

SHAWN D. HAGERTY, Bar No. 182435
shawn.hagerty@bbkllaw.com
BEST BEST & KRIEGER LLP
655 West Broadway, 15th Floor
San Diego, California 92101
Telephone: (619) 525-1300
Facsimile: (619) 233-6118

CHRISTOPHER MARK PISANO, Bar No. 192831
christopher.pisano@bbkllaw.com
SARAH CHRISTOPHER FOLEY, Bar No. 277223
sarah.foley@bbkllaw.com
PATRICK D. SKAHAN, Bar No. 286140
patrick.skahan@bbkllaw.com
BEST BEST & KRIEGER LLP
300 South Grand Avenue, 25th Floor
Los Angeles, California 90071
Telephone: (213) 617-8100
Facsimile: (619) 617-7480

Attorneys for Respondent and Cross-Complainant
CITY OF SAN BUENAVENTURA

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

SANTA BARBARA CHANNELKEEPER, a
California non-profit corporation,

Petitioner,

v.

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL
BOARD, etc., et al.,

Respondents.

CITY OF SAN BUENAVENTURA, etc.,

Cross-Complainant,

v.

DUNCAN ABBOTT, an individual, et al.,

Cross-Defendants.

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County of Los Angeles

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Case No. 19STCP01176

Judge: Hon. William F. Highberger

RESPONDENT AND CROSS-
COMPLAINANT CITY OF SAN
BUENAVENTURA'S BRIEF
REGARDING DISCOVERY SCHEDULE

Date: July 19, 2021
Time: 3:00 p.m.
Dept: SS10

Action Filed: Sept. 19, 2014
Trial Date: Feb. 14, 2022

BRIEF REGARDING DISCOVERY SCHEDULE

I. INTRODUCTION

At the July 6, 2021 status conference, the Court ordered a briefing on a proposed discovery schedule that addresses two issues: (1) whether the exchange of expert witness information should be simultaneous, or whether the City of San Buenaventura (“City”) should be compelled to disclose its expert witness information before any other party is required to disclose his/her/its information, and (2) when the expert witness disclosures should occur. The City was ordered to provide an initial briefing, to which others may respond. As is discussed herein, the City contends as follows: (1) the exchange of expert witness information for Phase 1 of trial must be simultaneous, and (2) the initial exchange should occur on September 24, 2021, or a date in late August, 2021, or at another date within that range. The City has proffered September 24th as the initial exchange date, but it can be ready in late August should the Court so order.

On the first issue, by statute, the initial exchange of expert witness information must be simultaneous, and as a matter of fairness, it should be simultaneous for those parties that, like the City, have retained experts to analyze the issues to be resolved in Phase 1 of trial. Code of Civil Procedure Section 2034.010 *et seq.* applies in this case, and it is clear; all parties appearing in the action are required to disclose expert witness information simultaneously. (Code Civ. Proc. § 2034.260.) Chapter 18 of the Civil Discovery Act, which is the statutory scheme applicable to expert disclosures, is in fact titled: “Simultaneous Exchange of Expert Witness Information.” By the statute’s plain language, the exchange must be simultaneous.

At the July 6th hearing, it was noted that the Comprehensive Groundwater Adjudication statute, Code of Civil Procedure Section 830 *et seq.*, applies to this case, and that this statutory scheme includes a specific procedure for the exchange of expert information. It was suggested that the specific statute, Code of Civil Procedure Section 843, governs the exchange of experts in this case, and not the more general Civil Discovery Act. As is discussed herein, this argument is flawed for three reasons: (1) the Civil Discovery Act’s provisions for the exchange of experts apply broadly to civil actions, including this action, (2) the Comprehensive Groundwater Adjudication statute does not conflict with the Civil Discovery Act’s process for a simultaneous

exchange, rather Code of Civil Procedure Section 843 itself suggests that the exchange of expert witness information be simultaneous, and (3) even if the Civil Discovery Act and Comprehensive Groundwater Adjudication statutes were inconsistent, which they are not, this case is not solely a groundwater adjudication, rather it is an adjudication of an entire watershed, including the Ventura River and its tributaries, and the four groundwater basins that the watershed overlies. Code of Civil Procedure Section 843 is not the only applicable statute.

On the second issue, the City has proposed to the Court that the mutual exchange of expert witness information should occur on September 24, 2021. Other parties have suggested that this date is too late in the process, and that the exchange should occur in late August, 2021. The City proffered late September because that was a date proposed by the State Agencies, and the City is trying to accommodate those parties it knows currently have experts who are analyzing the Phase 1 issues. However, the City can be prepared to exchange in late August should the Court deem that a more appropriate date for a simultaneous exchange.

II. THE EXCHANGE OF EXPERT WITNESS INFORMATION SHOULD BE SIMULTANEOUS; THERE IS NO AUTHORITY SUGGESTING OTHERWISE

A. The Civil Discovery Act Applies to this Case, And the Statute Provides for a Simultaneous Exchange of Expert Witness Information

As stated above, Chapter 18 of the Civil Discovery Act, entitled “Simultaneous Exchange of Expert Witness Information,” governs the exchange of expert witness disclosures in civil actions. (Code Civ. Proc. § 2034.010 *et seq.*) Chapter 18 provides that in any “action,” which is broadly defined to include “a civil action and a special proceeding of a civil nature” (Code Civ. Proc. § 2016.020, subd. (a)),¹ a party may demand that all parties “simultaneously” exchange information concerning the parties’ expert trial witnesses. (Code Civ. Proc. § 2034.210.) The statute further provides that, “[a]ny party may demand a mutual and simultaneous exchange by all

¹ The term “action” is likewise broadly defined in the “Preliminary Provisions” of the Code of Civil Procedure to mean “an ordinary proceeding in a court of justice by which one party prosecutes another for the declaration, enforcement, or protection of a right, the redress or prevention of a wrong, or the punishment of a public offense.” (Code Civ. Proc. § 22.) The term special proceeding is defined as follows: “Every other remedy is a special proceeding.” (Code Civ. Proc. § 23.) A “civil action” is prosecuted by one party against another for the declaration, enforcement or protection of a right, or the redress or prevention of a wrong. (Code Civ. Proc. § 30.)

1 parties of a list containing the name and address of any natural person...whose ... testimony in
2 the form of an expert opinion any party expects to offer in evidence at trial.” (Code Civ. Proc. §
3 2034.210, subd. (a).)

4 On its face, the Civil Discovery Act leaves no doubt that the exchange of expert witness
5 information must be simultaneous. This clear rule for a simultaneous exchange among all parties
6 has been reaffirmed by case law. (*See Fairfax v. Lords* (2006) 138 Cal.App.4th 1019.) In
7 *Fairfax*, the court addressed the issue of whether a defendant in a civil action was required to
8 participate in a simultaneous exchange, even though the plaintiff ultimately bears the burden of
9 proof at trial. In *Fairfax*, the defendant did not designate any retained experts on the date for the
10 simultaneous exchange, rather he exchanged a document indicating that he was not designating
11 any retained experts, but that he “expressly reserves the right to designate experts in rebuttal to
12 [Fairfax’s] designation.” (*Id.* at 1022.) Defendant subsequently designated a retained expert, and
13 in his designation he stated that “[s]ince plaintiff has the burden of proof as to all issues,
14 defendant reserves the right...to provide a supplemental designation of experts regarding all
15 issues for which plaintiff designates an expert.” (*Id.* at 1023.) The court denied plaintiff’s motion
16 to strike the designation and permitted defendant’s retained expert to testify. Following a trial in
17 which defendant prevailed, plaintiff appealed, and the court of appeal reversed. The appellate
18 court found that the statute was clear on its face in requiring a “simultaneous” exchange of
19 experts, which applied to all parties to the action. The court noted that “[i]f [defendant] Lords
20 would like to see that requirement changed, his remedy is with the Legislature, not the courts.”
21 (*Id.* at 1027.) This case confirms that the expert exchange must be simultaneous, and that all
22 parties (plaintiffs and defendants alike) must participate in the exchange in order to call expert
23 witnesses at trial.

24 **B. The Comprehensive Groundwater Adjudication Statute is Consistent with the**
25 **Civil Discovery Act’s Provisions for a Simultaneous Exchange of Expert**
26 **Information**

27 The Comprehensive Groundwater Adjudication statute is found in Chapter 7 of Title 10 of
28 the Code of Civil Procedure, and it is entitled “Actions Relating to Groundwater Rights.” (Code
Civ. Proc. § 830 *et seq.*) The statute establishes “methods and procedures” for a comprehensive

1 adjudication (Code Civ. Proc. § 830, subd. (a)), but it is important to note that the statute requires
2 that it be applied and interpreted consistently with the following: “Providing notice and due
3 process sufficient to enable a court in a comprehensive adjudication conducted pursuant to this
4 chapter to determine and establish the priority for unexercised water rights. The court may
5 consider applying the principles established in *In re Waters of Long Valley Creek Stream System*
6 (1979) 25 Cal.3d 339. ***Except as provided in this paragraph, this chapter shall not alter***
7 ***groundwater rights or the law concerning groundwater rights.***” (Code Civ. Proc. § 830, subd.
8 (b)(7) (emphasis added).) In short, this statute provides procedural structure to comprehensive
9 groundwater adjudications, but it does not alter or replace existing common law regarding
10 groundwater rights. (*Ibid.*) The chapter must be applied and interpreted in a manner that
11 “promotes efficiency, reduces unnecessary delays, and provides due process” (*id.* at subd. (b)(2)),
12 which requires a simultaneous expert exchange.

13 The Comprehensive Groundwater Adjudication statute also provides that “[t]he other
14 provisions of the ‘code’ [i.e. the Code of Civil Procedure]² apply to procedures in a
15 comprehensive adjudication to the extent they do not conflict with the provisions of this chapter.”
16 (Code Civ. Proc. § 830, subd. (c).) In other words, the provisions of the Code of Civil Procedure,
17 which include the Civil Discovery Act, apply to the Comprehensive Groundwater Adjudication
18 statute as long as they are not in conflict. As is discussed herein, the Civil Discovery Act’s
19 procedure for simultaneously exchanging expert witness information is entirely consistent with
20 the procedure in the Comprehensive Groundwater Adjudication statute, and thus the Civil
21 Discovery Act applies.

22 Code of Civil Procedure Section 843 sets forth the procedure for disclosing expert witness
23 information in the Comprehensive Groundwater Adjudication statute. This section provides in
24 part: “In addition to all other disclosures required by this chapter [e.g. initial disclosures under
25

26 ² The word “code” is not defined in the Comprehensive Groundwater Adjudication statute.
27 However, the word “code” is generally used in the Code of Civil Procedure in reference to the
28 Code of Civil Procedure itself. (*See e.g.* Code Civ. Proc. §§ 2 [“When this code takes effect”],
4 [“Rule of construction of this code”], 17 subd. (a) [“Definitions” – “Words used in this code in
the present tense include the future as well as the present.”], and 18 [“Statutes, etc., inconsistent
with code repealed.”]).

1 Section 842], a party shall disclose to the other parties the identity of any expert witness it may
2 use at trial to present evidence.” (Code Civ. Proc. § 843, subd. (a).) Section 843 goes on to state
3 that unless the parties stipulate or the court orders otherwise, a party must submit written reports
4 with its expert disclosure in a format that is similar to Rule 26 of the Federal Rules of Civil
5 Procedure. (Code Civ. Proc. § 843, subds. (b) and (c).) Section 843 then provides for the timing
6 of expert disclosures, stating that unless stipulated by the parties, the parties are to disclose expert
7 witness information at the times and in the sequence as ordered by the court, and if there is no
8 court order, then the disclosures must be made at least 30 days after the court enters an order
9 setting a particular phase of the trial. (Code Civ. Proc. § 843, subd. (d).) Finally, Section 843
10 discusses a disclosure procedure for rebuttal experts, as well as the parties’ ongoing obligation to
11 supplement and correct expert witness reports. (Code Civ. Proc. § 843, subds. (e) and (f)).

12 There is nothing in this statute that conflicts with the Civil Discovery Act regarding the
13 simultaneous nature of the disclosure. While Section 843 imposes the requirement that disclosing
14 parties exchange expert witness reports, which is perhaps somewhat in conflict with the Civil
15 Discovery Act’s lack of such a requirement (*see* Code Civ. Proc. § 2034.260),³ there is nothing in
16 Section 843 that states that the exchange of information is not intended to be simultaneous.
17 Instead, Section 843 must be read as requiring simultaneous disclosures, as the statutory default
18 position (i.e. if there is no stipulation or court order saying otherwise) provides for only one
19 exchange date, namely 30 days after the phased trial is set, for the disclosures to occur. (Code
20 Civ. Proc. § 843, subd. (d)(1).) In other words, Section 843 provides that unless the parties
21 stipulate to something different, or the court orders otherwise,⁴ the disclosures must be on a single
22

23 ³ Section 843’s requirement to disclose expert witness reports is not entirely inconsistent with the
24 Civil Discovery Act to the extent that the Civil Discovery Act mandates that discoverable reports
25 and writings be produced at the time of the simultaneous disclosure to the extent such reports and
26 writings exist, provided the demand for exchange specifies that such writings and reports must be
27 produced. (Code Civ. Proc. § 2034.270.)

28 ⁴ The City reminds the Court here that while the City strongly contends that expert disclosures be
simultaneous, the City is willing to accept a second-tier initial disclosure date for smaller parties
who have not yet retained an expert to analyze the Phase 1 trial issues and who do not presently
know whether they need an expert. This should only apply to smaller parties, many of whom are
self-represented. For the larger parties, like the City of Ojai, and the Thacher School and other
large water users who have already retained experts and who are likely to challenge connectivity
with expert witness testimony, the expert disclosures should be simultaneous. It would be

1 date, i.e. a simultaneous exchange. This is consistent with the Civil Discovery Act.

2 The City anticipates that objecting parties may point to the Legislature's use of the
3 singular word "party" in Section 843(a), rather than the plural form, "parties." This does not
4 show an intent for anything other than a simultaneous exchange. Stated another way, Section 843
5 provides that it is the obligation of each "party" who wishes to present expert testimony at trial to
6 make his/her/its disclosure pursuant to Section 843, just as it is the obligation of each "party" to
7 make his/her/its initial disclosures under Section 842. The use of the word "party" as opposed to
8 "parties" in Section 843(a) does not suggest that expert disclosures are not to be simultaneous.

9 The City also notes here that if the Legislature had intended for Section 843 to provide for
10 unilateral expert disclosures by one party, rather than a simultaneous exchange, it would have
11 said so in in the statutory language. It did not. The Legislature likewise could have amended
12 Chapter 18 of the Civil Discovery Act, which it also did not do. Chapter 18 of the Civil
13 Discovery Act, which was last amended in 2005, specifically exempts eminent domain cases from
14 its provisions regarding expert disclosures. (Code Civ. Proc. § 2034.010.) If the Legislature had
15 intended for Chapter 18 of the Civil Discovery Act not to apply in comprehensive groundwater
16 adjudication cases, it would have amended Section 2034.010 to enumerate both eminent domain
17 and groundwater adjudication cases when it enacted the Comprehensive Groundwater
18 Adjudication statute in 2015. The Legislature did not do so, which shows its intent that the Civil
19 Discovery Act's procedure for expert disclosures would apply to groundwater adjudication cases.
20 (*See Mosser Companies v. San Francisco Rent Stabilization & Arbitration Bd.* (2015) 233
21 Cal.App.4th 505, 514 [The Legislature is presumed to know existing law when it enacts a new
22 statute.].) Section 843 does not conflict with the Civil Discovery Act on the simultaneous
23 exchange of experts, and the Civil Discovery Act therefore applies.

24 C. **The Civil Discovery Act Applies to this Case Regardless Because this Case is**
25 **not Solely a Comprehensive Groundwater Adjudication**

26 Finally, even if Chapter 18 of the Civil Discovery Act and Comprehensive Groundwater
27 Adjudication were in conflict, which they are not, this case is not solely one to adjudicate basin

28 patently unfair to give these parties and their experts the opportunity to review and analyze the
City's expert disclosures and reports before submitting their own disclosures and reports.

groundwater rights. The City's operative Third Amended Cross-Complaint contains many causes of action, including one for a comprehensive adjudication of groundwater rights. The Court's order of bifurcation of a Phase 1 trial on the issues of interconnectivity and the basin boundaries is not limited to any one cause of action, and it is not solely limited to the City's request for a comprehensive groundwater adjudication. The City and other proposing parties seek to impose a physical solution for the entire Ventura River Watershed, including the Ventura River and all of its tributaries (which constitute legally distinct surface water), as well as the Watershed's four groundwater basins. In short, there is more at issue in this lawsuit, and in this Phase 1 trial, than solely a groundwater adjudication under Code of Civil Procedure Section 830 *et seq.* Thus, even if there were a conflict among the statutes, which again there is not, the Civil Discovery Act would still necessarily apply to this action.

III. THE SIMULTANEOUS EXPERT EXCHANGE SHOULD OCCUR ON SEPTEMBER 24, 2021, BUT THE CITY DOES NOT OBJECT TO AN EARLIER SIMULTANEOUS DATE IN LATE AUGUST, IF THE COURT DEEMS THAT MORE APPROPRIATE

The City proposes that the mutual exchange of expert witness information should occur on September 24, 2021. The City has proposed this date because other parties who have indicated that they intend to designate experts for Phase 1 of trial suggested it, and City would like to accommodate those parties. However, the City recognizes that other parties to this action have requested an exchange in late August. The City can be prepared to exchange its expert witness information, including the expert reports under Section 843, in late August, or at some other date within that range – i.e. mid-September, if the Court feels that it is a more appropriate deadline. The City will accept whatever date the Court deems appropriate between late August and September 24, 2021 for the simultaneous initial exchange.

IV. CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated, the City requests that the Court set a discovery schedule that provides for a simultaneous exchange of expert witness information, and that it set the initial expert witness disclosure date of September 24, 2021, or an earlier date between late August and September 24th, as the Court may deem appropriate.

1 Dated: July 9, 2021

BEST BEST & KRIEGER LLP

2
3 By: 
4 SHAWN D. HAGERTY
5 CHRISTOPHER M. PISANO
6 SARAH C. FOLEY
7 PATRICK D. SKAHAN
8 Attorneys for Respondent and Cross-
9 Complainant
10 CITY OF SAN BUENAVENTURA
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PROOF OF SERVICE

I am a resident of the State of California and over the age of eighteen years, and not a party to the action herein; my business address is Best Best & Krieger LLP, 2001 N. Main Street, Suite 390, Walnut Creek, CA 94596. On July 9, 2021, I served the following document(s):

RESPONDENT AND CROSS-COMPLAINANT CITY OF SAN BUENAVENTURA'S BRIEF REGARDING DISCOVERY SCHEDULE

- ☐ by placing the document(s) listed above in a sealed envelope with postage thereon fully prepaid, in the United States mail at Walnut Creek, California addressed as set forth below. I am readily familiar with the firm's practice of collection and processing correspondence for mailing. Under that practice it would be deposited with the U.S. Postal Service on that same day with postage thereon fully prepaid in the ordinary course of business.
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Daniel Cooper
Sycamore Law
1004 O'Reilly Ave.
San Francisco CA 94129
Tel: (415) 360-2962
daniel@sycamore.law

Matthew Bullock
Deputy Attorney General
California Department of Justice
Natural Resources Law Section
455 Golden Gate Ave., Suite 11000
San Francisco, CA 94102-7004
Tel: (415) 510-3376
matthew.bullock@doj.ca.gov

Attorneys for Petitioner and Plaintiff
Santa Barbara Channelkeeper

Attorneys for Respondent and Defendant State
Water Resources Control Board

Marc N. Melnick
Deputy Attorney General
Attorney General's Office
1515 Clay Street, 20th Floor
P.O. Box 70550
Oakland, CA 94612-0550
Tel: 510-879-0750
Marc.melnick@doj.ca.gov

Eric M. Katz
Supervising Deputy Attorney General
Noah Golden – Krasner
Deputy Attorney General
Carol Boyd
Deputy Attorney General
300 South Spring Street, Suite 1702
Los Angeles, CA 90013
Tel. (213) 269-6343
Fax (213) 897-2802
Eric.Katz@doj.ca.gov
Noah.goldenkrasner@doj.ca.gov
Carol.boyd@doj.ca.gov

Attorneys for Respondent and Defendant State
Water Resources Control Board

1
2
3
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17
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19
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21
22
23
24
25
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27
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Edward J. Casey
Gina Angiolollo
Alston & Bird LLP
333 South Hope Street, 16th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90071
Tel: 213.576.1000
ed.casey@alston.com
gina.angiolollo@alston.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendants AGR
Breeding, Inc.; Bentley Family Limited
Partnership; and Southern California Edison
Company

Attorneys for Proposed Intervenor California
Department of Fish & Wildlife

Ryan Blatz
Blatz Law Firm
206 N. Signal St. Suite G
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel: (805) 646-3110
blatzlawfirm@gmail.com
ryan@ryanblatzlaw.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendants Troy Becker
and Jeri Becker; Janet Boulton; Michael
Boulton; Michael Caldwell; Joseph Peter
Clark, successor in interest to the Joseph
Clark and Linda Epstein Family Trust; Linda
Louise Epstein, successor in interest to the
Joseph Clark and Linda Epstein Family Trust;
Michael I. Cromer and Jody D. Cromer;
Michel A. Etchart, Trustee of the Michel A.
Etchart Separate Property Trust, and Mark W.
Etchart, Trustee of the Mark W. Etchart
Sepertate Property Trust; Lawrence
Hartmann; Ole Konig; Krotona Institute of
Theosophy; Stephen Michtell and Kathleen
Reid Mitchell, Trustees of the Stephen
Mitchell and Byron Katie Trust; North Fork
Springs Mutual Water Company; Stephen
Robert Smith, Trustee of the Charles R. Rudd
and Lola L. Rudd Trust, dated May 20, 1976;
Shlomo Raz; Sylvia Raz; Senior Canyon
Mutual Water Company; Siete Robles Mutual
Water Company; Soule Park Golf Course,
Ltd.; Telos, LLC; Victor C. Timar, Jr. Trustee
of the Timar Family Trust; John Town; Trudie
Town; Asquith Family Limited Partnership,
Ltd.; Burgess Ranch; Cary Cheldin; Cynthia
Daniels; Wayne Francis; David Friend; The
Larry & Pat Hartmann Family Trust; The John
N. Hartmann Trust; Gary Hirschcron; Cheryl
Jensen; Lutheran Church of the Holy Cross of
Ojai, California; Janice Sattler (Mineo); Eitan
Sloustcher; Rogers-Cooper Memorial
Foundation; Robert Norris (not yet appeared);
Patricia Norris; Old Creek Road Mutual
Water Company (not yet appeared); Margaret
Vanderfin; Telos Ojai, LLC (not yet
appeared); Jennifer Ware; The Walker Jr.
Living Trust; David Altman, Trustee of the
1190 El Toro Trust ; Babtiste Foundation;
Sean A. Bennett and Leslie Bennett, Trustees
of the Bennett Family Trust; Dwayne A.
Bower and Marilyn E. Bower Trustees of the
Bower Family Trust; Mark Terry Cline and

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Bonnie Burreson Cline, Trustees of the Mark
Terry Cline and Connie Burreson Cline
Revocable Trust; Robert R. Daddi and
Darlene J. Daddi; Lucille A. Elrod, Trustee of
the John and Lucille Elrod Family Trust;
Friend's Stable & Orchard Inc. Daniel
Hultgen, Trustee of the Hultgen Living Trust;
Ojai Golf, LLC; Three Oaks, LLC, Erica J.
Abrams, Trustee of the Erica J. Abrams Trust;
Raul E. Alvarado and Hildegard M. Alvarado,
Trustees of the Alvarado Family Trust;
William Armstrong and April Nardini; Joseph
Lynn Barthelemy and Elvira Lilly
Barthelemy, Trustees of the Joseph Lynn
Barthelemy and Elvira Lilly Barthelemy 2002
Family Trust; James S. Bennett and Carolyn
D. Bennett, Trustees of the Bennett Family
Trust; Sumeet Bhatia and Michael McDonald;
John Joseph Broesamle and Katharine Sue
Broesamle, Trustees of the Broesamle Family
Trust; Richard Aaron Carlson, Trustee of the
Richard Aaron Carlson Trust and Michelle
Larson, Trustee of the Michelle Larson
Family Trust; Thomas D. Carver and Cynthia
L. Carver; Dana Cenicerros, Trustee of the
Dana and Dawn Cenicerros Revocable Living
Trust; Deborah Lys Martin Crawford; Frank
Clay Creasey Jr.; Debra Joy Reed, Trustee of
The Debra Joy Reed Revocable Trust Dated
November 3, 1994; Frederic Devault; Diana
Syvertson, Trustee of the Diana Syvertson
Living Trust; Dive Deep L.L.C.; Douglas Roy
Parent and Ann Marie Parent; William
Erickson; Gelb Enterprises, L.P.; Jan Stephen
Granade and Priscilla K. Granade, Trustees of
the Granade Family Revocable Living Trust;
Margot J. Griswold; Brian C. Haase and
Marie Haase, Trustees of the B&M Haase
Trust Dated October 8, 2019; Thomas Lann
Harper and Jadona Collier-Harper; Ojai-
Jackman L.L.C.; Kevin Rainwater and
Marianne Ratcliff; Keith M. Nightingale and
Victoria V. Nightingale, Trustees of The
Nightingale Family Trust; Heide C. Kurtz,
Trustee of The Kurtz Family Trust Dated
January 19, 2019; Randall Leavitt, Trustee of
The Randall B. Leavitt 2010 Trust; Edward C.
Leicht and Jacqueline M. Leicht, Trustees of
The Leicht Family 2013 Revocable Trust
Dated March 1, 2013; Paul Lepiane and
Bengtson Bo; Robert Levin and Lisa Solinas,
Trustees of The Levin Family Living Trust;
Francis Longstaff and Shauna Longstaff,
Trustees of The Longstaff Trust Dated
October 11, 2018; Mandy Macaluso, Trustee

of The Living Trust of Mandy Macaluso; Marilyn Wallace, Trustee of The Marilyn Wallace Separate Property Trust; Daniel J. McSweeney and Yoko McSweeney; Wendell M. Mortensen and Laura L. Mortensen, Trustees of The Mortensen Family Revocable Trust; Timothy Jerome Murch and Jody Caren Murch, Trustees of The Jodim Family 2007 Trust Dated July 31, 2007; Chris E. Platt and Hanh H. Platt; Robert Erickson, Trustee and Ronald Wilson; Michael D. Robertson and Kimberly A. Robertson, Trustees of The Robertson Family Trust; James P. Robie, Trustee of the Robie Family Trust; Petter Romming and Kimi Romming, Trustees; Marc Saleh, Trustee of The Saleh Family Trust; Konrad Stefan Sonnenfeld, Trustee of The Konrad Stefan Sonnenfeld Living Trust; Mark Sutherland, Trustee of The Sutherland Marital Trust; John H. Thacher and Caroline H. Thacher, Trustees of The Thacher Family Trust Dated January 2004; Gilbert G. Vondrisk and Carolyn J. Vondrisk, Trustees of The Vondrisk Living Trust; William D. Rusin, Sr., Trustee of the William D. Rusin Sr. Revocable Trust; Oscar D. Acosta, Trustee of the Acosta Trust; Chris E. Platt and Hanh H. Plat; Deborah Lys Martin Crawford; Diane Syvertson, Trustee of the Diana Syvertson Living Trust; Erica J. Abrams, Trustee of the Erica J. Abrams Trust; Frank Clay Creasey Jr.; Frederic DeVault; Gilbert G. Vondrisk and Carolyn J. Vondrisk, Trustees of the Vondrisk Living Trust; James P. Robie, Trustee of the Robie Family Trust; John H. Thacher and Caroline H. Thacher, Trustees of the Thacher Family Trust dated January 2004; Mandy Macaluso, Trustee of the Living Trust of Mandy Macaluso; Margot J. Griswold; Mark Sutherland, Trustee of the Sutherland Marital Trust; Randall Leavitt, Trustee of the Randall B. Leavitt 2010 Trust; Raul E. Alvarado and Hildegard M. Alvarado, trustees of the Alvarado Family Trust; Sumeet Bhatia and Michael McDonald; Timothy Jerome Murch and Jody Caren Murch, Trustees of the Jodim Family 2007 Trust dated July 31, 2007; Wendell M. Mortensen and Laura L. Mortensen, Trustees of the Mortensen Family Revocable Trust; Petter Romming and Kimi Romming, Trustees; William Armstrong and April Nardini; William Erickson; Rancho Sueño, LLC

1 William G. Short, Esq.
2 Law Offices of William G. Short
3 Post Office Box 1313
4 Ojai, California 93024-1313
5 Tel: (805) 490-6399
6 Fax: (805) 640-1940
7 billshortesq@me.com

8 Attorney for Cross-Defendant Robin Bernhoft

9 Robert N. Kwong
10 Dennis O. La Rochelle
11 Arnold Larochelle Mathews Vanconas &
12 Zirbel, LLP
13 300 Esplanade Dr Ste 2100
14 Oxnard, CA 93036
15 Tel: (805) 988-9886
16 rk Wong@atozlaw.com

17 Attorneys for Cross-Defendant Casitas
18 Municipal Water District

19 Gregory J. Patterson
20 Musick, Peeler & Garrett LLP
21 2801 Townsgate Road, Suite 200
22 Westlake Village, CA 91361
23 Tel: (805) 418-3103
24 Fax: (805) 418-3101
25 g.patterson@musickpeeler.com

26 Attorneys for Cross-Defendants Robert C.
27 Davis, Jr.; James Finch; Topa Topa Ranch
28 Company, LLC; The Thacher School;
Thacher Creek Citrus, LLC; Ojai Oil
Company; Ojai Valley School; Sharon
Hamm-Booth and David Robert Hamm, Co-
Trustees of The Hamm 2004 Family Trust
Dated April 29, 2004; Reeves Orchard, LLC;
and Ojai Valley Inn

Anthony Lee Francois
Jeremy Talcott
David Deerson
Pacific Legal Foundation
930 G Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-1802
Tel: (916) 419-7111
Fax: (916) 419-7111
alf@pacificlegal.org
TFrancois@pacificlegal.org
jtalcott@pacificlegal.org
ddeerson@pacificlegal.org

Attorney for Cross-Defendant Robin Bernhoft
Patrick Loughman
Cristian Arrieta
Lowthorp, Richards, McMillan, Miller &
Templeman
300 Esplanade Drive, Suite 850
Oxnard, CA 93036
Tel: 805.804.3848
Ploughman@lrmmmt.com
Carrieta@lrmmmt.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendants Ernest Ford,
Tico Mutual Water Company, and Betty
Withers and Betty Bow Withers Trust

Lindsay F. Nielson
Law Office of Lindsay F. Nielson
845 E Santa Clara Street
Ventura, CA 93001
Tel: 805-658-0977
nielsonlaw@aol.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant Meiners Oaks
Water District, Ventura River Water District,
and Jean Marie Webster, Trustee of The
Roger E. and Jean Marie Webster Trust

Jeanne Zolezzi
Herum Crabtree Suntag
5757 Pacific Avenue, Suite 222
Stockton, CA 95207
Tel: (209) 472-7700
Fax: (209) 472.7986
jzolezzi@herumcrabtree.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendants Meiners Oaks
Water District and Ventura River Water
District

Thomas S. Bunn III
Elsa Sham
Lagerlof Senecal Gosney & Kruse LLP
301 N. Lake Avenue, 10th Floor
Pasadena, CA 91101-5123
Tel.: (626) 793-9400
Fax: (626) 793-5900
tombunn@lagerlof.com
esham@lagerlof.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant St. Joseph's
Associates of Ojai, California, Inc. and St.
Joseph's Health and Retirement Center, Janis
Long Nicholas, John Jay Nicholas, Jess Earl
Long (aka Jess E. Long), Johana Rae Long,
and Mary Margaret Long, Janis Long
Nicholas and Jess E. Long as Trustees of the
Long Family Trust

Jeffrey E. Barnes
Chief Assistant County Counsel
Jason Canger
Assistant County Counsel
Office of Ventura County Counsel
800 South Victoria Avenue, L/C #1830
Ventura, CA 93009
Tel.: (805) 654-2879
Fax: (805) 654-2185
jason.canger@ventura.org

Attorneys for Cross-Defendants
Ventura County Watershed Protection District
and County of Ventura

Neal P. Maguire
Ferguson Case Orr Patterson LLP
1050 South Kimball Road
Ventura, CA 93004
Tel: (805) 659-6800
nmaguire@fcoplaw.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendants Rancho
Matilija Mutual Water Company; Bettina
Chandler, Trustee of the Bettina Chandler
Trust; Martin Gramckow and Linda
Gramckow individually; Martin Gramckow,
Trustee of the Monika G. Huss Irrevocable
Trust, Trustee of the Karin W. Gramckow
Irrevocable Trust, and Trustee of the Kurt J.
Gramckow Irrevocable Trust

Michael J. Van Zandt
Nathan A. Metcalf
Sean G. Herman
Hanson Bridgett LLP
425 Market Street, 26 Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105
Tel: 415-777-3200
Fax: 415-541-9366
mvanzandt@hansonbridgett.com
nmetcalf@hansonbridgett.com
sherman@hansonbridgett.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant Ventura
County Watershed Protection District and
County of Ventura

Scott Slater
Bradley Herrema
Christopher Guillen
Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP
1021 Anacapa Street, 2nd Floor
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
Tel: (805) 963-7000
Fax: (805) 965-4333
sslater@bhfs.com
bherrema@bhfs.com
cguillen@bhfs.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant The Wood-
Claeysens Foundation

1 Joseph C. Chrisman
2 Hathaway, Perrett, Webster, Powers,
3 Chrisman & Gutierrez
4 5450 Telegraph Road
5 Ventura, CA 93003
6 (805) 644-7111
7 jchrisman@hathawaylawfirm.com

8 Attorneys for Cross-Defendant Wood-
9 Claeysens Foundation

10 Thomas E. Jeffry
11 Debra J. Albin-Riley
12 Arent Fox LLP
13 555 West Fifth Avenue, 48th Floor
14 Los Angeles, CA 90013-1065
15 (213) 629-7400
16 (213) 629-7401
17 Thomas.jeffry@arentfox.com

18 Attorneys for Cross-Defendant Community
19 Memorial Health System

20 Jennifer T. Buckman
21 Andrew J. Ramos
22 Holly Jacobson
23 Bartkiewicz Kronick & Shanahan, PC
24 1011 Twenty-Second Street
25 Sacramento, CA 95816-4907
26 Tel. (916) 446-4254
27 Fax (916) 446-4018
28 jtb@bkslawfirm.com
hjj@bkslawfirm.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant City of Ojai

Eric J. Schindler
Michelle J. Berner
Kroesche Schindler LLP
2603 Main Street, Suite 200
Irvine, CA 92614
Tel. (949) 387-0495
Fax (888) 588-0034 Fax
eschindler@kslaw.legal
mberner@kslaw.legal

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant Oak Haven,
LLC

David B. Cosgrove
Jeffrey M. Oderman
Douglas J. Dennington
Jeremy N. Jungreis
Rutan & Tucker, LLP
611 Anton Boulevard, Suite 1400
Costa Mesa, CA 92626-1931
Tel: 714-641-5100
Fax: 714-546-9035
dcosgrove@rutan.com
joderman@rutan.com
ddennington@rutan.com
jjungreis@rutan.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant Casitas
Municipal Water District

Andrew Brady
DLA Piper LLP (US)
550 South Hope Street, Suite 2400
Los Angeles, CA 90071-2618
Tel. (213) 330-7700
Fax: (213) 330-7701
andrew.brady@us.dlapiper.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant Integritas Ojai,
LLC

David R. Krause-Leemon
BEAUDOIN & KRAUSE-LEEMON LLP
15165 Ventura Blvd., Suite 400
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403
Tel. (818) 205-2809
Fax (818) 788-8104
david@bk-llaw.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant RDK Land,
LLC

Brian A. Osborne
Osborne Law Firm
674 County Square Drive, Suite 308
Ventura, CA 93003
Tel. (805) 642-9283
Fax (805) 642-7054
osbornelawyer@gmail.com

Attorney for Cross-Defendants Brian A.
Osborne; Ronald W. Rood and Susan B.
Rood, Trustees of the Rood Family Trust

Adam D. Wieder
Barry C. Groveman
Ryan Hiete
Groveman Hiete LLP
35 East Union Street, Suite B
Pasadena, CA 91103
Tel (626) 747-9383
Fax (626) 747-9370
awieder@grovemanhiete.com
bgroveman@grovemanhiete.com
rhiete@grovemanhiete.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant Michael
Bradbury; Heidi Bradbury; and The Heidi
Gramkow Trust

Ernest J. Guadiana
Elkins Kalt Weintraub Reuben Gartside LLP
10345 W. Olympic Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90064
Tel. (310) 746-4425
eguadiana@elkinskalt.com

Attorneys for Michael Lombardo and Charles
L. Ward III, as Co-Trustees of the Ward-
Lombardo Living Trust

Patrick L. Rendon
Lamb and Kawakami LLP
333 South Grand Avenue, Suite 4200
Los Angeles, CA 90071
Tel. (213) 630-5500
Fax: (213) 630-5555
prendon@lkfirm.com

Attorneys for Real Party in Interest Emily V.
Brown

David A. Ossentjuk
Ossentjuk & Botti
2815 Townsgate Road, Suite 320
Westlake Village, CA 91361
Tel: (805) 557-8081
Fax: (805) 456-7884
DOssentjuk@oandblawyers.com

Attorney for Cross-Defendant Robert Martin

Peter A. Goldenring
Mark R. Pachowicz
Pachowicz | Goldenring A Professional Law
Corporation
6050 Seahawk Street
Ventura, CA 93003-6622
Tel. (805) 642-6702
Fax (805) 642-3145
attorneys@gopro-law.com
peter@gopro-law.com
mark@pglaw.law

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant The Manfred
Krankl and Elaine V. Krankl Living Trust

Karen A. Feld
Daniel S. Roberts
Cole Huber LLP
3401 Centrelake Drive, Suite 670
Ontario, CA 91761
Tel: (909) 230-4209
Fax: (909) 937-2034
kfeld@colehuber.com
droberts@colehuber.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant Ventura
Unified School District

Hermitage Mutual Water Company, and Santa
Ana Ranch, Inc.

Attn: J. Roger Essick
2955 Hermitage Road
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 320-1406
rogeressick@gmail.com

Julie A. Baker
2193 Maricopa Hwy
Ojai, CA 93023
(805) 646-8700
Jandjbaker2@gmail.com

The Joseph Fedele 1995 Living Trust,
Oriana Marie Fedele, Trustee
Attn. Oriana Fedele
P.O. Box 298
Lahaina, HI 96767
Tel. (818) 601-3161
orianafedele@gmail.com

T&D Nevada Trust
Dennis and Antoinette Mitchell
Mitchell Homes Inc.
P.O. Box 360
Ojai, CA 93024
(805) 340-2890
amitc74383@aol.com

Michaela Boehm
12293 topa Lane
Santa Paula, CA 93060
Tel. (323) 493-3737
micboehm@me.com

Anthonie M. Voogd
918 Palomar Road
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 646-1512
avoogd@stanfordalumni.org

Lawrence S. Mihalas
Trustees of the Mihalas Family Trust
419 21st Place
Santa Monica, CA 90402
Tel. (310) 739-0700
lmihalas@gmail.com
lmihalas@ucla.edu

Heather Blair
556 So. Fair Oaks Ave., Ste 101
Box 356
Pasadena, CA 91105
Tel. (626) 755-6566
Hblair1946@gmail.com

Martin Hartmann
Whitney Hartmann
430 S. Carrillo Road
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 798-2253
earthbuilding@gmail.com

Robert K. Cartin
Cartin Family LLC
505 Estremoz Ct.
Oceanside, CA 92057
Tel. (760) 429-4738
bob.cartin@dvm.com

Loa E. Bliss
Loa E. Bliss 2006 Revocable Trust
9030 Ojai Santa Paula Road
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel: (617) 750-8500
loabliss@hotmail.com

Del Cielo LLC
Attn. Tim Carey, Managing Member
22410 Hawthorne Boulevard, Suite 5
Torrance, CA 90505
Tel. (310) 787-6569
tim@calvoterguide.com

Joyce Syme, and
The Joyce A. Syme Living Trust
1760 Ocean Avenue
Santa Monica, CA 90401
Tel. (310) 403-1760
seaviewmotel@hotmail.com

Janice and Jesse Hillestad
9611 N. Ventura Ave.
Ventura, CA 93001
Tel. (310) 614-8438
janicehillestad@icloud.com
jessehillestad@gmail.com

Dale and Patricia Givner
12617 Koenigstein Rd.
Santa Paula, CA 93060
Tel. (805) 525-9524
dalegivner@gmail.com

Carlos A Mejia
Sophie A Wenzlau
Department of Justice
1300 I Street, Suite 125
P.O. Box 944255
Sacramento, CA 94244-2550
Tel. (916) 210-6379
Fax: (916) 327-2319
sophie.wenzlau@doj.ca.gov
carlos.mejia@doj.ca.gov

Attorneys for California Department of Parks
and Recreation

Jacob Slujter
Rabindra Singh
1070 McAndrew Road.
Ojai CA 93023; Tel.
(805) 646-2726
ED@KFA.ORG

In Propria Persona for Krishnamurti
Foundation of America

Kelton Lee Gibson
878 Oak Grove Court
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 701-9318
kgibson@mwglaw.com
kgibson878@gmail.com

Kelton Lee Gibson, Trustee of the Gibson
Family Trust, dated June 6, 2006

Rebecca C. Collins
Thomas M. Collins, Jr.
241 Longhorn Lane
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. 805-312-5894
tominojai@gmail.com
collinst3@sbcglobal.net

Claude R. and Patricia E. Baggerly
119 S. Poli Avenue
Ojai, CA 93023-2144
Tel. (805) 646-0767
Tel. (805) 766-7317
russ.baggerly65@gmail.com

Dennis and Nadine Corte
12812 MacDonald Drive
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 701-1950
dwcorte@outlook.com

David R. Greifinger
Law Offices of David R. Greifinger
15515 West Sunset Blvd., No. 214
Pacific Palisades, CA 90272
Tel. (424) 330-0193
tracklaw@me.com

Attorney for Cross-Defendants Danny Everett
and Tiarzha Talyor

George and Sigrid Bressler
340 Longhorn Lane
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 646-1221
andybsail@gmail.com

Peter Duchesneau
Sigrid R Waggener
Mannat, Phelps & Phillips, LLP
One Embarcadero Center, 30th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94111
Tel (415) 291-7400
Fax (415) 291-7474
pduchesneau@manatt.com
swaggener@manatt.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant Aera Energy,
LLC

Judith L. Mercer
c/o of Jason Goldman
Mercer Family Trust Agreement of 1992
1175 Grand Avenue
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (310) 625-7795
jgoldman@begroup.com

Matthew Haffner
Haffner Law Group
86 S. Laurel Street
Ventura, CA 93001
Tel. (805) 641-9334
Fax (805) 980-5014
mhaffner@haffnerlawgroup.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant Susan Moll

Harry D. Sims and Raymond P. Sims
P.O. Box 1870
Ojai, CA 93024
Tel. (805) 646-0167
1978simsfamilytrust@gmail.com

Andrew K. Whitman
821 N. Signal Street
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 444-5671
sfreberg@scr-legaliner.com

In pro per and Atty for Cross-Defendants
Andrew K. Whitman and Heidi A. Whitman;
Nancy L. Whitman; John R. Whitman and
Nancy L. Whitman Family Trust

Paul R. Huff
The Huff Law Firm APC
21 S. California Street, Suite 205
Ventura, CA 93001
Tel. (805) 667-8940
Fax (805) 850-7399
phuff@hufffirm.com

Attorneys for Barnard Properties, LLC

Henry D. Finkelstein
Brian Moskal
Greenberg Glusker Fields Claman &
Machtiger LLP
2049 Century Park East, Suite 2600
Los Angeles, CA 90067
Tel. (310) 553-3610
Fax (310) 553.0687
hfinkelstein@ggfirm.com
bmoskal@greenbergglusker.com

Attorneys for Ginnetti Living Trust, and
Baldwin Ranch, LLC
Tristan F. Mackprang
David J. Farkas
Coleman Frost LLP
201 Nevada Street, Smoky Hollow
El Segundo, CA 90245
Tel. (424) 277-1650
Fax (31) 648-9739
tristan@colemanfrost.com
david@colemanfrost.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendants Housing
Authority of the City of San Buenaventura,
Triad Properties, Inc., Encanto Del Mar
Apartments, L.P., Villages at Westview I LP,
Vista Del Mar Commons, LP, and Soho
Associates, L.P.

Christopher Danch
16200 Maricopa Highway
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 640-8534
chrisdanch@gmail.com

Attorney for Cross-Defendants Angie Marie
Genasci and Christopher Paul Danch, Trustees
of the Genasci-Danch Family Trust; and
Donald and Wendy Givens

Alessandro (Alex) Lobba
Alessandro Lobba and Mary E. Jackson,
individually as Trustees of the Lobba-Jackson
Family Trust
947 Casitas Vista Road
Ventura, CA 93001
Tel. (805) 895-7056
alobba@gmail.com

Christine Steiner
2560 Ladera Road
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (31) 600-3220
csteiner@csteinerlaw.com

William Slaughter
Slaughter, Reagan & Cole, LLP
625 East Santa Clara Street, Suite 101
Ventura, CA 93001
Tel. (805) 658-7800
Fax (805) 644-2131
slaughter@srllplaw.com

Attorneys for The Boyd S. Dron and Karin
Dron Joint Living Trust, and Sisar Mutual
Water Company

Julia Taft-Whitman, President CEO
Taft Corporation
111 West Topa Topa Street
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 794-2837
juliawhitman@gmail.com

Jaide Whitman, President
Julia Whitman, Director
Conservation Endowment Fund
P.O. Box 6
Oak View, CA 93022
Tel. (805) 649-2333
Tel. (805) 804-7005
jaide.whitman@gmail.com
TaftGardensOffice@gmail.com

Kelley M. Rasmussen, Trustee
2420 Park Road
Lake Oswego, OR 97034
Tel. (805) 798-7125
kelleyras@gmail.com

Angela Small Booth, Attorney
2175 Valley Meadow Drive
Oak View, CA 93022
Tel. (805) 765-5413
angie@angiesmall.org

William E. Colborn, Jr.
13183 Ojai Road
Santa Paula, CA 93060
Tel. (805) 795-1909
jake@colbornandassociates.com

Rebecca Tickell
350 Verano Drive
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (323) 559-5700
rebecca@bigpictureranch.com

Joshua Beckman
913 Oso Road
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (323) 404-0465
joshbfbp@gmail.com

Gregg S. Garrison and Rosanna Garrison
Garrison Law Corporation
12986 MacDonald Drive
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (650) 726-1111 / Fax: (805) 669-3168
gsgarrison@garrisonlawcorp.com

Robert L. Smith
12777 Tree Ranch Road
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 558-6322
treeranch@ymail.com

Susan M. Glennon
292 Cruzero Street
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 646-4816
theglennonnest@aol.com

Robin Schwartzburd
411 Franklin Drive
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 272-5877
robin.schwartzburd@gmail.com

Melinda Hass
11947 Koenigstein Road
Santa Paula, CA 93060
Tel. (213) 713-4360
mlynnbooking@gmail.com

1 Malinda K. Vaughn
2 Mitchell B. Vaughn
3 12283 Ojai Santa Paula Road
4 Ojai, CA 93023-9323
5 Tel. (805) 890-6616
6 vaughnmb@aol.com

7 Jennifer Jordan Day and Joel Fox
8 909 North Rice Road
9 Ojai, CA 93023
10 Tel. (213) 321-5253
11 jenniferjordanday@gmail.com

12 Catherine Ferro &
13 Catherine Eileen Ferro Inter Vivos Trust
14 312 Montana Road
15 Ojai, CA 93023
16 Tel. (805) 326-1686
17 cepharoah@gmail.com

18 Susan Capper
19 12870 Tree Ranch Road
20 Ojai, CA 93023
21 Tel. (805) 794-6421
22 chelsue@aol.com

23 Joyce L. Heath
24 Joyce Heath, Trustee of the Heath Family
25 Living Trust,
26 P.O. Box 1323
27 Ojai, CA 93024
28 Tel. (805) 290-6231
mamaheath55@gmail.com

Ronald W. Bowman
Trustee of the Bowman Trust dated April 8,
2011
672 W. Villanova Road
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 732-4014
ron@l-binc.com

Amy Hueppe
1025 Moreno Drive
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (310) 699-4619
amyhueppe@gmail.com

Rebecca D. Schwermer
P. O. Box 174
Santa Paula, CA 93061
Tel. (805) 551-3494
octoberbabies2@verizon.net

Brigitte Lovell, Trustee of Lovell Living Trust
295 Encino Drive
Oak View, CA 93022
Tel. (915) 227-9412
loveb9@gmail.com

Susan C. White
Steven J. White
2 Shorewood Drive
Bellingham, WA 98225
Tel. (425) 891-9249
curranwhite1@hotmail.com

Lindy & Karen C. Goetz
12338 Linda Flora
Ojai, CA 93023-9721
Tel. (805) 649-2526; (805) 794-2312
lindygoetz@roadrunner.com

Thomas M. German
301 N. Drown Avenue
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 646-2130
kittycatgirl214@gmail.com

Andrew P. Byrne, Esq.
1140 Highland Avenue, Ste. 250
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266
Tel. (310) 505.7170
Andy@ByrneLaw-LA.com

Attorney for Cross-Defendant Roman
Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles, a sole
corporation

Glenn Bator
338 Montana Road
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 798-1802
denibator@aol.com

1 Harry Anthony Williams
2 915 Daly Road
3 Ojai, CA 93023
4 Tel. (661) 609-1253
5 Tel. (805) 794-6922
6 awilliam@me.com

Bryan M. Sullivan, Esq.
EARLY SULLIVAN WRIGHT GIZER &
McRAE LLP
6420 Wilshire Boulevard, 17th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90048
Tel. (323) 301-4660
bsullivan@earlysullivan.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant
Jeff Bacon as Trustee of the Villa Nero Trust
Dated January 25, 2000

7 David L. Osias, Esq.
8 Allen Matkins Leck Gamble Mallory & Natsis
9 LLP
10 One America Plaza
11 600 West Broadway, 27th Floor
12 San Diego, CA 92101-0903
13 Tel. (619) 233-1155
14 Fax (619) 233-1158
15 dosias@allenmatkins.com

Laura M. Peakes
John E. Peakes, Jr.
316 Verano Drive
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 402-0249
jpeakesjr@aol.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant
Jeff Bacon as Trustee of the Villa Nero Trust
Dated January 25, 2000

14 Kelsey Klein
15 Paula Kee
16 1042 Fairview Road
17 Ojai, CA 93023
18 Tel. (805) 640-5154
19 kelseyklein88@gmail.com

Laura R. Schreiner, a.k.a Laura Rearwin
418 Crestview Drive
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 479-5400
laura@rearwin.com

18 Paul J. Deneen
19 12170 Ojai Santa Paula Road
20 Ojai, CA 93023-9358
21 Tel. (805) 218-0211
22 paul@carbide.com

Jennifer Carafelli
Robin Schwartzburd
211 Village Commons Boulevard, No. 21
Camarillo, CA 93012
Tel. (805) 340-2540
carafelli@gmail.com

21 Timothy Mahoney
22 10244 Ojai Santa Paula Road
23 Ojai, CA 93023
24 Tel. (323) 252-3309
25 honedog@mac.com

Thomas Adams
Adams & Associates
21781 Ventura Boulevard, Suite 10005
Woodland Hills, CA 93003
Tel. (805) 229-1529
tom@adamsassoc.com

Attorneys for Cross-Defendant 235 La Luna
Owners, an unincorporated association

Salvatore Scarpato
106 Calhoun Lane
Georgetown, TX 78633
Tel. (805) 797-8767
salscarpato@att.net

Robert Kyle
The Robert Kyle Living Trust
715 Sunset Place
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (626) 260-5509
robertkyle61@gmail.com

William R. Thatcher
12195 Linda Flora Drive
Ojai, CA 93023-9723
thelostplanetairmen@yahoo.com

David Bishop
Sophie Loire
Tel. (805) 403-5370
frenchiephotos@yahoo.com

Chet Hilgers
Mellanie Hilgers
mellaniehilgers@gmail.com

Stephanie Gustafson
Tel. (805) 646-1423
sgustafson@ovs.org

Kristi Schoeld
Neil Jorgensen
Tel. (805) 272-8360
neilkristi@googlemail.com

Robert Turnage
9902 Sulphur Mountain Road
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (916) 837-3907
Robert.turnage@sbcglobal.net

Authorized Representative for Cross-
Defendant Meher Mount Corporation

Linda J.G. MacDougall, Trustee of The Linda
J.G. MacdDugall Living Trust
Marsha Kee Strong-Chandler
Richard Holt Robinson
119 E. Channel Islands Blvd.
Port Hueneme, CA 93041
(805) 202-6379
speakerholistic@gmail.com

Gerrold Grigsby
Karen Grigsby
9799 Ojai Santa Paula Road
Ojai, CA 93023
Tel. (805) 649-1624
grigsbyranch@gmail.com

Via First Class Mail

James A. Vickman
Vickman & Associates
424 South Beverly Drive
Beverly Hills, CA 90212
Tel. (310) 553-8533
Fax (10) 553-0557
jv@vickmanassociates.com

Warren W. Greene
Bonnie M. Greene
958 E. Main Street
Ventura, CA 93001
Tel. (805) 652-1080
Fax (805) 652-0400

Attorneys for New Civilization, a California
corporation

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the
above is true and correct.

Executed on July 9, 2021 at Walnut Creek, California


Irene Islas