

STATE OF NEW MEXICO
ENERGY, MINERALS, AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
OIL CONSERVATION DIVISION

IN THE MATTTTER OF THE HEARING CALLED
BY THE OIL CONSERVATION DIVISION FOR
THE PURPOSE OF CONSIDERING:

Application of EOG Resources for
Approval of the Ford Exploratory
Unit, Sandoval County, New Mexico

Case No. 21980

REPORTER'S TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

EXAMINER HEARING

JULY 1, 2021

This matter came on for hearing before the New Mexico Oil Conservation Division, William Brancard, Hearing Examiner, John Garcia and Kathleen Murphy, Technical Examiners, on July 1, 2021, via the Webex Virtual Conferencing Platform hosted by the New Mexico Department of Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources.

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A P P E A R A N C E S .

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C O N T E N T S

CASE NO. 21980	PAGE
CASE CALLED:	4
STATEMENT BY MS. LUCK:	4
STATEMENT BY MR. FELDEWERT:	14
STATEMENT BY EXAMINER BRANCARD:	17

I N D E X of W I T N E S S E S

EOG WITNESSES	PAGE
DANIEL KOURY SWORN:	9
Direct Examination by Affidavit:	
Cross Examination by Examiner Murphy:	10
NILES WETHINGTON SWORN:	9
Direct Examination by Affidavit:	
Cross Examination by Examiner Murphy:	10

E X H I B I T I N D E X		
	EOG RESOURCES, INC. EXHIBITS:	PAGE
1		
2		
3	A Application	23
4	B Affidavit of Daniel Koury, Landman	23
5	B-1 Resume	23
6	B-2 Unit Agreement	23
7	B-3 BLM Preliminary Approval Letter	23
8	B-4 Initial Development Well	23
9	C Affidavit of Niles Wethington	23
10	C-1 Resume	23
11	C-2 Type Log for Gallup Formation	23
12	C-3 Structure/Isopach Maps	23
13	C-4 All-depths Cross-Section	23
14	C-5 First Gallup Cross-Section	23
15	C-6 Second Gallup Cross-Section	23
16	D Unit Hearing Notice Letter and Tracking Information.	23
17		
18	E Notice of Publication	23
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

1 (Time noted 10:47 A.M.)

2 EXAMINER BRANCARD: Our final case on the docket
3 today, No. 25, is 21980, and we will have yet other guest
4 examiner. Ms. Kathleen Murphy is joining us. And this is
5 EOG Resources, Inc. Again Holland and Hart.

6 MS. LUCK: Good morning again. Kaitlyn Luck of
7 the Santa Fe office of Holland & Hart for EOG Resources in
8 this case.

9 EXAMINER BRANCARD: Are there any other persons
10 here for Case 21980? (Note: Pause.) Hearing none, Ms.
11 Luck please explain what you would like the Division to do
12 with this.

13 MS. LUCK: Thank you. In this case EOG applied
14 for approval of the Ford Exploratory Unit which is located
15 in Sandoval County.

16 The application explains that EOG is
17 seeking an Order approving the Ford Exploratory Unit,
18 which is a voluntary unit consisting of 18,978.54 acres of
19 federal and Indian allotted lands in Sandoval County.

20 The application, as well as the affidavit
21 of Daniel Koury, who is the landman in this case, will
22 provide the acreage descriptions.

23 So turning to the exhibit packet that was
24 filed with the Division, the application is included as
25 Exhibit A and then Mr. Koury's affidavit as Exhibit B.

1 Mr. Koury has not previously testified
2 before the Division and so we've provided his resume as
3 Exhibit A-1 which explains his education, experience, and
4 credentials to qualify him as an expert landman before the
5 Division.

6 Going forward with his affidavit, like I
7 mentioned it does note all of the sections and portions of
8 the sections that EOG seeks to include in this voluntary
9 unit. All of the acreage is located in Township 21 North,
10 Range 4 West, and Township 21 North, Range 5 West.

11 EOG is the designated operator of the
12 proposed units and has been designated as the operator
13 under the Unit Agreement. That's included in the packet
14 as Exhibit B-2.

15 The standard exhibits A and B are included
16 with the Unit Agreement that conforms to the federal form.

17 The unitized interval for the Ford
18 Exploratory Unit will be all depths underlying the said
19 sections, and Exhibit A to the unit agreement outlines the
20 boundary of the unit area, identifies the tracts within
21 the units, and the percentage of interest in each of those
22 tracts. 99.16 of the acreage in the proposed unit is
23 federal and the other .84 are the Indian allotted tracts.

24 Exhibit B to the Unit Agreement explains
25 that 11 of the 15 tracts are held by EOG with 100 percent

1 working interest and that EOG is continuing to work with
2 FIMO as to those uncommitted Indian allotted tracts.

3 EOG also provided Notice of this hearing to
4 overriding royalty interest owners, and Mr. Koury's
5 affidavit, paragraph 10, explains how those royalty owners
6 are to be treated under the unit agreement.

7 Exhibit B-3 is the letter from the BLM
8 providing preliminary approval for this unit and
9 reflecting that BLM supports the proposed voluntary
10 unitized area as well as the Unit Agreement.

11 Finally, Exhibit B-4 is the last exhibit
12 attached to Mr. Koury's affidavit that reflects that the
13 initial obligation well is going to be the Bullet 06 Fed
14 605H well, and his affidavit provides the location for
15 that well.

16 The next exhibit in the packet is the
17 affidavit of Mr. Niles Wethington. He is the geologist
18 for EOG on this project and we've attached his affidavit
19 as EOG Exhibits C.

20 He also has not previously testified before
21 the Division and so attached as Exhibit C-1 is a copy of
22 his resume reflecting his education, experience, and
23 credentials that qualify him as an expert petroleum
24 geologist, and as such we would ask that he be qualified
25 as an expert before the Division.

1 His affidavit provides the standard geology
2 exhibits for this unit, starting off with Exhibit C-2,
3 which is a Type Log for the well for the Gallup Formation.
4 Under the Unit Agreement, as I mentioned, the unitized
5 interval is all depths but EOG is specifically targeting
6 the Lower Gallup interval, and he provides more details on
7 the thickness of the formation, as well as the reasons for
8 EOG targeting that area.

9 His Exhibit C-3 is a Structure and Isopach
10 Map, and as I just mentioned he explained in a little more
11 detail about the prospective for development. He explains
12 the Gallup Interval's prospective for development in this
13 area.

14 So Exhibit C-3, he has the location of the
15 Type Log that's included as Exhibit C-2, as well as the
16 two cross sections, B to B-prime and C to C-prime.

17 His Exhibit C-4 is the cross section from A
18 to A-prime, which reflects all depths underlying the unit
19 area, and then his Cross Sections B to B-prime and C to
20 C-prime are only for the Gallup Formations.

21 And then next in the package are EOG's
22 Exhibits D and E, and that is the Notice information for
23 this unit case, which just reflects that EOG provided
24 Notice to both the royalty interest owners as well as FIMO
25 for the unallotted Indian interests that are also being

1 included in this unit.

2 So with that I would move the admission of
3 EOG Exhibits A through E, and I will stand for any
4 questions that the Division has for me, but if not I would
5 ask the case be taken under advisement.

6 EXAMINER BRANCARD: Thank you.

7 Ms. Murphy, I'll start with you.

8 EXAMINER MURPHY: Good morning. I have a couple
9 of questions and I think Mr. Koury and Mr. Wethington are
10 attending.

11 MS. LUCK: They are here and they are able
12 available to answer any questions.

13 CROSS EXAMINATION

14 BY MS. MURPHY:

15 **Q. My first question is those three un-issued**
16 **federal leases. Just for my own edification, how long**
17 **does it take those to get issued from the BLM?**

18 MR. KOURY: Ms. Murphy, that depends on the BLM.
19 Since these have not yet been issued to --

20 EXAMINER BRANCARD: I'm sorry, Mr. Koury. Could
21 you identify yourself?

22 MR. KOURY: Yes. I apologize. Daniel Koury on
23 behalf of EOG Resources.

24 EXAMINER BRANCARD: Could you spell your last
25 name.

1 MR. KOURY: Yes. It's K-o-u-r-y.

2 EXAMINER BRANCARD: Why don't I swear in you and
3 Mr. Wethington here, just so if you have to jump in and
4 answer questions.

5 Do both of you solemnly swear the testimony
6 you're about to give, if you give any, will be the truth
7 and nothing but the truth?

8 MR. KOURY: I do. Daniel Koury.

9 MR. WETHINGTON: I do, as well. This is Niles
10 Wethington.

11 EXAMINER BRANCARD: Sorry. Thank you. Go
12 ahead, Mr. Koury.

13 MR. KOURY: That's okay.

14 A. So these leases have not been issued and we are
15 not entirely sure when they will be issued, but once they
16 are, they will be effectively committed to the unit, if
17 that kind of answers your question at all.

18 **Q. Do you need those to be issued for the initial**
19 **well by the time it's drilled? I think you might not.**

20 A. Our understanding is we do not need those to be
21 issued for that initial well, but they are also
22 effectively included into the unit upon issuance.

23 MS. MURPHY: That was just I wondered how long
24 it takes to get those from the BLM.

25 I think my next questions are for

1 Mr. Wethington, the geologist.

2 And when I looked up these wells I had
3 questions, so I called the District Geologist Kate
4 Pickford in District 3, because I had questions about that
5 pool code, and she requests that instead of having a
6 wildcat pool that you guys come to apply for a unit pool
7 for that entire unit.

8 MR. WETHINGTON: Okay. We can follow up with
9 that.

10 EXAMINER MURPHY: And also some of those wells
11 in that unit might be Mesa Verde the same thing, to have
12 them converted over to a unit pool instead of a wildcat
13 pool.

14 MR. WETHINGTON: Okay.

15 EXAMINER MURPHY: She also requests that the
16 names of those wells in there -- I don't know, I think
17 they are cars, she wants them to be renamed according to
18 the unit, and you can do that on a sundry form.

19 MR. WETHINGTON: Yeah, we will do that.

20 EXAMINER MURPHY: And then kind of my last
21 question is a geology question for you.

22 CROSS EXAMINATION

23 BY MS. MURPHY:

24 Q. In the Gallup, I'm assuming your lateral will be
25 in a sandstone, the Gallup Sandstone, although there is

1 different environments.

2 And you frack those, true?

3 A. That's correct.

4 Q. And when you -- maybe it's just the way they lay
5 out those wells, because they are not stand-up or laydown,
6 they are 45-degree-angle wells. Do you step out from the
7 same surface location, more like a pitchfork as opposed to
8 a fan?

9 A. Yes, that's correct. The first perf location
10 would be away from the surface location, in the Azimuths
11 each lateral would be consistent.

12 Q. Do you believe the pool -- the Gallup Sandstone
13 covers most of that unit so it will be out even the
14 boundaries of the unit?

15 A. Yes, we believe the Gallup Sandstone extends
16 regionally.

17 Q. And there's really nothing out there in this
18 initial well, the Bullet. You're going to do core on it?
19 Is that what it looked like? It's an exploratory well,
20 also, before you shoot the lay-off (phonetic)?

21 A. That's correct. Plug that pilot well with the
22 core (inaudible) unit.

23 MS. MURPHY: I think that's really all the
24 questions I had, then. Thank you.

25 EXAMINER BRANCARD: Thank you.

1 Ms. Murphy did I understand that we don't
2 have pools that govern, pool rules that govern this area?
3 Is that correct?

4 EXAMINER MURPHY: I don't know how to answer
5 that.

6 EXAMINER BRANCARD: We don't have a special pool
7 that covers this area? These are wildcat, they're
8 outside the pools?

9 EXAMINER MURPHY: The pools that are in there
10 are wildcat. There's probably 30-some wells that have
11 APDs and all the pools on them are wildcat.

12 And when I was talking to Ms. Pickford this
13 morning she said: If you have a unit you should probably
14 come and get a unit pool versus a wildcat pool.

15 EXAMINER BRANCARD: Thank you.

16 Okay. Ms. Luck, I guess the sort of
17 threshold question for the Division is what exactly are
18 you asking the Division to do here, and what effect does
19 that action of the Division have? And I guess also what
20 authority does the Division have to deal with an
21 exploratory unit such as this?

22 MS. LUCK: Right. It's my understanding that
23 EOG is seeing approval of this voluntary unit, and that,
24 uhm -- I guess -- I'm not -- sorry, I'm not sure if I
25 follow your question completely. But the BLM is waiting

1 to approve the unit agreement until there is an Order
2 approving this voluntary unit, so EOG has to obtain
3 approval from the Division for this exploratory unit in
4 order to proceed under the Unit Agreement with the BLM,
5 and then once they have that approval the BLM will sign
6 the Unit Agreement.

7 EXAMINER BRANCARD: So the BLM has requested
8 that the State approve this? We hear nothing from the
9 BLM, so we have to rely on you-all telling us, you know,
10 third-hand what the BLM is wanting us to do.

11 So that is sort of part of our confusion
12 here.

13 MS. LUCK: Right. And I understand that.

14 And the BLM has submitted a Preliminary
15 Approval Letter, and we've included that with our packet,
16 that indicates that the unit would become effective upon
17 approval from the Division.

18 But this is a voluntary unit, and though,
19 uhm, it's my understanding that it does require Division
20 approval under the rules.

21 EXAMINER BRANCARD: I'm sorry. Under whose
22 rules?

23 MS. LUCK: Under the Division rules.

24 EXAMINER BRANCARD: Okay. Well, you will have
25 to point us to that.

1 You know, the Division, if you look at the
2 Statutory Unitization Act, it says in the first section of
3 the Act, this does not apply to exploratory units.

4 So we are left sort of trying to figure out
5 what our authority is, and perhaps more importantly, what
6 the implication of us approving a unit is.

7 What Ms. Murphy and Ms. Pickford have
8 discussed is perhaps the more important element for your
9 client, which is: If you have a special pool you can
10 achieve a lot of what the unit is desiring; in other
11 words, getting rid of internal setbacks, which is probably
12 a big issue, which most pools say: If you have a federal
13 exploratory unit internal setbacks go away.

14 So that may be more what you're looking for
15 in terms of achieving something with the Division. We
16 just sort of hesitate approving something that we have no
17 authority to approve and we are not sure what the
18 implications of us approving it are.

19 So that's it.

20 I see a hand raised. Mr. Feldewert.

21 MR. FELDEWERT: Mr. Brancard, I'm stepping in
22 here only because I think you and I have a little more
23 long-term history here than perhaps others.

24 This issue has been raised before, and I
25 think you and I have had discussions with that; I know I

1 have had discussions at least with Mr. Brooks about it a
2 number of years ago.

3 But, you know, it -- and Kaitlyn, correct
4 me if I am wrong. This is all federal land, right?

5 MS. LUCK: That's correct. It's all federal
6 lands.

7 EXAMINER BRANCARD: Except for that one little
8 Indian allotment.

9 MR. KOURY: That is correct, Mr. Brancard.

10 This is Daniel Koury.

11 MR. FELDEWERT: So when you look -- for whatever
12 reason, when you look at the federal form and you look at
13 the Whereas clause, it talks about approval from the Oil
14 Conservation Division. That has been there for a long
15 time in these federal forms, federal/state fee, federal,
16 fed fee, et cetera.

17 So we know, No. 1, that historically the
18 Division has approved units even if it's all federal land.
19 Now, why that started I don't know, and why that Whereas
20 clause is in that federal form, I don't know. But the
21 problem we have is that the federal form says you-all will
22 approve them, the BLM thinks you-all approve them, so the
23 operators out there are stuck with the proposition that
24 even though it's all federal lands we have go to the Oil
25 Conservation Division for approval of this federal unit.

1 Now, perhaps that is something that can be
2 revisited by the Division and the BLM, but that's
3 historically been the practice and remains the practice.

4 EXAMINER BRANCARD: That's right, although I
5 will say I looked through the Unit Agreement. I did not
6 see that provision in there. I've seen it in
7 Communitization Agreements but I didn't see that in this
8 Unit Agreement, because this Unit Agreement actually comes
9 right out of the CFRs. It is from the CFRs.

10 Now, we don't -- I don't think we're trying
11 to sort of mess with the BLM here. Okay? I mean, this is
12 their job, they're doing their job, and it's great. I
13 don't think the Division has a problem acknowledging,
14 accepting a BLM Unit Agreement, recognizing it exists and
15 putting it on our maps and doing all of that. I think
16 that's all just fine with us. But I guess when the word
17 "approval" comes up we sort of are concerned with what are
18 the implications of that approval.

19 And I think there are -- I think in some of
20 our previous Orders, I've looked at some, there were real
21 implications. We put things in there that said things.
22 But that was back when we had -- what were those called,
23 those units for the horizontal spacing units -- they
24 weren't horizontal spacing units, they were project areas.
25 Yes, project areas.

1 MR. FELDEWERT: Yes.

2 EXAMINER BRANCARD: We don't have those any
3 more, we just have spacing units.

4 So that's just a concern that's raised, is:
5 What are the implications of us doing that? I mean, in
6 this particular matter I will raise another issue here
7 that is specific to this unit, which is: This unit
8 borders to the north the Jicarilla Reservation. To the
9 south you have Navajo Chapters. I didn't see here
10 anything in your Notice that any Notice went to either of
11 those entities.

12 You know, that may not be your concern,
13 however the State does have obligations of tribal
14 consultation. We have our own agency policy about that.
15 And so when we elevate this to the level of an approval, I
16 worry about it triggering some of our obligations to reach
17 out to these tribes that are directly adjacent to this
18 unit, which is why it may be better for us to simply
19 acknowledge/accept, whatever words we want to use, rather
20 than "approve" this unit.

21 So I'm throwing this out in the discussion,
22 and I will make you aware that the discussion has been
23 raised to the Director's level about these units in
24 general. And the Director does meet with the BLM on a
25 regular basis and is going to raise the question with the

1 BLM of: What do you want us to do, BLM?

2 So we realize you're caught in the middle,
3 that your client is caught in the middle. You just want
4 this done with. You just want it approved, signed off on,
5 and can we move forward.

6 And we shouldn't be getting you crosswise
7 between two agencies here, so we will move forward with
8 this in some way or another, but, you know, hopefully our
9 Division will have, you know, some productive discussions
10 with the BLM so that we better understand where they are
11 coming from. Because they are not communicating to us.
12 They are communicating to you, not to us. They are not
13 sending us a Unit Agreement saying, "Please approve it,"
14 right? They are expecting you to come to us to do that.

15 So you're caught in the middle, and we
16 should talk to them directly about this so we can have
17 these move forward in a way that isn't causing any
18 implications/repercussions beyond what anybody really is
19 intending here.

20 And so that's all. I do think that what
21 Ms. Murphy has brought up, and Ms. Pickford, about looking
22 at special pools for the area may actually be quite
23 helpful for you in this area dealing with that. Because
24 if you look at the Blanco-Mesaverde pool rules it says:
25 Here is all these setbacks. Oh, by the way, if you have a

1 federal exploratory unit, they are gone internally. You
2 know, doesn't say an approved federal exploratory unit, it
3 just says a federal exploratory unit.

4 So those pool rules deal explicitly with
5 that issue and allow changes to how we implement our
6 obligations based on a federal exploratory unit, just the
7 mere existence of one, you know, rather than us approving
8 one.

9 So just a word, a thought there that that
10 might be more helpful to your client in some ways.

11 MR. FELDEWERT: Mr. Brancard, I appreciate that.

12 I have three things. (1) I think you raise
13 a legitimate point of why is the Oil Conservation Division
14 asked to approve purely federal units. Okay. But
15 historically the Division has, and has required applicants
16 to come before them.

17 No. 2 is, you know, this is a voluntary
18 unit. You know, there's no Notice to the offsetting
19 parties unless you got something funky about your unit.
20 Right? But, as you know, there's no Notice. So there has
21 not been a Notice requirement for offsetting tracts,
22 whether it's tribal, state, fee, or whatever.

23 And then third: The pool idea is
24 interesting. I know we've done it. I think questions
25 arise as to whether that pool then extends beyond the unit

1 boundary or is this a special pool where you're confined
2 strictly to that unit.

3 You know, those are issues that only the
4 Division can answer. You know, when we come to them they
5 set the pool.

6 So that's the kind of background here. I
7 appreciate the fact that the Director is taking the
8 initiative and kind of reaching out to the BLM. I think
9 the results of that being communicated to operators would
10 be very helpful as to whether we need to apply, right, to
11 the Division for units that comprise federal lands,
12 because right now operators/practitioners, we are not
13 quite sure.

14 EXAMINER BRANCARD: I mean, I think clearly the
15 Division is aided by the fact that you're providing to us
16 a Federal Exploratory Unit Agreement. So we know they
17 exist, we know what their boundaries are. I think that's
18 very important for the Division.

19 Do we have to do this through a hearing, do
20 we have to do this through an Order? I don't know. Maybe
21 there is a simpler way of doing this.

22 MR. FELDEWERT: Because you do have the APDs,
23 right, that would identify the affected acreage. And, as
24 you know, with the horizontal well rules if you have a
25 unitized area, the internal setbacks go away.

1 EXAMINER BRANCARD: Correct.

2 MR. FELDEWERT: So I think there's a mechanism
3 where the Division is apprised of the existence of these,
4 I'll call it, purely federal units. Like I said,
5 traditionally we've had to come before the Division.

6 EXAMINER BRANCARD: Right. And, you know, as I
7 discovered when I was researching this case, you know if
8 you go on our website we have a whole GIS platform now,
9 and one of the layers is federal units, Communitization
10 Agreements, Exploratory Units. So you can find those. We
11 obviously keep track of them, because they are important
12 to us precisely for those reasons you mentioned, in that
13 it impacts the horizontal spacing units, impacts the pool
14 rules.

15 So obviously we need to know about these
16 and we need to have you-all bring them to us. What we do
17 with that, I guess that's further action to be determined
18 here.

19 Ms. Murphy, any other questions?

20 EXAMINER MURPHY: Just as an FYI.

21 And the BLM maintains those GIS layers.
22 So, as it's been said to me, if we didn't, in a way, hear
23 some of these cases, we might not know about what units
24 have been created. I mean, I pay attention to the GIS but
25 other people don't at all, and so you might not know if

1 units were new or created unless you looked at that layer
2 a lot.

3 And another thing is: One of the benefits
4 somebody raised about this is if they come through OCD
5 then it goes to Taxation and Rev. and the unit gets the
6 credit and the associated issues with that. But, in other
7 words, sometimes if it doesn't come through OCD nobody
8 knows that a unit's been created.

9 And it seems like there could be a
10 different route. You know, instead of a hearing you could
11 come in, there's paperwork submitted, and we approve a
12 unit, but if we don't know about it, then, you know, it
13 just shows up on the BLM and we have to trust that the BLM
14 is maintaining those layers, and you don't always know
15 that they are.

16 EXAMINER BRANCARD: Yes. I think going forward
17 we will certainly have a process of bringing these
18 forward. What it will look like -- maybe it will be same.
19 I don't know. We'll see.

20 But I think we can take this case under
21 advisement. I think we have sufficient evidence here.

22 Once again I'll ask if there are any other
23 persons interested in Case 21980 to comment or question
24 on? (Note: Pause.)

25 Hearing none, your exhibits will be

1 admitted into the record. If we have any follow-up
2 questions, we will let you know.

3 On the Notice question, Mr. Feldewert, I
4 didn't see that as your issue, your client's issue, I saw
5 that more as our issue, that if we're taking -- if we
6 consider this a significant action, should we have been
7 notifying the tribes?

8 And so, you know, that sort of depends on
9 what level of action we classify this as. That's how our
10 tribal policies work. And so that's one reason to sort of
11 question what level of action is this.

12 So with that I think we have enough.

13 Ms. Murphy, do we have any other
14 information that we need from the applicants?

15 EXAMINER MURPHY: I believe we're good.

16 EXAMINER BRANCARD: Okay. Thank you. We will
17 take this case under advisement.

18 MS. LUCK: Thank you. I appreciate all your
19 time.

20 EXAMINER BRANCARD: Thank you, Ms. Luck.
21 Appreciate it. Anything else coming before the Division
22 today? (Note: Pause.) Hearing none, thank you all for
23 your patience. I believe we are completed for the
24 hearings for July 1, 2021. Have a great day.

25 (Time noted 11:18 a.m.)

1 STATE OF NEW MEXICO)
2 : SS
3 COUNTY OF TAOS)

5 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

6 I, MARY THERESE MACFARLANE, New Mexico Reporter
7 CCR No. 122, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that on Thursday, July 1,
8 2021, the proceedings in the above-captioned matter were
9 taken before me; that I did report in stenographic
10 shorthand the proceedings set forth herein, and the
11 foregoing pages are a true and correct transcription to
12 the best of my ability and control.

13 I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am neither employed by
14 nor related to nor contracted with (unless excepted by the
15 rules) any of the parties or attorneys in this case, and
16 that I have no interest whatsoever in the final
17 disposition of this case in any court.

18 /s/ Mary Macfarlane

19 _____

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