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Attorneys for the Modesto Irrigation District

# STATE OF CALIFORNIA STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

In the Matter of Draft Cease and Desist Order

No. 2009-00XX-DWR Enforcement Action 73)

Against Wood Irrigation Company

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#### I. Introduction

Pursuant to a Draft Cease and Desist Order ("CDO") issued by the California State Water Resources Control Board ("SWRCB") against Woods Irrigation Company ("Woods IC") on December 28, 2009, the SWRCB requested that Woods IC provide proof of its legal right to divert water from the Middle River in San Joaquin County for use on lands within and upon Roberts Island. Specifically, Woods IC was instructed to delineate the area served and the amount of water delivered under any pre-1914 appropriative water right that Woods IC claims to have, and also to provide a list of riparian parcels that it serves on behalf of the property owners through its diversion works. Woods IC has requested a hearing before the SWRCB during which Woods IC may present evidence of any riparian or pre-1914 appropriative water rights it has. However, any evidence supporting Woods IC's assertion that it possesses riparian or pre-1914 appropriative water rights is barred by the doctrine of

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res judicata and/or collateral estoppel and judicial estoppel because the determination of whether Woods IC owns riparian or pre-1914 appropriative water rights was raised and adjudicated by the California Supreme Court in Woods Irr. Co. v. Department of Employment (1958) 50 Cal.2d 174. Pursuant to the Government Code section 11513, the Modesto Irrigation District ("MID") objects to any and all evidence that Woods IC will present in an attempt to prove riparian and/or pre-1914 water rights. Thus, because Woods IC's lack of riparian and/or pre-1914 appropriative water rights has been conclusively established, any contradictory evidence that Woods IC will present now in an attempt to prove such rights is not the sort of evidence on which responsible persons are accustomed to rely when conducting serious affairs, and therefore should be excluded. Therefore, MID requests the SWRCB exclude all evidence presented by Woods IC to prove it has any water rights.

#### H. STATEMENT OF FACTS

On December 28, 2009, the SWRCB issued a Draft CDO against the Woods IC requesting it cease and desist its unauthorized diversion, collection and use of water in violation of section 1052 of the Water Code regarding its use of water from Middle River in San Joaquin County on Roberts Island. (Exhibit PT-7.)

On January 11, 2010, Dennis Donald Geiger, the attorney for Woods IC, requested a hearing before the SWRCB regarding the allegations presented in the Draft CDO against Woods IC.

On February 9, 2010, the MID requested to intervene as a party in Woods IC's proceeding.

On April 7, 2010, the SWRCB issued a Notice of Public Hearing to inform the public of a hearing scheduled for June 7, 2010 to determine whether to adopt the CDO against the Woods IC.

In the Reporter's Transcript on Appeal of the original Sacramento County Superior Court case, *Woods Irrigation Company v. Department of Employment*, Gilbert L. Jones, the attorney for Woods IC, testified that Woods IC did not have its own water right. (Exhibit MSS-IE pp. 49 and 140.)

In <u>Woods Irr. Co. v. Department of Employment</u> (1958) 50 Cal.2d 174, 323 P.2d 758, the California Supreme Court found that Woods IC does not own any riparian or pre-1914 appropriative water rights. (Exhibit PT-10.)

#### **III.ARGUMENT**

#### A. Standard of Review

Under California Government Code section 11513, formal administrative hearings "need not be conducted according to technical rules relating to evidence and witnesses[.]" (Cal. Govt. Code § 11513.) Thus, relevant evidence will be admitted so long as it "is the sort of evidence on which responsible persons are accustomed to rely in the conduct of serious affairs," even if it would be inadmissible when objected to in civil actions. (Id.) Although administrative adjudications follow a relaxed standard of admissibility, the evidence still "must be relevant and reliable," and whether the hearing board deems evidence as relevant and reliable should be considered in determining its admissibility. (Aengst v. Board of Medical Quality Assurance (1980) 110 Cal App 3d 275, 283.)

Pursuant to the California Evidence Code section 350, no evidence is admissible unless it is relevant. (Cal. Evid. Code § 350.) Evidence is considered relevant if it tends to "logically, naturally and by reasonable inference" establish material facts. (Cal. Evid. Code § 210; People v. Garceau (1993) 6 Cal.4<sup>th</sup> 140, 177, overruled on other grounds in People v. Yeoman (2003) 31 Cal.4<sup>th</sup> 93, 117-118.) A motion *in limine* may be made to request the court exclude evidence before the evidence is offered at trial, on grounds that would be inadmissible and prejudicial. (People v. Morris (1991) 53 Cal.3d 152, 188, overruled on other grounds in People v. Stansbury (1995) 9 Cal.4th 824, 889.) Motions *in limine* also provide

for a more meticulous consideration of evidentiary issues and improved efficiency because "potentially critical issues" can be resolved "at the outset" rather than during trial. (Id.) If a motion *in limine* is granted, all challenged evidence is excluded and counsel, the parties, and witnesses may not refer to the excluded material during trial. (Id.)

## B. Woods IC Is Barred By The Doctrine of *Res Judicata* And/Or Collateral Estoppel From Asserting Ownership Of Any Water Rights.

The SWRCB should not permit Woods IC to submit evidence that it has riparian or pre-1914 appropriative water rights with which to divert water from Middle River in San Joaquin County for use on lands within and upon Roberts Island because Woods IC is barred by the doctrine of *res judicata* and/or collateral estoppel from asserting ownership of any water rights. *Res judicata*, or claim preclusion, prevents the re-litigation of a claim previously tried and decided. (Mycogen Corp. v. Monsanto Co. (2002) 28 Cal.4<sup>th</sup> 888, 896-897.)

Collateral estoppel, or issue preclusion, prevents the re-litigation of issues actually adjudicated between the parties in a previous litigation. (Producers Dairy Delivery Co. v. Sentry Ins. Co. (1986) 41 Cal.3d 903, 910.) The prerequisite elements for applying either doctrine are the same: (1) a claim or issue raised in the present action is identical to a claim or issue litigated in a prior action, (2) the prior action resulted in a final judgment on the merits, and (3) the party against whom the doctrine is to be applied was a party, or is in privity with a party, to the prior action. (People v. Barragan (2004) 32 Cal.4<sup>th</sup> 236, 252-253.)

All three elements are met here.

To be considered an issue that has been litigated in a prior action, an issue must have been (1) properly raised by the pleadings or otherwise, (2) submitted to the court for determination, and (3) actually determined by the court. (People v. Sims (1982) 32 Cal.3d 468, 484.) To determine if these criteria have been met, courts must carefully evaluate the entire record of the prior action. (Murphy v. Murphy (2008) 164 Cal.App.4<sup>th</sup> 376, 400-401.)

Woods IC's assertion that it possesses riparian and/or pre-1914 appropriative water rights is barred by the doctrine of *res judicata* and/or collateral estoppel because the

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determination of whether Woods IC owns riparian or pre-1914 appropriative water rights was raised and adjudicated in Woods Irr. Co. v. Department of Employment (1958) 50 Cal.2d 174. In that case, Woods IC sought to recover unemployment insurance contributions assessed and paid under protest pursuant to the Unemployment Insurance Act. (Woods Irr. Co. v. Department of Employment (1958) 50 Cal.2d 174, 176.) Woods IC alleged that it was exempt from paying the taxes because the irrigation and drainage services provided by its employees fell into the exempt category of agricultural labor. (Id.) In order to determine the nature of the labor Woods IC's employees performed, the nature of Woods IC itself was considered. (Id.)

The Supreme Court specifically evaluated two in issues in Woods Irr. Co. v. Department of Employment. First, it had to decide if the work being performed by Woods IC's employees constituted "agricultural labor" as defined by the Unemployment Insurance Act. Second, it had to decide if there was any significance to the fact that the work was being performed on easements owned by Woods IC, as opposed to the on the farms of the landowners. In evaluating the first issue, the Court looked at the purposes for which Woods IC had been formed. (Id.) The Court specifically ruled that Woods IC "own[ed] no land or water rights of its own," and was not a water corporation that provided water to the general public. (Id.) From this, the Court determined that Woods IC and its employees provided a mere service, consisting of the construction, operation and maintenance of irrigation and drainage ditches to support the agricultural activities of its landowners. (Id.) Since the Court went on to find that there was no legal distinction created by the fact that Woods IC's employees worked on facilities placed on easements owned by Woods IC, instead of directly on the farms of Woods IC's landowners, the Supreme Court ruled that Woods IC and its employees were exempt from paying certain corporate unemployment contributions. (Id. at 179, 181.) Thus, the question of whether or not Woods IC owned water rights in its own name was central to the reasoning and decision of the Supreme Court, was specifically

litigated, and the result is binding upon Woods IC in accordance with the doctrines of *res judicata* and/or collateral estoppel.

In the case at hand before the SWRCB, Woods IC is alleging riparian and/or pre-1914 appropriative water rights by which it provides water from the Middle River in San Joaquin County for use on lands within and upon Roberts Island. Woods IC's water rights, riparian and/or pre-1914 appropriative water rights, however, have already been adjudicated in the previous action. Woods IC's water rights were determined by the court in Woods Irr. Co. v. Department of Employment, in which Woods IC was found to have no water rights in a final judgment on the merits. (Id. at 176.) Woods IC is the same party seeking to establish water rights in this action as had its rights determined in the prior action. (Id.) As such, Woods IC's assertion that it possesses riparian and/or pre-1914 appropriative water rights is barred by the doctrine of *res judicata* and/or collateral estoppel because the determination of whether Woods IC owns riparian and/or pre-1914 appropriative water rights was raised and adjudicated in Woods Irr. Co. v. Department of Employment.

As a result of the decision in Woods Irr. Co. v. Department of Employment and the doctrine of collateral estoppel/res judicata, Woods IC should not be permitted to re-litigate whether it possesses any legal riparian or pre-1914 appropriative right to divert water from the Middle River in San Joaquin County for use on lands within and upon Roberts Island. Thus, because Woods IC's lack of riparian and/or pre-1914 appropriative water rights has been conclusively established by the California Supreme Court, any evidence that Woods IC will present in an attempt to establish such rights will not be the sort of evidence on which responsible persons are accustomed to rely when conducting serious affairs because it would be contradictory to a decision of the California Supreme Court. As no responsible person would rely on such contradictory statements when conducting serious affairs, any evidence that Woods IC will present in an attempt to establish riparian and/or pre-1914 appropriative water rights should be excluded.

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### C. Woods IC Is Barred By The Doctrine of Judicial Estoppel From Asserting Ownership Of Any Water Rights.

The SWRCB should not permit Woods IC to present evidence that it has riparian or pre-1914 appropriative water rights to divert water from the Middle River in San Joaquin County for use on lands within and upon Roberts Island because Woods IC is barred by the doctrine of judicial estoppel from asserting ownership of any water rights. "Judicial estoppel prevents a party from asserting a position in a legal proceeding that is contrary to a position previously taken in the same or some earlier proceeding." (Jackson v. County of Los Angeles (1997) 60 Cal. App. 4th 171, 181.) The crucial objective of judicial estoppel is to protect the integrity of the judiciary by preventing the intentional use of self-contradiction for the purpose of obtaining an unfair advantage. (Thomas v. Gordon (2000) 85 Cal. App. 4th 113, 118.) Judicial estoppel applies when: "(1) the same party has taken two positions; (2) the positions were taken in judicial or quasi-judicial administrative proceedings; (3) the party was successful in asserting the first position (i.e., the tribunal adopted the position or accepted it as true); (4) the two positions are totally inconsistent; and (5) the first position was not taken as a result of ignorance, fraud, or mistake." (Jackson v. County of Los Angeles, supra, 60 Cal.App.4th at 183; see also New Hampshire v. Maine (2001) 532 U.S. 742; Swahn Group, Inc. v. Segal (2010) WL 1347700.)

Woods IC's contention that it possesses riparian and/or pre-1914 appropriative water rights is barred by the doctrine judicial estoppel because Woods IC took the position that it did not own riparian or pre-1914 appropriative water rights in Woods Irr. Co. v. Department of Employment (1958) 50 Cal.2d 174, and in that case, the Supreme Court of California adopted Woods IC's position and determined it to be true.

In this case, the judicial estoppel factors have all been met and thus Woods IC's recent claim that it owns a riparian and/or pre-1914 appropriative water right is barred by judicial estoppel. First, Woods IC has taken two different positions; originally in 1958, in Woods Irr. Co. v. Department of Employment (1958) 50 Cal.2d 174, Woods IC asserted that

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it held no water rights of its own, and in the present CDO case, Woods IC alleges it holds a riparian and/or pre-1914 appropriative water right. Second, the original position taken by Woods IC was in a judicial proceeding and the current contradictory position taken by Woods IC is in a quasi-judicial administrative proceeding. Third, Woods IC successfully asserted the first position, that it held no water rights, in Woods Irr. Co. v. Department of Employment, as this assertion was critical to the California Supreme Court's finding that Woods IC merely provided a service maintaining the irrigation and drainage infrastructure for its shareholders, and thus the labor of Woods IC's employees was exempt from taxation under the Unemployment Insurance Act. (Woods Irr. Co. v. Department of Employment (1958) 50 Cal.2d 174.) Fourth, the two positions that Woods IC has taken, originally that it owns no water rights and now that it does, are totally inconsistent. Fifth and finally, the first position taken by Woods IC, that it owned no water rights, was not taken as a result of ignorance, fraud or mistake because its own attorney, Gilbert L. Jones, in the original Sacramento County Superior Court case, Woods Irrigation Company v. Department of Employment, testified that Woods IC did not have its own water right. (Exhibit MSS-IE pp. 49 and 140.)

Therefore, the SWRCB should not permit Woods IC to present evidence that it has riparian or pre-1914 appropriative water rights with which to divert water from the Middle River in San Joaquin County for use on lands within and upon Roberts Island because Woods IC is barred by the doctrine of judicial estoppel from asserting ownership of any water rights.

## D. Woods IC Cannot Assert Water Rights Before the SWRCB Because the Final Judgment of the California Supreme Court Is Conclusive.

Although Woods IC claims to possess a pre-1914 appropriative water right to divert water from Middle River to lands within and upon Roberts Island at a rate of up to 77.7 cubic feet per second (Exhibit PT-7), the Supreme Court of California has previously established in Woods Irr. Co. v. Department of Employment (1958) 50 Cal.2d 174, that Woods IC does not

possess any riparian water rights, nor any pre-1914 appropriative water rights. The SWRCB and the courts each have original concurrent jurisdiction over water rights. (National Audubon Soc. V. Superior Court (1983) 33 Cal.3d 419, 449). It is hornbook law that where two bodies have original concurrent jurisdiction, the first to exercise such jurisdiction assumes exclusive and continuing jurisdiction over the subject matter and the parties. (California Attorneys, Administrative Law Judges and Hearing Officers in State Employment v. Schwarzenegger (2010) 182 Cal.App.4<sup>th</sup> 1424, 1430). As to Woods IC's alleged water rights, the California court system asserted exclusive jurisdiction in the 1950s as part of the dispute between Woods IC and the State. The final judgment of the dispute, rendered by the California Supreme Court in 1958, is conclusive and cannot be the subject of a collateral attack before a body with concurrent jurisdiction. (Busick v. Workmen's Comp. Appeals Bd. (1972) 7 Cal.3d 967, 977; Consumer Advocacy Group, Inc. v. ExxonMobil Corp. (2008) 168 Cal.App.4<sup>th</sup> 675, 683). As to the water rights of Woods IC, the SWRCB is bound to comply with the findings of the California Supreme Court that Woods IC has no independent water right of its own.

As a result of the decision in Woods Irr. Co. v. Department of Employment, Woods IC should not be permitted to present evidence to establish whether it possesses any legal riparian or pre-1914 appropriative right to divert water from the Middle River in San Joaquin County for use on lands within and upon Roberts Island. Thus, because Woods IC's lack of riparian and/or pre-1914 appropriative water rights has been conclusively established by the California Supreme Court, any evidence that Woods IC will present in an attempt to establish such rights will not be the sort of evidence on which responsible persons are accustomed to rely when conducting serious affairs because it would be contradictory to a decision of the California Supreme Court. As no responsible person would rely on such contradictory statements when conducting serious affairs, any evidence that Woods IC will present in an attempt to establish riparian and/or pre-1914 appropriative water rights should be excluded.

#### IV. Conclusion

Woods IC's assertion that it possesses riparian or pre-1914 appropriative water rights is barred by the doctrine of *res judicata* and/or collateral estoppel and judicial estoppel because Woods IC's lack of riparian and/or pre-1914 appropriative water rights has already been asserted by Woods IC and conclusively established and adopted by the California Supreme Court. Any evidence that Woods IC will present in an attempt to establish such rights will not be the sort of evidence on which responsible persons are accustomed to rely when conducting serious affairs because such evidence would be contradictory to a decision of the California Supreme Court. As no responsible person would rely on such contradictory statements when conducting serious affairs, any evidence that Woods IC will present in an attempt to prove riparian and/or pre-1914 appropriative water rights should be excluded. Therefore, MID requests the SWRCB exclude all evidence presented by Woods IC to prove it has any water rights.

DATED: June 4, 2010

Respectfully submitted

O'LAUGHLIN & PARIS LLP

By:

TIM O'LAUGHLIN

Attorney for

MODESTO IRRIGATION DISTRICT

#### **PROOF OF SERVICE**

(Government Code §11440.20)

I am employed in the County of Butte, State of California. I am over the age of eighteen years and not a party to the within cause. My Business address is P.O. Box 9259, Chico, California 95927-9259. On this date, in the following manner, I served the foregoing document(s) identified

### **MOTION IN LIMINE**

UNITED STATES MAIL [CCP §1013] I enclosed the documents in a sealed envelope addressed to the following persons and placed the envelope for collection and mailing, following our ordinary business practices. I am readily familiar with our practice for collection processing correspondence for mailing. On the same day that the correspondence is placed for collection and mailing, it is deposited in the ordinary course of business with the United States Postal Service, in a sealed envelope with postage thereon fully prepaid at

**FACSIMILE** Based on prior consent, I caused the documents to be sent to the following persons via telecopier/facsimile machine a true copy thereof to the parties indicated below:

**OVERNIGHT DELIVERY** [CCP §1013(c)] I enclosed the documents in a sealed envelope provided by an overnight delivery carrier and addressed it to the persons identified below. I placed said envelope for collection at a regularly utilized drop box of the overnight

►► E-MAIL [CCP §1010.6] Based on a court order or an agreement of the parties to accept service by e-mail, I caused the documents to be sent to the e-mail addresses indicated in

PERSONAL DELIVERY [CCP §415.10] I personally delivered the documents to the

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct, and that this declaration was executed on **June 24, 2010**, at Chico, California.

#### PROOF OF SERVICE

(Government Code §11440.20)

I, TIM O'LAUGHLIN, declare that:

I am employed in the County of Butte, State of California. I am over the age of eighteen years and not a party to the within cause. My Business address is P.O. Box 9259, Chico, California 95927-9259. On this date, in the following manner, I served the foregoing document(s) identified as:

### **MOTION IN LIMINE**

UNITED STATES MAIL [CCP §1013] I enclosed the documents in a sealed envelope addressed to the following persons and placed the envelope for collection and mailing, following our ordinary business practices. I am readily familiar with our practice for collection processing correspondence for mailing. On the same day that the correspondence is placed for collection and mailing, it is deposited in the ordinary course of business with the United States Postal Service, in a sealed envelope with postage thereon fully prepaid at Chico, California addressed as below:

**FACSIMILE** Based on prior consent, I caused the documents to be sent to the following persons via telecopier/facsimile machine a true copy thereof to the parties indicated below:

**OVERNIGHT DELIVERY** [CCP §1013(c)] I enclosed the documents in a sealed envelope provided by an overnight delivery carrier and addressed it to the persons identified below. I placed said envelope for collection at a regularly utilized drop box of the overnight carrier.

**E-MAIL** [CCP §1010.6] Based on a court order or an agreement of the parties to accept service by e-mail, I caused the documents to be sent to the e-mail addresses indicated in the attached Service List of Participants.

►► PERSONAL DELIVERY [CCP §415.10] I personally delivered the documents to the persons identified below:

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct, and that this declaration was executed on **June 24, 2010**, at Chico, California.

Tim O'Laughlin

# HEARING REGARDING ADOPTION OF DRAFT CEASE AND DESIST ORDER AGAINST: WOODS IRRIGATION COMPANY (MIDDLE RIVER) – SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY - SCHEDULED TO COMMENCE ON JUNE 7, 2010

## REVISED SERVICE LIST (April 23, 2010)

THE FOLLOWING MUST BE SERVED WITH WRITTEN TESTIMONY, EXHIBITS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS. (All have AGREED TO ACCEPT electronic service, pursuant to the rules specified in the hearing notice.)

MODESTO IRRIGATION DISTRICT c/o Tim O'Laughlin O'Laughlin & Paris LLP PO. Box 9259 Chico, CA 92927 Chox details a possible of the process of	WOODS IRRIGATION COMPANY c/o John Herrick, Esq. 4255 Pacific Avenue, Suite 2 Stockton, CA 95207 jherrlaw@aol.com  c/o Dean Ruiz, Esq. Harris, Perisho & Ruiz 3439 Brookeside Road, Suite 210 Stockton, CA 95219 dean@hpllp.com  c/o Dennis Donald Geiger, Esq. 311 East Main Street, Suite 400 Stockton, CA 95202 dgeiger@bgrn.com	DIVISION OF WATER RIGHTS PROSECUTION TEAM c/o David Rose State Water Resources Control Board 1001 I. Street Sacramento, CA 95814 drose@waterboards.ca.gov
PO. Box 9259 Chico, CA 92927 towater@olaughlinparis.com kpetruzzelli@olaughlinparis.com  THE SAN LUIS & DELTA-MENDOTA WATER AUTHORITY Jon D. Rubin/Valerie C. Kincaid Diepenbrock ◆ Harrison 400 Capitol Mall, 18 <sup>th</sup> Floor Sacramento, CA 95814 prubin@diepenbrock.com  400 Capitol Mall, 27 <sup>th</sup> Floor Sacramento, CA 95814 spowell@kmtg.com  CENTRAL DELTA WATER AGENCY c/o Dean Ruiz, Esq. Harris, Perisho & Ruiz 3439 Brookside Road, Suite 210 Stockton, CA 95219 dean@hpllp.com		c/o Stanley C. Powell
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400 Capitol Mall, 18 <sup>th</sup> Floor Stockton, CA 95219 Sacramento, CA 95814 dean@hpllp.com jrubin@diepenbrock.com		Harris, Perisho & Ruiz
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	Sacramento, CA 95814	

# HEARING REGARDING ADOPTION OF DRAFT CEASE AND DESIST ORDER AGAINST: WOODS IRRIGATION COMPANY (MIDDLE RIVER) – SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY - SCHEDULED TO COMMENCE ON JUNE 7, 2010

## REVISED SERVICE LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (April 23, 2010)

PARTICIPANTS TO BE SERVED WITH WRITTEN TESTIMONY, EXHIBITS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS. (The participants listed below AGREED TO ACCEPT electronic service, pursuant to the rules specified in the hearing notice.)

SOUTH DELTA WATER AGENCY c/o John Herrick, Esq. 4255 Pacific Avenue, Suite 2 Stockton, CA 95207 jherrlaw@aol.com

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