

In the United States Court of Federal Claims

Filed: November 20, 2017

IN RE ADDICKS AND BARKER
(TEXAS) FLOOD-CONTROL
RESERVOIRS

Master Docket No. 17-3000L

THIS DOCUMENT APPLIES TO:

ALL CASES

ORDER REGARDING JUDICIAL ASSIGNMENT, APPOINTMENT OF PLAINTIFFS' COUNSEL FOR THE PURPOSE OF PRE-TRIAL DISCOVERY, DISPOSITIVE MOTIONS FOR PARTIAL OR SUMMARY JUDGMENT AND/OR CROSS-MOTIONS PURSUANT TO RULE OF THE UNITED STATES COURT OF FEDERAL CLAIMS 56 AND/OR A TRIAL ON LIABILITY, AND SCHEDULING.

(DOWNSTREAM CLAIMS)

During the October 6, 2017 and November 1, 2017 hearings convened in Houston, the court was advised that putative class action complaints and individual complaints with downstream claims affecting approximately 4,000 private property interests are or will be filed in the United States Court of Federal Claims. *See, e.g., In re Addicks and Barker (Texas) Flood-Control Reservoirs*, Master Docket No. 17-3000L, Dkt. 7 (Fed. Cl. Nov. 3, 2017).

I. Assignment Of A United States Court Of Federal Claims Judge.

The Honorable Marian Blank Horn of the United States Court of Federal Claims is hereby assigned to manage pre-trial discovery and adjudicate all pre-trial dispositive motions.¹

II. Appointment Of Co-Counsel For Pre-Trial Discovery And Dispositive Motions (In Alphabetical Order).

On October 11, 2017, the court issued an Order requesting “all counsel of record that wish to be considered as class counsel(s) and/or lead class counsel(s)” to file a Statement of Interest

¹ On December 4, 2017, the Clerk of Court will effectuate this assignment when Master Docket, *In re Addicks and Barker (Texas) Flood-Control Reservoirs*, Master Docket No. 17-3000L is divided into Sub-Master Dockets. *See In re Addicks and Barker (Texas) Flood-Control Reservoirs*, Master Docket No. 17-3000L, Dkt. 10 (Fed. Cl. Nov. 13, 2017).

addressing the factors set forth in Rule of the United States Court of Federal Claims (“RCFC”) 23(g)(1). *See, e.g., Y And J Properties, Ltd.*, No. 17-1189, Dkt. 12 at 6 (Fed. Cl. Oct.11, 2017).

After considering the views of all counsel, the court makes the following appointments of Plaintiffs’ Counsel for the purpose set forth herein.

Mr. Rand P. Nolen is a graduate of the South Texas College of Law. Mr. Nolen is a Founding Partner of the Houston law firm of Fleming, Nolen, Jez, LLP, where he specializes in complex civil litigation. Mr. Nolen is admitted to the bar of the United States Court of Federal Claims and the United States Supreme Court. The court appoints Mr. Nolen as Co-Lead Counsel for the purposes set forth herein.

Mr. Derek Potts is a graduate of the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law. Mr. Potts is the Founder and Managing Partner of the Potts Law Firm, based in Houston, Texas. Mr. Potts specializes in complex litigation and multi-district litigation matters. Mr. Potts is admitted to the bar of the United States Court of Federal Claims. The court appoints Mr. Potts as Co-Lead Counsel for the purposes set forth herein.

Where “diverse interests exist among the parties, the court may designate . . . counsel representing different interests.” MANUAL FOR COMPLEX LITIGATION § 10.224 (4th ed. 2004). Mr. Nolen and Mr. Potts have filed complaints that they contend should be certified as class actions. The court has determined that the issue of class certification is premature at this juncture. The court is concerned that the interests of property owners who ultimately may decide to opt-in to a certified class, may be different than those who may decide to pursue claims as individuals. *See* RCFC 23 Rules Committee Notes (Rule 23 “only contemplates opt-in class certifications”). For this reason, the court also has appointed Mr. Richard W. Mithoff to serve as a Co-Lead Counsel for the purposes set forth herein to ensure that the interests of individual plaintiffs are represented, since Mithoff Law represent only individual plaintiffs who, at this point, do not seek class treatment.

Mr. Mithoff is a graduate of the University of Texas School of Law. Mr. Mithoff was a Law Clerk for Judge William Wayne Justice of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Texas and is a Founding Partner of the Houston law firm of Mithoff Law. Mr. Mithoff is admitted to the bar of the United States Court of Federal Claims and the United States Supreme Court. The court appoints Mr. Mithoff as Co-Counsel for the purposes set forth herein.²

Each of the above-referenced appointed counsel satisfy the criteria for selection, set out in the MANUAL FOR COMPLEX LITIGATION (4th ed. 2004) and *MDL Standards and Best Practices*, DUKE LAW SCHOOL CENTER FOR JUDICIAL STUDIES (Sept. 11, 2014), https://law.duke.edu/sites/default/files/centers/judicialstudies/MDL_Standards_and_Best_Practices_2014-REVISED.pdf.

All appointed counsel will be compensated, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 4654(c), for work on pre-trial discovery issues and dispositive motions, including any subsequent appeals. *See Hensley v. Eckerhart*, 461 U.S. 424 (1983); *see also Hubbard v. United States*, 480 F.3d 1327 (Fed. Cir. 2007). In that regard, appointed counsel are expected to keep and maintain detailed time records from the date of this Order, take care to limit the use of law firm personnel (partners,

² Mr. Phillip B. Dye, Jr. of Vinson & Elkins LLP recommended Mithoff Law to the court.

associates, and paralegals), only to the extent absolutely necessary to meet professional standards of due diligence and care and minimize ancillary expenses.

III. Schedule.

To ensure the expeditious and orderly management of pre-trial jurisdictional discovery, dispositive motions, and/or a trial on liability, the court establishes the following schedule.

On or before January 30, 2018, all initial disclosures and electronically stored information and hard copy documents filed in the pre-trial phase of this case, will be provided to opposing counsel.

On or before February 28, 2018, the Government will file an Answer, pursuant to RCFC 7(a)(2), in response to any Amended Complaint filed on or before January 15, 2018. Thereafter, the parties may conduct discovery, subject to court Order, including any expert discovery, to conclude no later than May 31, 2018.

On or before June 15, 2018, the parties will file any dispositive motion(s), pursuant to RCFC 56.

On or before July 16, 2018, the parties may file any Responses and/or Cross-Motions to the June 15, 2018 dispositive motion(s).

On or before July 31, 2018, the parties simultaneously may file any Replies.

On or before October 29, 2018, the court will convene an oral argument in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, 515 Rusk Street, Houston, Texas on any dispositive motions.

If contested facts preclude disposition of this case on partial or summary judgment, pursuant to RCFC 56, this case will be set for a trial on liability by the assigned judge, at the earliest date available.

Page limitations for briefs and court filings, set forth in RCFC, are suspended. No extensions of time will be granted, but for extraordinary circumstances.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

s/ Susan G. Braden
SUSAN G. BRADEN
Chief Judge