

Purpose (Use): STOCK

Flow Rate: 4.00 GPM

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

Source Type: GROUNDWATER

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		SENESE	4	15N	34E	GARFIELD

Period of Diversion: MAY 1 TO NOVEMBER 30

Diversion Means: WELL

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			SENESE	4	15N	34E	GARFIELD

Contract for Deed Purchasers: DANA G PHIPPS
461 BOXCAR RD
BRUSETT, MT 59318-9604

THIS WATER RIGHT IS APPURTENANT TO REAL PROPERTY THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF A CONTRACT FOR DEED. THE CONTRACT FOR DEED PURCHASER IS ENTITLED TO THE SAME NOTICE AS THE OWNER OF THE PROPERTY PURSUANT TO 85-2-232(1)(C) AND 70-20-115, MCA. REFERENCE TO THE CONTRACT FOR DEED PURCHASERS IN THIS ABSTRACT IS FOR NOTICE PURPOSES ONLY AND DOES NOT AMOUNT TO A STATEMENT REGARDING OWNERSHIP. UPON TRANSFER OF THE PROPERTY IDENTIFIED AS THE PLACE OF USE FOR THIS WATER RIGHT, THE TRANSFEREE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR UPDATING OWNERSHIP AS REQUIRED BY 85-2-423 AND -424, MCA. IN THE EVENT OF A DEFAULT RESULTING IN TERMINATION OF THE CONTRACT FOR DEED AND RELEASE OF DOCUMENTS FROM ESCROW, THE OWNERS SHALL PROVIDE THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION WITH A COPY OF A QUIT CLAIM DEED OR SIMILAR INSTRUMENT INDICATING THE CONTRACT FOR DEED PURCHASERS ARE NO LONGER ENTITLED TO RECEIVE NOTICE OF PROCEEDINGS INVOLVING THIS WATER RIGHT.