

SUPERIOR COURT OF ARIZONA
MARICOPA COUNTY

4/25/2024

CLERK OF THE COURT

SPECIAL WATER MASTER
SHERRI ZENDRI

S. Ortega
Deputy

Contested Case No. W1-11-3109
In Re: *Walterio G. and Teresita Romero*

FILED: 5/1/2024

In Re: The General Adjudication
of All Rights to Use Water in the
Gila River System and Source
W-1, W-2, W-3 and W-4 (Consolidated)

Initial Conference

MINUTE ENTRY

Central Court Building – Courtroom 301

10:00 a.m. This is the time set for an Initial Conference before Special Water Master Sherri Zendri to determine if land owners are interested in pursuing potential water rights.

A record of the proceedings is made digitally in lieu of a court reporter.

The following parties/counsel appear virtually and/or telephonically:

- Alexa Penalosa for the United States Department of Justice
- Rhett Billingsley for ASARCO
- John D. Burnside for BHP Copper
- Sunshine Manuel for the Gila River Indian Community
- Laurel A. Herrmann for the San Carlos Apache Tribe
- Alexander Ritchie, Attorney General for the San Carlos Apache Tribe
- Jana Sutton, observing for San Carlos Apache Tribe
- Bernardo Velasco, observing for San Carlos Apache Tribe
- Kent Millward for Tonto Apache Tribe

- Alexandra Corcoran-Shannon, Paralegal for Susan Montgomery, observing for Pascua Yaqui Tribe and Yavapai-Apache Nation
- Mark A. McGinnis for Salt River Project (SRP)
- Karen Nielsen for Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR)

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Discussion is held regarding resetting the initial conference to allow for the claimants/landowners or their representatives to make an appearance.

10:05 a.m. Candace D. French announces her appearance on behalf of the Navajo Nation.

10:05 a.m. Maria Romero Sims, Personal Representative of Walterio and Teresita Romero announces her appearance and states a claim for the water rights on behalf of the Romeros.

The Court addresses the well, which appears to be in the subflow zone for the San Pedro River Watershed. The Court explains the various types of documents and filings are required to pursue potential water rights from the San Pedro River Watershed.

The Court explains the surface water adjudication process to Ms. Sims. The Court will send more information as an attachment to this minute entry including the next hearing date to resolve objections.

10:11 a.m. Danika Marzillier announces her appearance on behalf of the Arizona Chapter of the Nature Conservancy. The Court notes Ms. Marzillier has been present since the start of the meeting.

10:12 a.m. Matter concludes.

LATER:

IT IS ORDERED scheduling a status conference for **Thursday, May 30, 2024, at 10:00 am**. At the status conference Ms. Maria Romero Sims should be prepared to inform the Court what progress has been made to resolve the objections to the water rights claims of Walterio G. and Teresita Romero including obtaining an appropriate well registration number, updated statement of claimant, basis of right documentation, and detailed quantity of use documentation.

The status conference will be held using the Court Connect program. Instructions for Court Connect are attached at the end of this Minute Entry. If you receive this Minute Entry by email, click on the red box "Join Court Connect Hearing" on the attached instructions to make an appearance. If you do not receive this Order by email, log into the Court Connect program on the internet by typing <https://tinyurl.com/specialwatermaster>. If you do not have access to the internet, you may attend telephonically using the telephone number and access code included in the instructions for Court Connect.

The following information is provided to assist Ms. Romero.

To pursue water rights, a property owner must file a Statement of Claimant and present to the Court evidence of the existence of a water right on their property. This evidence may include the WFR. If the property owner proves to the Court the existence of a water right on their property, the Court will recognize enforceable water rights in a “Final Decree.” ARS § 45-257(B).

Objections for this contested case can be found on the General Stream Adjudication website under “Active Cases” at:

<http://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/SuperiorCourt/GeneralStreamAdjudication/docs/W1-11-3109-Combined-Objs-for-web.pdf>

Documents prepared by the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) as part of the November 1991 Hydrographic Survey Report (“HSR”) and the April 2014 Revised Subflow Delineation for the San Pedro River can be found on the ADWR website at:

<https://www.azwater.gov/adjudications>

Parties wishing to move forward with historical water rights claims on their property must ensure Statement of Claimants are current and that documentation of the reason the claim to the water is legally valid, also known as the “basis of right,” is presented to the Court. Additionally, claimants must be able to document the use of the water had not been suspended for any period of five (5) successive years since the use began.

1) Statement of Claimants (SOCs)

A SOC is a landowner’s or lessee’s (“claimant’s”) written statement to the Court that provides details about their water right claim. This claim to use public water is filed with the Arizona Department of Water Resources (“ADWR”). Although a water right generally remains attached to the land, the SOC must reflect the current claimant’s name and contact information as well as any changes to the original claim. The SOC as filed does not list current property owners or lessees. To update an SOC, parties may make an SOC amendment, obtain a SOC assignment from the original claimant, or file a new SOC for their use. See Ariz. Rev. Stat. §§ 45-254. Forms may be found on ADWR’s website at:

<https://www.azwater.gov/adjudications/statement-claimant-new-use-summons-forms>

2) Basis of Right

To obtain a water right, a claimant must also provide a “basis of right.” A basis of right is a document filed with ADWR either registering a water right, applying for a permit to appropriate water, or applying for a stockpond claim of right. See Arizona Revised Statutes (“Ariz. Rev. Stat.”) §§ 45-182(A), 45-152(A), 45-273.

If a claimant proves that the water right claimed was initiated prior to June 12, 1919, they do not need to file an “application for a permit to appropriate,” but must present a statement of claim registering their claimed water right and filed prior to, (90 days before the publication of the San Pedro HSR). See Ariz. Rev. Stat. §§ 45-171, 45-182(A). *Note that a statement of claim is a different document than a statement of claimant.*

ADWR can help the current property owners determine if former Claimants properly registered the potential water rights claimed on the SOCs for this contested case. If a claimant either cannot prove that the water right claimed was initiated prior to June 12, 1919, or cannot present a statement of *claim* filed prior to August 22, 1991, the claimant must file either an “application for a permit to appropriate public water” or an “application for a stockpond claim of right.” Ariz. Rev. Stat. §§ 45-152(A), 45-272(C).

If the claimed water right is for a pond constructed before 1977, less than 15 acre-feet, and used solely for watering livestock or wildlife (but not primarily for fishing or culturing of fish), the claimant should file an “application for a stockpond claim of right.” Ariz. Rev. Stat. §§ 45-271, 45-272. If the claimed water right is for any other use, the claimant must file an “application for a permit to appropriate public water.” Blank forms for either application may be found on the ADWR website at:

<https://www.azwater.gov/surface-water/surface-water-forms-and-documents>.

Because of the time and cost involved in pursuing an “application for a permit to appropriate public water” or an “application for a stockpond claim of right,” claimants should first gather as much evidence as possible to determine which, if any, of their water rights claims are for water uses initiated prior to June 12, 1919, and described in a timely filed statement of claim.

Federal land entry case files (e.g. homestead proofs and affidavits) may be useful for proving historical farming and grazing activity on your land. Resources for finding land entry filings are listed below:

- Federal land patents may be found here:
<https://gloreCORDS.blm.gov/search/default.aspx>
- Pre-1908 homestead proofs may be accessed from a physical FamilySearch location. See <https://locations.familysearch.org/en/search> for more information.
- Any other land entry case files can be ordered using the following form:
<https://www.archives.gov/forms/pdf/natf-84.pdf>.

While it is not necessary, Claimants are free to seek their own legal counsel at any time should they decide to do so. In addition, The Arizona Adjudications Project is taking applications to provide free, limited legal representation in the adjudication. The team can help claimants who are not already represented by an attorney. You can apply for assistance here:

<https://law.arizona.edu/academics/clinical-programs/natural-resource-use-management-clinic/arizona-adjudications-clinic>.

To contact the University of Arizona Adjudications Project call (520) 621 6722 or via email at:
law-azadjudicationsproject@arizona.edu.

To contact ADWR regarding application forms and processing procedures please call 1-866-246-1414, email smitchell@azwater.gov, or visit <https://www.azwater.gov/adjudications>.

To contact the Office of the Special Water Master please call (602) 372-4115.



Court Connect Hearing Notice for In re Walterio G. and Teresita Romero

This hearing will be conducted through the new Court Connect program offered by the Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County. This new and innovative program allows Court participants to appear online, rather than in a physical courtroom. Hearings are preferably conducted by videoconference but can also be conducted by phone. Lawyers (and self-representing litigants) are responsible for distributing this notice to anyone who will be appearing on their behalf.

All participants must use the JOIN COURT CONNECT HEARING button or the dial in information below to participate.

Participants: Please follow the steps below to participate in the remote proceeding.

1. Click the JOIN COURT CONNECT HEARING button below.
2. Enter your full name and role in name field.
3. Wait for the facilitator to admit you to the proceeding.

Remember to keep this email handy so you can use it to participate in the following proceeding.

Case Name: In re Walterio G. and Teresita Romero, Contested Case No. W1-11-3109

Start Date/Time: May 30, 2024, at 10:00 am

JOIN COURT CONNECT HEARING

Dial-in Information: +1 917-781-4590

Private Dial-in Information: for privacy purposes, you can block your phone number by dialing *67 +1 917-781-4590

Dial-in Access Code: 688 970 203#

Tiny URL: <https://tinyurl.com/specialwatermaster>

To ensure an optimal experience, please review the brief Court Connect training prior to the hearing: [Here](#)