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6 IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF ARIZONA
7 IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF MARICOPA
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9 IN RE THE GENERAL ADJUDICATION
10 OF ALL RIGHTS TO USE WATER IN
11 THE GILA RIVER SYSTEM AND
12 SOURCE

W1-00-001234 (Consolidated)

Contested Case Nos. **W1-11-001653**
W1-11-003331
W1-11-003427

13 **ORDER SETTING DEADLINES**

14 **CONTESTED CASE NAMES:** *In re Forest Service-Coronado* (W1-11-001653); *In*
15 *re Forest Service-Deer Creek I* (W1-11-003331); and *In re Forest Service-Deer Creek*
16 *II* (W1-11-003427).

17 **REPORT INVOLVED:** San Pedro River Watershed Hydrographic Survey Report
18 (“HSR”)

19 **DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY:** The United States Forest Service shall confer with
20 Arizona Department of Water Resources no later than **December 21, 2026**.

NUMBER OF PAGES: 6

21 The United States Forest Service (“USFS”) filed draft abstracts for these
22 contested cases on the following dates:

23 August 28, 2026: W1-11-001653 - *In re Forest Service-Coronado*

24 September 4, 2026: W1-11-003331 - *In re Forest Service-Deer Creek I*
W1-11-003427 - *In re Forest Service-Deer Creek II*

25 Timely responses were filed by the Arizona Department of Water Resources
26 (“ADWR”) and the San Carlos Apache Tribe (“Tribe”).

27 In contested case W1-11-1653, ADWR addresses the United States’ preference
28 for a standardized nomenclature for all water rights owned by the United States, where

1 statements of claimant and bases of right for this contested case do not align with that
2 nomenclature.¹ In contested cases W1-11-003331 and W1-11-003427, the United States
3 has presented statements of claimant and bases of right ostensibly filed by prior Forest
4 Service lessees in support of its own claims. ADWR's comments for all three of these
5 contested cases request direction. The agency presents some possible options:

- 6 1. An order for ADWR to adopt the US's preferred nomenclature regardless of
7 the owner name listed on other filings;²
- 8 2. An order for the US to file assignments [or amendments];³ or
- 9 3. An order at the time an abstract is approved for inclusion into the Catalog of
10 Proposed Water Rights ("Catalog") for ADWR to make the appropriate
11 changes in the ADWR database.⁴

12 These contested cases pertain to land indisputably owned by the US. In most of
13 these instances the underlying statement of claimant ("SOC") and/or basis of legal right
14 was filed by a USFS lessee. In other instances, it is a matter of how the abstracts should
15 refer to the US. Certainly, the most thorough method for resolving these issues would
16 require the USFS to assign or amend all appropriate documents. However, both ADWR
17 and the Court recognize the outsized administrative effort involved in that task; for just
18 these three contested cases, the United States would have to file nearly 50 documents.
19 Moreover, this issue is not limited to these three contested cases.

20 Nonetheless, to bypass formal assignment or amendment, the United States must
21 confirm that entities named on historical ADWR filings are no longer associated with
22 the property. A blanket order from the Special Master for all cases, whether now or at

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24 ¹ The United States's preferred nomenclature is as follows: United States of America,
25 [Department Name], [Agency Name]. *See ADWR's Comments on Draft Abstracts*, W1-
11-001653, September 10, 2026, at 2.

26 ² *ADWR's Comments on Draft Abstracts* at 2, contested case no. W1-11-001653,
(September 10, 2026).

27 ³ *ADWR's Comments on Draft Abstracts* at 2, contested case nos. W1-11-003331 and
28 W1-11-003427, (September 18, 2026).

⁴ *Id.* at 3.

the time a potential water right is admitted to the Catalog, is neither fully explanatory, nor fully indisputable.

IT IS ORDRED that the following actions be taken for the identified contested cases:

Contested Case No. W1-11-001653

Potential Water Right #	Special Master's Order
112-17-061-SW001 112-17-061-SW002 112-17-061-SW003 112-17-061-SW004	1. ADWR shall use the ownership nomenclature requested by the US. 2. USFS shall confer with ADWR no later than December 21, 2026 , regarding recording of the basis of right and priority date. 3. ADWR shall file revised abstracts no later than January 25, 2027 , that include the suggested edits by ADWR and the Tribe.
112-17-061-SW005	1. USFS shall file an SOC no later than October 23, 2026 . 2. USFS shall confer with ADWR no later than December 21, 2026 , regarding recording of the basis of right and priority date. 3. ADWR shall file revised abstracts no later than January 25, 2027 , that include the suggested edits by ADWR and the Tribe.

Contested Case No. W1-11-003331

Potential Water Right #	Special Master's Order
115-05-007-SW001 - SW016	1. USFS shall file confirmation with ADWR no later than October 23, 2026 , that Deer Creek Ranch, Inc. no longer has any interest in the property. 2. USFS shall confer with ADWR no later than December 21, 2026 , regarding recording of the basis of right and priority date. 3. ADWR shall file revised abstracts no later than February 22, 2027 , that include the ownership nomenclature requested by the US and the suggested edits by ADWR and the Tribe.

Contested Case No. W1-11-003427

Potential Water Right #	Special Master's Order
115-09-005-SW001 – SW009	1. USFS shall file confirmation with ADWR no later than October 23, 2026, that Deer Creek Ranch, Inc. no longer has any interest in the property. 2. USFS shall confer with ADWR no later than December 21, 2026, regarding recording of the basis of right and priority date. 3. ADWR shall file revised abstracts no later than February 22, 2027, that includes the ownership nomenclature requested by the US and the suggested edits by ADWR and the Tribe.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that where ADWR continues to lack the appropriate information for a revised abstracts in these contested cases, the agency shall provide notice to the Special Master of the missing information in lieu of an abstract.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that all future filings on these contested cases shall be filed ONLY in the contested case associated with the filing.

Signed this 24th day of September 2026.



Sherri L. Zendri
Special Water Master

The original of the foregoing was delivered to the Clerk of the Maricopa County Superior Court on September 24, 2026, for filing and distributing a copy to all persons listed on the Court approved mailing list for this contested case.



Emily Natale

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