

1 JOHN W. HOWARD, Cal. State Bar No. 80200  
JW Howard/Attorneys, LTD.  
2 625 Broadway, Suite 1206  
San Diego, California 92101  
3 Telephone: (619) 234-2842  
Telefax: (619) 234-1716  
4 Pro Hac Vice Counsel for Joseph & Beverly Landolt

5 WILLIAM E. SCHAEFFER, Nev. State Bar No. 2789  
P.O. Box 936  
6 Battle Mountain, Nevada 89820  
Telephone: (775) 635-3227  
7 Telefax: (775) 635-3229  
8 Local Counsel for Joseph & Beverly Landolt

9 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
10 DISTRICT OF NEVADA  
11 RENO, NEVADA

12 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

13 Plaintiff,

14 WALKER RIVER PAIUTE TRIBE,

15 Plaintiff, Intervenor

16 v.

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

19 Defendants.

20 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
21 WALKER RIVER PAIUTE TRIBE

22 Counterclaimants,

23 vs.

24 WALKER RIVER IRRIGATION  
DISTRICT, et al.,

25 Counterdefendants.  
26  
27

) Case No: 03:73:cv-127-ECR-RAM  
) In Equity No. C-125-ECR  
) Subfile No. C-125-B  
)  
)  
) **REPLY TO OPPOSITION TO**  
) **MOTION TO CLARIFY JUDGE**  
) **REED'S CASE MANAGEMENT**  
) **ORDER DATED APRIL 18, 2000**

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The Landolts filed the instant motion to clarify this Court’s Case Management Order because the Order has been interpreted in a manner the effect of which is to make the Decree of 1936 unenforceable while the various sub-proceedings are proceeding. It would be unique in Federal Jurisprudence for a court to prevent parties from enforcing a long-standing decree on the basis that some other party subject to that decree has requested that it be modified going forward. That is probably why the various parties opposing this motion have failed to cite one example in which this has been done.

The 1936 Decree comprehensively governs the rights and duties of the various parties subject to it in the allocation of water rights. The Tribe and the government have initiated the instant proceeding for the purpose of establishing rights to water that are not recognized under the 1936 Decree. The Landolts’ originally filed a motion on the basis that the Tribe is taking more water than it is entitled to take under the 1936 Decree (“Decree”). Their position was that no one subject to the Decree has the right to act in violation of it. That motion was denied on the basis that the Case Management Order stayed all litigation bearing on water management pursuant to the 1936 Decree. The instant motion is to clarify that the Case Management Order did not intent to neuter the 1936 Decree but, only, to stay litigation on the issues presented by the Tribe’s counterclaims herein.

In opposing the Landolt’s motion, the Walker River Irrigation District (“WRID”) has invoked the *Winters* doctrine (*Winters v. United States*, 207 U.S. 564 (1908)) suggesting that in deciding whether or not the Tribe is violating the Decree, the court will have to decide all of the ultimate issues presented by the Tribe’s counterclaim. WRID argues that if the Tribe has the

1 rights it claims, they exist and are perfected irrespective of what the Decree says and may be  
2 exercised at will by the Tribe. (Opposition at page 7).

3 If WRID's interpretation is correct, why are we all here? What is the purpose of this  
4 litigation but to establish, and receive a court judgment, that the Tribe has the rights it claims? If  
5 it does not need that judgment, why, then, does it seek it? The fact is that the Tribe needs the  
6 judgment it seeks because without it, its claims are colorable and probably ultimately  
7 unenforceable. What this court is asked to decide is whether or not the Tribe's claims to a  
8 massive amount of additional water have merit. Until the Court makes that decision, though, it  
9 must be presumed that the Tribe's claims are unestablished.

10  
11 Until the Tribe's claims are established, the only governing document is the 1936 Decree  
12 and it should be enforceable. If parties subject to the Decree are acting in a manner that violates  
13 that Decree, other parties to it should have the right to enforce their rights under it. That is all the  
14 Landolts have attempted to do and that is why they seek a clarification of the Order solely for the  
15 purpose of clarifying that the Decree is alive and enforceable.

16  
17 Enforcement of the Decree does not necessitate a decision on the merits of the Tribe's  
18 claims. If, for example, the Tribe were taking water in excess of that allocated to it under the  
19 Decree, this Court could so find and prohibit it from doing so reserving until the instant litigation  
20 is completed the various issues presented by the Tribe's counterclaim herein. The Tribe could  
21 posit the *Winters* doctrine in opposition to any motion to enforce the decree, but this Court would  
22 still be able to reserve that issue until the Tribe's counterclaim is fully litigated at the same time  
23 as it enforces the Decree as it sits now.

24  
25 To use an analogy, if one person held title to a vehicle and another person were to claim  
26 that the vehicle belonged to him and, on that basis, simply took it, the title holder would clearly  
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1 be able to get the vehicle returned and use it until the court made the ultimate decision as to  
2 ownership. Similarly, if a landowner were to secure his land by fence and an adjoining  
3 landowner were to claim that he had a prescriptive easement for ingress across the first  
4 landowner's property, the first landowner would surely have the right to maintain his fence and  
5 exclude the adjoining landowner until a court had decided whether or not the adjoining  
6 landowner did, in fact, own an easement by prescription. In either analogy, the presumed right to  
7 possession and use would be maintained without disrupting or foreclosing the ultimate decision  
8 regarding ownership. And in both, the ultimate decision could be that the claimant did, in fact,  
9 have a prior right that mere title did not affect.  
10

11         So it is here. In this instance, the presumed status of water rights are those in the Decree.  
12 The Tribe believes it has a vested and perfected right to water resources that is unaffected by the  
13 Decree. But we must presume, for present purposes, that the Decree is correct. If the Tribe,  
14 therefore, is misappropriating more water than is authorized under the Decree, it must be  
15 prevented from doing so until this Court can make the ultimate decision on the merits of the  
16 Tribe's claim.  
17

18         Surely, it must not be as easy to thwart the law as WRID suggests. Surely, this Court did  
19 not intend to allow anyone subject to the Decree to act in contravention to it and escape penalty  
20 by filing a counterclaim suggesting he has a prior right that he can exercise while the court  
21 decides whether or not his claim has merit. But that is what WRID is suggesting and it flies in  
22 the face of the orderly resolution of disputes.  
23

24         Simply put, WRID's argument in opposition simply makes no sense. If the *Winters*  
25 doctrine is so powerful that it is unaffected by anything this Court might do, then we can all  
26 agree to dismiss the instant action and go home and the Tribe can arrogate to itself whatever  
27

1 water resources it would like. But if the Tribe's claims must, like everything else in the law, be  
2 established, then, until they are, they must be presumed not to exist. And that means that the  
3 parties' rights and duties under the existing Decree must be enforceable and enforced.

4 Therefore, it is entirely appropriate that this Court clarify the Case Management Order so that it  
5 is clear that all who are subject to the 1936 Decree are expected to abide by its terms and that  
6 those who do not can be forced to do so by means of enforcement.  
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8  
9 Dated: February 20, 2006

*/s/ John W. Howard*

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11 John W. Howard  
12 Attorney for Landolts  
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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on the 21st day of February, 2006, I electronically filed the foregoing REPLY TO OPPOSITION TO MOTION TO CLARIFY JUDGE REED'S CASE MANAGEMENT ORDER DATED April 18, 2000 with the Clerk of the Court using the CM/ECF system, which will send notification of such filing to the following via their e-mail addresses:

Marta Adams  
[maadams@ag.state.nv.us](mailto:maadams@ag.state.nv.us), [payoung@ag.state.nv.us](mailto:payoung@ag.state.nv.us)

Gregory W. Addington  
[greg.addington@usdoj.gov](mailto:greg.addington@usdoj.gov), [judy.farmer@usdoj.gov](mailto:judy.farmer@usdoj.gov), [joanie.silvershield@usdoj.gov](mailto:joanie.silvershield@usdoj.gov)

Linda Bowman  
[office@bowman.reno.nv.us](mailto:office@bowman.reno.nv.us)

Gordon H. DePaoli  
[gdepaoli@woodburnandwedge.com](mailto:gdepaoli@woodburnandwedge.com)

Ross E. de Lipkau  
[Rde-lipkau@parsonsbehle.com](mailto:Rde-lipkau@parsonsbehle.com)

Kirk C. Johnson  
[kirk@nvlawyers.com](mailto:kirk@nvlawyers.com)

Stephen M. MacFarlane  
[Stephen.Macfarlane@usdoj.gov](mailto:Stephen.Macfarlane@usdoj.gov), [deedee.sparks@usdoj.gov](mailto:deedee.sparks@usdoj.gov), [efile-sacramento.enrd@usdoj.gov](mailto:efile-sacramento.enrd@usdoj.gov)

Scott McElroy  
[smcelroy@greenelawyer.com](mailto:smcelroy@greenelawyer.com)

G. David Robertson  
[gdauid@nvlawyers.com](mailto:gdauid@nvlawyers.com), [chris@nvlawyers.com](mailto:chris@nvlawyers.com), [kirk@nvlawyers.com](mailto:kirk@nvlawyers.com)

Susan L. Schneider  
[susan.schneider@usdoj.gov](mailto:susan.schneider@usdoj.gov)

Debbie Shosteck  
[dshosteck@mcdonaldcarano.com](mailto:dshosteck@mcdonaldcarano.com), [ssmithson@mcdonaldcarano.com](mailto:ssmithson@mcdonaldcarano.com)

Stephen R. Wassner  
[swassner@aol.com](mailto:swassner@aol.com), [wassner@sbcglobal.net](mailto:wassner@sbcglobal.net)

David L. Negri  
[david.negri@usdoj.gov](mailto:david.negri@usdoj.gov)

and I further certify that I served a copy of the foregoing to the following non CM/ECF participants by U.S. Mail, postage prepaid, this 21<sup>st</sup> day of February, 2006:

George Benesch, Esq.  
190 West Huffaker Lane, Ste 408  
Reno, NV 89511

Kelly Chase, Esq.  
PO Box 2800  
Minden, NV 89423

Wesley G. Beverlin  
Malissa Hathaway McKeith  
Lewis, Brisbois, Bisgaard & Smith LCP  
221 N. Figueroa St., Ste. 1200  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Cheri Emm-Smith  
Mineral County District Attorney  
PO Box 1210  
Hawthorne, NV 89415

Nathan Goedde  
Staff Counsel  
Calif. Dept. of Fish and Game  
1416 Ninth Street, Ste. 1335  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Hugh Ricci, P.E.  
Division of Water Resources  
State of Nevada  
901 S. Stewart St.  
Carson City, NV 89701

Simeon Herskovits  
Courtney Brown  
Western Environment Law Center  
PO Box 1507  
Taos, NM 87571

Stephen B. Rye  
Chief Deputy District Attorney  
31 S. Main St.  
Yerington, NV 89447

John Kramer  
Department of Water Resources  
1416 Ninth Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Scott H. Schackelton  
Silverado, Inc.  
4160 Long Knife Rd.  
Reno, NV 89509

Timothy A. Lukas  
P.O. Box 3237  
Reno, NV 89505

William E. Schaeffer  
PO Box 936  
Battle Mountain, NV 89820

Erin K.L. Mahaney  
Office of Chief Counsel  
State Water Resources Control Board  
1001 I Street, 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Laura A. Schroeder  
P.O. Box 12527  
Portland, OR 97212-0527

Michael W. Neville  
DOJ, Office of the Atty General  
455 Golden Gate Avenue  
Suite 11000  
San Francisco, CA 94102-3664

James Shaw  
Water Master  
US Board of Water Commissioners  
P.O. Box 853  
Yerington, NV 89447

Jeff Parker  
Deputy Atty General  
Office of the Attorney General  
100 N. Carson St.  
Carson City, NV 89701-4717

Todd Plimpton  
Belanger & Plimpton  
1135 Central Avenue  
P.O. Box 59  
Lovelock, NV 89419

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

William W. Quinn  
Office of the Field Solicitor  
Department of the Interior  
401 W. Washington St., SPC 44  
Phoenix, AZ 85003

Alan Biaggi  
Dir. Of Conservation & Natural Resources  
State of Nevada  
901 S. Stewart St.  
Carson City, NV 89701

Tim Glidden  
U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Office of the  
Secretary, Div. Of Indian Affairs  
1849 C St. N.W.  
Mail Stop 6456  
Washington, DC 20240

Marshall S. Rudolph, Mono County Counsel  
Stacy Simon, Deputy County Counsel  
Mono County  
P.O. Box 2415  
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546-2415

Walker River Irrigation District  
P.O. Box 820  
Yerington, NV 89447

Kenneth Spooner  
General Manager  
Walker River Irrigation District  
P.O. Box 820  
Yerington, NV 89447

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

Garry Stone  
United States District Court Water Master  
290 S. Arlington Ave, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Reno, NV 89501

*/s/ Elisa Marino*

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Elisa Marino