

**IN THE WATER COURT OF THE STATE OF MONTANA
LOWER MISSOURI DIVISION
PEOPLES CREEK
BASIN 40I**

**FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW FOR THE
INTERLOCUTORY DECREE OF PEOPLES CREEK BASIN
(BASIN 40I)**

The Water Court issued the Preliminary Decree for the Peoples Creek Basin on June 20, 2013. Objections filed to claims in the Preliminary Decree and issue remarks appearing on the claims in the Preliminary Decree continue to be addressed and resolved.

These Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are issued for the Interlocutory Decree of the Peoples Creek Basin (Basin 40I) as authorized by §§ 3-7-224(2) and 85-2-231, MCA.

FINDINGS OF FACT

DESCRIPTION OF BASIN

1. Basin 40I encompasses Peoples Creek and its tributaries as well as groundwater located within Basin 40I. Peoples Creek is a tributary of the Milk River in north central Montana. A portion of Peoples Creek flows through the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. The boundaries of Basin 40I are outlined on the attached map. Although this Decree includes water rights within the hydrologic boundaries of Basin 40I, it does not include all the water rights in the Basin. The purpose of this Decree is to adjudicate existing water rights not included in the Preliminary Decree in Basin 40I and not claimed as reserved water rights by any Indian tribe or by the federal government for the benefit of any Indian tribe.

DECREE ABSTRACTS AND INDEX

2. In addition to these Findings and Conclusions, this Decree consists of abstracts for the 13 claims included in this Decree. Accompanying the Decree are six

Indexes designed to facilitate research on water rights included in the Decree. The six Indexes are as follows:

- Water Right Claim Identification Number Index
- Owner Name Index
- Priority Date Index
- Point of Diversion Index
- Source Name Index
- Issue Remark Index

3. Copies of the Decree and six Indexes are located at the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (“DNRC”) Glasgow Regional Office, the DNRC Water Rights Adjudication Office in Helena, and the Montana Water Court in Bozeman. This information is also available on the DNRC’s Water Rights Adjudication webpage.

UNRESOLVED FACTUAL AND LEGAL ISSUES

4. Parties may file objections ONLY to the water rights in this Decree. Issues may also be raised by the Water Court on its own initiative. Rule 8, W.R.Adj.R.

5. Unresolved factual and legal issues have been noted by issue remarks on claim abstracts. The Issue Remark Index combines the issue remarks into a list arranged numerically by water right claim number. Searching the Issue Remark Index by water right claim number will identify issue remarks on individual claim abstracts. Issue remarks not resolved through the objection process will be resolved pursuant to § 85-2-248, MCA.

6. Water users within this Basin and other interested persons will be mailed a Notice of Entry of Interlocutory Decree and Notice of Availability contemporaneously with the filing of these Findings and Conclusions. The Notice of Availability explains the objection process and sets a deadline for filing objections with the Water Court.

7. Claims for water rights reserved under the laws of the United States of America are included in the Montana general adjudication of water rights. The State of Montana, through the Reserved Water Rights Compact Commission, engaged in the negotiation of reserved water rights compacts with the federal government and Indian

tribes. §§ 85-2-701 through 85-2-708, MCA. There may be tribal reserved rights in this basin that are not reflected in this decree. Those rights may be issued in a separate decree.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. This is a general adjudication of existing water rights. An existing water right is a right to the use of water which is protected under the law as it existed prior to July 1, 1973. Section 85-2-102(13), MCA.

2. Certain claims were exempt from the statement of claim filing process but could be voluntarily filed. Section 85-2-222, MCA. These exempt rights were for stock or domestic uses from instream or groundwater sources. In 2013, the Montana Legislature created a process to file claims for existing water rights that were exempt from filing in the statewide water right adjudication. Section 85-2-222(2), MCA.

3. The Montana Water Court has jurisdiction to enter an Interlocutory Decree of the Peoples Creek Basin (Basin 40I) pursuant to Title 85, Chapter 2, Montana Code Annotated. *Ariz. v. San Carlos Apache Tribe*, 463 U.S. 545, 103 S. Ct. 3201 (1983); *State ex rel. Greely v. Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes*, 219 Mont. 76, 712 P.2d 754 (1985).

4. These Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and abstracts define these 13 existing water rights under Montana law in Basin 40I and comprise an Interlocutory Decree in accordance with § 85-2-231, MCA, and Rule 4, W.R.Adj.R.

ELECTRONICALLY SIGNED AND DATED BELOW.

Electronically Signed By:
Hon. Judge Stephen R Brown
Wed, Jul 09 2025 11:07:14 AM

Service via Electronic Mail:

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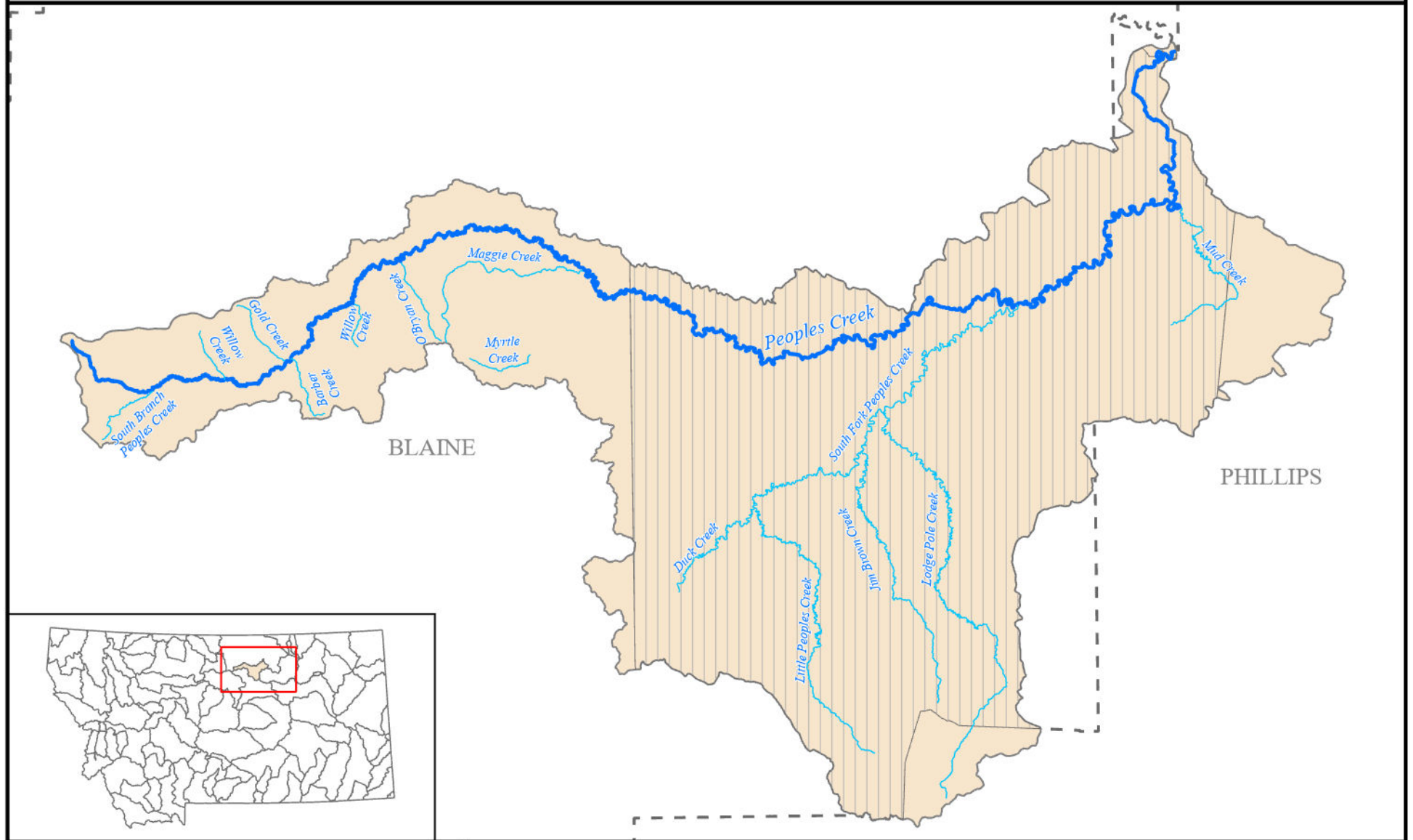
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Basin 40I - Peoples Creek



Legend

- Peoples Creek
- Streams
- Fort Belknap
- County Line
- Basin40I Boundary
- Montana State Boundary



0 3 6
Miles

Scale: 1:400,000



Map created by L Miller 2/14/2024