

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEVADA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

WALKER RIVER PAIUTE TRIBE

Plaintiff-Intervenor,

v.

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

Defendants.

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

O R D E R

The Walker River Irrigation District (WRID)'s motion to vacate schedule etc. (Doc. #24) is now ripe for decision. Mineral County opposed (Doc. #31) and a reply has been filed (Doc. #39). New issues were raised by Mineral County in the opposition (Doc. #24). WRID responded to those issues in its reply (Doc. #29) and Mineral County replied (Doc. #42).

1 DISCUSSION

2 A. SUMMARY

3 Mineral County seeks to intervene in this action. The
4 Court previously ordered Mineral County to serve its "motion to
5 intervene" and related documents, on all claimants to the waters of
6 the Walker River and its tributaries. Order (Doc. #19) at p. 2,
7 ln. 24 to p. 3, ln. 11. The Court made clear that service was to
8 be made pursuant to the requirements for service of process under
9 Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4. Id. at p. 2, ln. 24. The Court
10 further indicated that service pursuant to Rule 4 included the
11 possibility that service could be satisfied by waiver of service as
12 provided in Rule 4(d). Id. at p. 3, ln. 12-19.

13 The Court was careful to note however, that if service
14 was not waived pursuant to Rule 4(d) that personal service would be
15 required. Id. at p. 3, ln. 20-24; see also "Notice of Motion to
16 Intervene . . ." (attached to Doc. #19) at p. 2, ln. 14-26 and the
17 attached statement of "Duty to Avoid Unnecessary Costs of Service"
18 which indicate that personal service would follow any failure to
19 waive service.

20 There is no pending motion to reconsider, vacate or amend
21 the Court's order (Doc. #19) requiring service pursuant to Rule 4.

1 The documents which the Court ordered to be served by
2 Mineral County were:

3 (a) its revised motion to intervene; (b)
4 its revised points and authorities in support
5 thereof; (c) a revised proposed complaint-
6 in-intervention which clarifies the basis for
7 Mineral County's claims to water from the
8 Walker River for Walker Lake and which
9 identifies the persons or entities against
10 whom such claims are proposed to be asserted;
11 and (d) any motion for preliminary injunction,
12 supporting points and authorities, and any
13 other supporting documents which Mineral
14 County may choose to file.

15 Order (Doc. #19) at p. 2, ln. 12-21.

16 The Court further created a schedule pursuant to which
17 service was to be accomplished and the "motion to intervene" would
18 be briefed.

19 WRID now moves the Court (Doc. #24) to vacate and amend
20 the established schedule because Mineral County has allegedly
21 failed to serve the required intervention documents in a timely
22 manner. WRID argues that until a person is served with the "motion
23 to intervene", they will not be bound and that it is pointless to
24 require WRID and the other parties who have been served with
25 Mineral County's "motion to intervene" to respond to it until all
26 persons have been served. The State of Nevada joins in WRID's
27 motion to vacate the scheduling order. (Doc. #s 25 & 29). The
28 United States indicates it does not oppose the motion to vacate the
29 scheduling order. (Doc. #26). The Walker River Paiute Tribe
30 (Tribe) has filed a response which does not take any firm position
31 with respect to the motion to vacate other than to indicate that
32 vacating the scheduling order is the only practical avenue to take

1 and that after service has been accomplished, a lengthy briefing
2 period is not necessary. (Doc. #27).

3 Mineral County opposes the motion to vacate on several
4 bases and further moves for sanctions and other relief against WRID
5 and other individuals. (Doc. #s 31 & 42).

6 Mineral County seeks to be relieved of any further
7 obligation to serve its motion to intervene. Mineral County argues
8 that mailing the request for waiver of service gave adequate notice
9 of its claims and desire to intervene. Furthermore, Mineral County
10 argues that if it is required to personally serve the various
11 intervention documents that it should be reimbursed for costs of
12 service from WRID and certain other individuals who are allegedly
13 responsible for the refusal of the majority of the refusals to
14 waive service.

15
16 **B. HAS MINERAL COUNTY SERVED THE INTERVENTION DOCUMENTS**

17 Two different issues are raised by this question. First,
18 we must determine whether the requests for waiver of service are
19 adequate service in themselves. Second, we must determine whether
20 the failure to serve certain attachments to the moving papers (i.e.
21 supporting affidavits etc.) renders service ineffective.

22 Before analyzing these issues, the Court first addresses
23 the issue regarding those persons who did execute and return a
24 waiver of service. Those persons have been validly served. The
25 request for waiver of service included a waiver of any defect in
26 service. This waiver makes it immaterial, as to these persons,

1 whether certain affidavits were not attached. Further, if those
2 persons believe the affidavits were or are material, they are now
3 parties to this litigation and can themselves raise this issue.
4

5 **1. Service by Mailing Request for Waiver of Service**

6 The Court first notes that service pursuant to Rule 4 is
7 normally not required for service of intervention documents. See
8 Rule 24. The Court nevertheless determined that service pursuant
9 to Rule 4 was preferable for a host of reasons which were discussed
10 at the status conference of January 3, 1995. Thus, it is this
11 Court's order and not the technical requirements of service of
12 process that apply. However, this Court's order (Doc. #19) made
13 clear that service of the intervention documents was to be
14 accomplished as though it were service of original process and
15 summons pursuant to Rule 4. The Court's order is still in effect
16 and has not been vacated, modified or appealed from.

17 It is obvious that service pursuant to Rule 4 has not
18 been accomplished. Therefore, service of the various intervention
19 documents as the Court ordered has not been accomplished. Mineral
20 County has attempted only to obtain waivers of service pursuant to
21 Rule 4(d). Some persons who received the request for waiver of
22 service have waived service. As to those persons, service pursuant
23 to Rule 4 and this Court's order will be accomplished by filing the
24 waivers with the Court.
25
26

1 Apparently, the large majority of persons who received
2 the request have refused to waive service. Those persons who have
3 not waived service of the intervention documents must be personally
4 served as the Court indicated in its order, (Doc. #19).

5 Mineral County has not explicitly requested the Court to
6 reconsider its decision and order that service of the motion to
7 intervene be accomplished pursuant to Rule 4 rather than Rule 5.
8 Nor has Mineral County presented any compelling reason why this
9 Court's earlier decision and order were wrong or ought to be
10 vacated or modified.

11 All that Mineral County has done is to argue that a
12 mailed request for waiver of service gives adequate notice and that
13 formal compliance with Rule 4 is not necessary. However, the Court
14 ordered service to be accomplished pursuant to Rule 4 and not
15 merely to give "adequate notice." None of Mineral County's
16 arguments address the Court's determination that service of the
17 intervention documents should be made pursuant to Rule 4.

18 Absent a motion to reconsider the Court's previous order¹
19 and a sufficient showing in support of such motion indicating that
20 service of the intervention documents need not be made pursuant to
21 Rule 4, the Court will continue to insist on service pursuant to
22 Rule 4.

23
24 ¹. Although not necessarily stipulated to, the Court notes
25 that its decision to require service of the intervention documents
26 pursuant to Rule 4 was the result of the status conference of
January 3, 1995 and was largely a collaborative effort. Mineral
County would have to make a compelling showing indicating that
service pursuant to Rule 4 is not necessary and excusing its
failure to object earlier.

1 **2. Failure to Include Affidavits**

2 This issue is largely duplicative of the first. Those
3 persons who waived service also waived any technical defect in
4 service. Furthermore, by waiving service, those persons are
5 adequately positioned to represent themselves and WRID will not be
6 heard to object on their behalf.

7 Those persons who refused to waive service of the
8 intervention documents have not been served at all. Therefore
9 there is no need to decide whether failure to include certain
10 affidavits in the request for waiver of service somehow makes
11 otherwise valid service ineffective.

12 Whether certain affidavits and other supporting documents
13 were included in the requests for waiver of service may be
14 important in determining whether persons who refused to waive
15 service had "good cause" for refusing to do so. If this
16 constitutes "good cause" for refusal to waive service, then Mineral
17 County will not be able to recover its costs of service from those
18 persons. See Rule 4(d)(2). However, if the failure to include
19 these affidavits and supporting documents in the request for waiver
20 of service does not constitute "good cause" and no other "good
21 cause" is shown, Mineral County will be entitled to recover its
22 costs of service from those persons who refused to waive service.
23 Id.

1 It is premature to decide whether failure to include the
2 affidavits constitutes "good cause." Until Mineral County incurs
3 costs in personally serving any person who refused to waive service
4 and until such person claims "good cause" for refusing to waive
5 service, the Court sees no need to decide this issue. Certainly
6 there is no reason to allow WRID to litigate, this issue on behalf
7 of persons who have not yet been served with the intervention
8 documents.

9 However, with respect to personal service, it will be
10 helpful to declare at this time whether personal service will be
11 effective if the affidavits and supporting documents are not served
12 with the complaint in intervention (Doc. #20), points and
13 authorities in support thereof (Doc. #21) and motion for
14 preliminary injunction (Doc. #22). The Court has reviewed these
15 documents and they are intelligible on their face without reference
16 to the supporting documents. It appears to the Court that the
17 moving documents are adequate to inform the defendant/respondents
18 of Mineral County's claims and to enable them to respond to those
19 claims. In light of the substantial burden Mineral County faces in
20 personally serving the other parties it is fair and reasonable to
21 lighten that burden where possible and without prejudice to the
22 rights of others.

23 On the other hand, since Mineral County is obligated to
24 personally serve the moving documents, the only additional expense
25 represented by serving the supporting documents is the cost of
26 replicating the supporting documents. Furthermore, Mineral County

1 might be able to recover these costs from the persons it personally
2 serves.

3 For the reasons stated above the Court concludes that the
4 temporary additional cost of serving the supporting documents along
5 with the moving documents is not so burdensome as to entitle
6 Mineral County to relief. Personal service of the moving documents
7 (Doc. #s 20, 21 & 22), the supporting documents and the Notice in
8 Lieu of Summons properly issued by the Clerk of the Court is
9 required in order to comply with the Court's prior order (Doc.
10 #19).

11
12 **C. MOTION TO VACATE AND AMEND SCHEDULE FOR BRIEFING MOTION TO**
13 **INTERVENE**

14 The Court agrees with WRID and the Tribe that the current
15 briefing schedule must be modified so that all persons who have an
16 interest in Mineral County's motion to intervene and motion for
17 preliminary injunction will have an opportunity to respond to those
18 motions prior to the Court's decision. Therefore, the current
19 briefing schedule is vacated.

20 On or before September 29, 1995 Mineral County shall
21 serve its Intervention Documents on all claimants to the waters of
22 the Walker River and its ,tributaries as provided in the Court's
23 prior order (Doc. #19) at p. 2, ln. 24 to p. 3, ln. 11 and ln. 20-
24 24. At such time as service is complete, Mineral County shall file
25 a statement to that effect.
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1 Responses to Mineral County's motion to intervene and/or
2 its points and authorities in support of intervention (Doc. #21)
3 shall be served no later than October 27, 1995. Mineral County's
4 reply in support of motion to intervene shall be served no later
5 than November 17, 1995.

6 No answer or other response to the complaint-in-
7 intervention will be required until a decision by the Court on the
8 motion to intervene and then only upon a schedule to be established
9 by further order of the Court.

10 No response to the motion for preliminary injunction
11 filed and served by Mineral County will be required until a
12 decision by the Court on the motion to intervene and then only upon
13 a schedule to be established by further order of the Court.

14
15 **D. MOTION FOR SANCTIONS**

16 Mineral County seeks sanctions to be imposed against WRID
17 and others for interfering with Mineral County's request for waiver
18 of sanctions. WRID, certain officers and directors of WRID, Mr.
19 Gordon DePaoli, the law firm of Woodburn and Wedge and Mr. Stewart
20 Somach are allegedly responsible for mailing certain notices to the
21 persons from whom Mineral County was requesting waiver of service.
22 These notices informed or requested these persons not to waive
23 service.

24 Mineral County is in essence complaining that but for
25 these notices it would have received more waivers of service and
26 its costs would be substantially lower. As a result of these

1 notices Mineral County alleges its costs of service will be
2 increased and some amount of delay will result. On this basis
3 Mineral County alleges the above noted persons and entities
4 unfairly interfered with its attempt to obtain waivers of service
5 for improper purposes (i.e. for delay), and that they violated
6 ethical rules by giving unsolicited legal advice to unrepresented
7 persons.

8 Regardless of any impropriety involved in WRID et al's
9 conduct, each person had the right to refuse to waive service of
10 process. Furthermore, there is no indication how many persons were
11 persuaded not to waive service because of the notice and how many
12 would have refused to waive service regardless of the notice.

13 Assuming WRID et al, acted improperly they did not cause
14 others to act improperly. Refusing to waive service is a legal
15 right (exercisable at peril of being responsible for ultimate costs
16 of service).

17 Moreover granting Mineral County sanctions at this point
18 in time would be counterproductive and is unwarranted. Mineral
19 County's excess costs cannot be determined until service is
20 completed and costs of service have been paid by either Mineral
21 County or the persons who refused to waive service. Only the costs
22 of service not recoverable from those who refused to waive service
23 on the basis of the notice are "excess costs" attributable to the
24 notice.

1 Until it is determined whether failure to include the
2 supporting documents constituted "good cause" for refusing to waive
3 service the Court cannot determine whether refusal to waive service
4 on the advice of WRID et al was improper. Granting sanctions now
5 will also remove any incentive Mineral County might have to
6 minimize costs of service.

7 The Court notes that if there was no good cause for
8 refusing to waive service, but a person refused to waive service on
9 the advice or request included in WRID's notice, that person will
10 be liable to pay costs of service. Furthermore, that person might
11 be entitled to argue that WRID et al should indemnify her for costs
12 of service. This is obviously an issue that is not ready for
13 determination at this time. It does however indicate that the
14 proper party to seek sanctions is not Mineral County, because it
15 can recover costs for improper refusal to waive service. Rather
16 the proper parties to seek sanctions are those persons who refused
17 to waive service on advice of WRID et al, IF the refusal is
18 determined to have been without good cause.

19 Mineral County's motion for sanctions is denied without
20 prejudice to its ability to recover costs of service pursuant to
21 Rule 4(d)(5) or a later motion for sanctions made after service has
22 been completed and Mineral County's costs of service are
23 established.

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2 IT IS, THEREFORE, HEREBY ORDERED that Walker River
3 Irrigation District's motion to vacate and amend the schedule for
4 briefing Mineral County's motion to intervene (Doc. #24) is
5 GRANTED. The previously established briefing schedule is vacated
6 and a new briefing schedule, as set forth in this order is adopted.
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8 IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Mineral County's motion to be
9 relieved of further service (Doc. #31) and motion for sanctions
10 (Doc. #31) are DENIED.
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12 DATED: Aug 16, 1995.
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14 Edward C. Reed.
15 UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE
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