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LANCE S. WILSON  
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BY \_\_\_\_\_

1 FRANKIE SUE DEL PAPA  
Attorney General  
2 MARTA ADAMS  
Nevada Bar No. 1564  
3 Senior Deputy Attorney General  
100 North Carson Street  
4 Carson City, Nevada 89701  
(775) 684-1237  
5 Attorneys for Nevada Division of Wildlife

6 IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEVADA

7 IN EQUITY NO. C-125-ECR  
SUBFILE NO. C-125-B

8 IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT  
9 COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF  
NEVADA

STATE OF NEVADA'S OPPOSITION  
TO THE JOINT MOTION OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND  
THE WALKER RIVER PAIUTE TRIBE  
FOR CERTIFICATION OF  
DEFENDANT CLASSES

10 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
11 Plaintiff,

12 WALKER RIVER PAIUTE TRIBE,  
13 Plaintiff-Intervenor,

14 vs.

15 WALKER RIVER IRRIGATION  
16 DISTRICT, a corporation, et al.  
17 Defendants.  
18

19 The State of Nevada through the Nevada Division of Wildlife (alternatively, "Nevada" or  
20 "NDOW") hereby opposes the motion filed by the United States of America ("United States") and the  
21 Walker River Paiute Tribe ("Tribe") to certify two defendant classes and to designate representatives for  
22 these defendant classes. For purposes of its opposition and as set forth below, Nevada specifically  
23 opposes its designation as the class representative for domestic groundwater users in specified sub-basins  
24 of the Walker River Basin. Based on the requirements of Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure  
25 ("FRCP"), Nevada's claims and defenses are not typical of the claims or defenses of the proposed class,  
26 nor is Nevada equipped to fairly and adequately protect the interests of other domestic groundwater users  
27 in Nevada. Although NDOW does in fact utilize a domestic well at the Mason Valley Wildlife  
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Attorney General's Office  
100 N. Carson Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701-4717

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1 Management Area, there is no other commonality of interests between NDOW and other domestic users  
2 of groundwater sufficient to support designation of Nevada as the class representative under Rule 23.<sup>1</sup>

3 As the following arguments articulate, the United States and Tribe have failed to meet the burden  
4 imposed by Rule 23. The joint motion seeking to require that Nevada be the designated representative for  
5 the proposed defendant class of domestic groundwater users should be denied

6 **I. NEVADA CLAIMS AND ANTICIPATED DEFENSES ARE NOT TYPICAL OF**  
7 **THOSE CLAIMS AND DEFENSES OF OTHER DOMESTIC WELL OWNERS.**

8 Rule 23 of the FRCP contains the requirements for class actions in federal court. Rule 23 does not  
9 distinguish between plaintiff and defendant class actions. Rule 23(a) requires that a proposed class:

- 10 (1) is so numerous the joinder of all members is impracticable,  
11 (2) there are questions of law or fact common to the class,  
12 (3) the claims or defenses of the representative parties are typical of the claims or defenses of the  
13 class, and  
14 (4) the representative parties will fairly and adequately represent the interests of the class.

15 Here, with respect to creating a class of domestic groundwater users to be represented by Nevada,  
16 the United States and the Tribe have failed to sustain the burden of proving that elements (3) and (4) of  
17 Rule 23(a) are satisfied. *Mantolete v. Bolger*, 767 F.2d 1416, 1424 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1985); *Burkhalter Travel*  
18 *Agency v. MacFarms International, Inc.*, 141 F.R.D. 144, 152 (N.D. Cal. 1991). (upon a motion for  
19 certification, the proponent of the class bears the burden of establishing that the requirements of Rule 23  
20 are met.) Failure to satisfy any one of the requirements of Rule 23(a) precludes certification. *General*  
21 *Telephone Co. of Southwest v. Falcon*, 457 U.S. 147, 161 (1982).

22 Unlike the proposed class of domestic groundwater users, NDOW is the single largest decreed  
23 water right holder on the Walker River. In addition, NDOW holds a permitted water right to flood waters  
24 in Walker Lake. These are the interests which form the basis for Nevada's participation in this case rather  
25 than the incidental fact that Nevada also has a single domestic well. Despite the United States' and the

26 <sup>1</sup> No other Nevada agency, including the Division of Water Resources, regulates domestic well  
27 owners or has possession of comprehensive information as to the identity of these people. The State  
28 Engineer, through the Nevada Division of Water Resources, maintains well drillers' logs for all wells  
drilled in the state, but there is no program for identification of domestic groundwater users in Nevada.

1 Tribe's proposal to create a defendant class of all those individuals and entities with a right to use  
2 groundwater for domestic purposes in sub-basins 107, 108, 110A and 110B in the Walker River Basin in  
3 Nevada, there are few, if any, "typical" claims or defenses which Nevada shares with other domestic  
4 groundwater users.

5 As the largest decreed water right holder in the Walker River and the only party with water rights  
6 in Walker Lake, questions of law and fact relative to Nevada's interests are unique to itself and certainly  
7 cannot be considered "typical" for purposes of Rule 23. Even before reaching the merits of the United  
8 States' and the Tribe's claims, it is clear that to the extent the tribal claims to additional water may impact  
9 Nevada's water rights, the impact is vastly disproportionate to the impact experienced by any other  
10 domestic groundwater user. Unlike other domestic users of groundwater, Nevada, by virtue of its decreed  
11 water rights, is in a position to claim a priority on water as determined by the Walker River Decree. This  
12 fact alone places Nevada in a unique position dissimilar to other domestic groundwater users and prevents  
13 Nevada from participating in this litigation in a manner consistent with the best interests of domestic  
14 groundwater users.

15 The United States and the Tribe rely on *United States v. Truckee-Carson Irrigation District*, 71  
16 F.R.D. 10 (D. Nev. 1975) to support their argument that domestic groundwater users in the Walker River  
17 sub-basins are similar to the contractual right holders who were certified as a defendant class in that case.  
18 *See* United States/Tribe Memorandum, p. 9. An examination of the court's reasoning in *Truckee-Carson*  
19 reveals that the analogy does not pertain to the circumstances presented to this Court. In *Truckee-Carson*,  
20 all the contract certificate holders comprising a class derived their rights from a single federal diversion  
21 for use on the Newlands Project. No one certificate holder was in a position to establish himself as  
22 superior to other certificate holders. *Id.* at 11, 12. Here, priorities among decree holders along the Walker  
23 River are different from each other and clearly distinguishable from any protectible interests that may or  
24 may not exist for domestic users of groundwater. To the extent that domestic groundwater users are  
25 potentially impacted by the Tribal claims to water, variables such as proximity to the reservation and  
26 hydrology will be a factor. These factors, among others which may be "typical" to domestic groundwater  
27 users, may not assume a prominent role in Nevada's much larger claims or defenses in this case.  
28

1 The United States and the Tribe argue that “[t]he domestic groundwater users in sub-basins 107,  
2 108, 110A and 110B look to state law to define their rights, which law does not assign them any priority,  
3 and their defenses will spring from that state law.” See, U.S./Tribe Memorandum, p. 9. Despite this  
4 contention, however, the state statutory scheme for the administration of groundwater expressly does not  
5 define the rights of domestic groundwater users. The permitting provisions of Nevada’s groundwater law  
6 expressly do not apply to domestic well users and because domestic groundwater users are exempt from  
7 such provisions, the State has no particular relationship with these users. See, Nevada Revised Statute  
8 (“NRS”) 534.180. Nevada, through its Division of Wildlife, is present in this litigation on behalf of its  
9 interest in protecting its water rights and its role in the protection of wildlife.

10 In order to gain certification, the United States and the Tribe must demonstrate that the claims and  
11 defenses of the domestic groundwater users are typical of those of the entire class and shared with the  
12 class representative. *Hagen v. City of Winnemucca*, 108 F.R.D. 61 (D.Nev. 1985). Based on the  
13 foregoing, the United States and the Tribe have failed to meet this requirement.

14 **II. NEVADA CANNOT FAIRLY OR ADEQUATELY REPRESENT THE INTERESTS**  
15 **OF THE PROPOSED CLASS OF GROUNDWATER USERS.**

16 In addition to the absence of typical claims and defenses, the United States and the Tribe cannot  
17 establish that Nevada will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the proposed class of domestic  
18 groundwater users, or that Nevada is actually part of the proposed class and possesses the same interests  
19 as the other class members. *Amchem Products, Inc. v. Windsor*, 521 U.S. 591, 625-626 (1997).

20 Parties are generally considered to be adequate representatives of absent class members if there  
21 are no conflicts of interest between the representatives and class members and if the Court is persuaded  
22 that counsel for representatives will vigorously pursue the action. *Burkhalter Travel Agency v. MacFarms*  
23 *International, Inc., Id.* at 153. In the present situation, there may well be conflicts of interest between  
24 Nevada’s interests and those of domestic well owners. Nevada has its own interests to defend in this case  
25 separate and apart from the needs of the proposed class. In considering the involvement and knowledge  
26 of a prospective class representative, the Court must be assured that the class representative will discharge  
27 his fiduciary obligations by fairly and adequately protecting the interests of the class. *Id.* at 154.  
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Attorney General's Office  
100 N. Carson Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701-4717

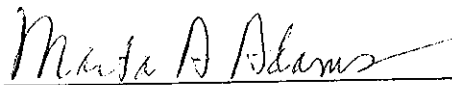
1 Class representative must be part of the class and possess the same interests and suffer the same  
2 injuries as class members. *East Texas Motor Freight System, Inc., v. Rodriguez*, 431 U.S. 395, 403  
3 (1977). Simply stated, a class representative must be part of the class and 'possess the same interest and  
4 suffer the same injury' as the class member. That is not the case here. Nevada, by virtue of the extent of  
5 its water rights as well as its responsibilities for wildlife, does not share the same interests nor will it  
6 suffer the same injuries as the proposed domestic groundwater user class.

7 **III. CONCLUSION**

8 Based on the foregoing, Nevada respectfully submits that the Court should reject the United  
9 States' and the Tribe's motion to designate the state as the appropriate class representative for the  
10 proposed class and domestic groundwater users.

11 Respectfully submitted this 13<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2001.

12 FRANKIE SUE DEL PAPA  
13 Attorney General

14 By:   
15 MARTA A. ADAMS  
16 Senior Deputy Attorney General  
17 Nevada Bar No. 1564  
18 Office of the Attorney General  
19 100 N. Carson Street  
20 Carson City, Nevada 89701-4717  
21 (775) 684-1237

Attorney General's Office  
100 N. Carson Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701-4717

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

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Attorney General's Office  
100 N. Carson Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701-4717

I certify that I am an employee of the Office of the Attorney General, State of Nevada, and that on this 13<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2001, I deposited for mailing, postage prepaid, true and correct copies of the foregoing document addressed as follows:

Gordon H. dePaoli  
Dale E. Ferguson  
Woodburn and Wedge  
6100 Neil Road, Suite 500  
Post Office Box 2311  
Reno, NV 89511

Mary Hackenbracht  
Deputy Attorney General  
State of California  
1515 Clay Street, 20<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Oakland, CA 94612-1413

George Benesch  
P.O. Box 3498  
Reno, NV 89505

James Spoo  
Trevia J. Hearne  
Zeh, Polaha, Spoo, Hearne & Picker  
575 Forest Service  
Reno, NV 89509

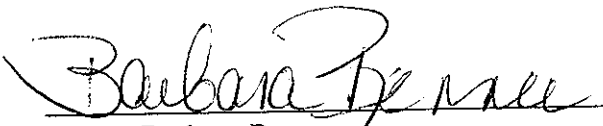
Susan Schneider  
Indian Resources Section  
U.S. Department of Justice  
999 18th Street  
Suite 945, North Tower  
Denver, CO 80202

Linda Bowman  
Office of Linda Bowman  
540 Hammill Lane  
Reno, NV 89511

Michael W. Neville  
California Attorney General's Office  
455 Golden Gate Ave. Suite 11000  
San Francisco, CA 94102-3664

Hank Meshorer  
United States Department of Justice  
Natural Resources Division  
Ben Franklin Station  
P.O. Box 7611  
Washington, D.C. 20044

Scott McElroy  
Alice E. Walker  
Greene, Meyer & McElroy  
1007 Pearl Street, Suite 220  
Boulder, CO 80302

  
Barbara Renner