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**EXEMPT FROM FILING FEE  
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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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12 CHINO BASIN MUNICIPAL WATER  
DISTRICT,

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Plaintiff,

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vs.

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16 CITY OF CHINO, ET AL.,

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Defendants.

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Case No: RCVRS 51010

*Assigned for All Purposes to:  
Honorable Stanford E. Reichert*

**DECLARATION OF GINA NICHOLLS  
IN SUPPORT OF OPPOSITION TO  
AGRICULTURAL POOL'S MOTION  
FOR ATTORNEY'S FEES**

[Concurrently Filed with Opposition to  
Motion; Declaration of J. Bosler; Declaration  
of S. Burton; Proposed Order]

Date: October 8, 2021

Time: 1:30 p.m.

Department: S35

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DECLARATION OF GINA NICHOLLS ISO OPPOSITION TO AGRICULTURAL POOL'S MOTION FOR  
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28 Attorney for APPROPRIATIVE POOL

1 DECLARATION OF GINA R. NICHOLLS

2 I, Gina R. Nicholls, declare:

3 1. I am an attorney at law duly licensed to practice law before the courts of the State  
4 of California. I am a partner at the law firm Nossaman LLP and one of the attorneys responsible  
5 for representing the City of Ontario, a member agency of the Appropriative Pool (“AP”), in the  
6 above-captioned case. I make this declaration in support of the opposition to the Agricultural  
7 Pool’s Motion for Attorney’s Fees, filed on July 26, 2021 (“Motion”). I have personal  
8 knowledge of the following matters and, if called as a witness, I could and would competently  
9 testify thereto.

10 2. After reviewing the Motion, I personally communicated with attorneys for other  
11 AP member agencies and the AP’s attorney, Mr. John Schatz. We prepared a meet and confer  
12 letter addressed to the Ag Pool’s attorney, Ms. Tracy Egoscue, requesting that the Ag Pool  
13 comply with the May 28, 2021 Court Order, by providing minimally redacted invoices to the AP  
14 fully covering the time frame FY 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. I am a signatory to the letter,  
15 which was sent by Mr. Schatz to Ms. Egoscue on August 27, 2021. A true and correct copy of  
16 the letter is attached hereto as **Exhibit “A”**.

17 3. Ms. Egoscue responded to our letter by email on September 3, 2021. A true and  
18 correct copy of her reply is attached hereto as **Exhibit “B”**.

19 4. I reviewed the invoices provided by the Ag Pool in support of its Motion and  
20 thereby confirmed the following information:

21 a. The Ag Pool did not provide any invoices for the first half of fiscal year  
22 2019-2020 (July through December 2019).

23 b. Invoices provided by Ag Pool for the latter half of fiscal year 2019-2020  
24 (January through June 2020), reflect attorney’s fees in the total amount of \$230,641.25, of which  
25 the narrative explanations for approximately \$203,000 (about 88%) are so heavily redacted that  
26 the subject matter of the time entry cannot be determined from reading it.

27 c. Invoices provided by Ag Pool for fiscal year 2020-2021 (July 2020  
28 through June 2021), reflect attorney’s fees in the total amount of \$384,687.50, of which the

1 narrative explanations for approximately \$351,000 (about 91%) are so heavily redacted that the  
2 subject matter of the time entry cannot be determined from reading it.

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

5 Executed this 26th day of September, 2021, at Los Angeles, California.

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Gina R. Nicholls

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# **EXHIBIT A**

**JOHN J. SCHATZ**  
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**August 27, 2021**

**Tracy Egoscue, Esq.**  
**Egoscue Law Group, Inc.**  
**3777 Long Beach Blvd.**  
**Long Beach, CA 90807**  
Email: [tracy@egoscue.com](mailto:tracy@egoscue.com)

**Re: Agricultural Pool Motion for Attorney's Fees, Filed July 26, 2021**

Dear Tracy:

The Motion for Attorney's Fees that you filed on behalf of the Agricultural Pool on July 26, 2021, seeks reimbursement by the AP of more than \$550,000 of attorney's fees and costs. These attorney's fees and costs appear to have been incurred by your law firm over a period of 18 months starting in January 2020, based on incomplete information presented in the Motion and supporting papers.

It is my understanding that several of our principals have had productive conversations toward a potential settlement of the issues. At the same time, in order for the settlement discussions to be as fruitful as possible, it is important that we receive complete information in support of the Agricultural Pool's Motion.

The Motion does not fully comply with the Order issued by the Court on May 28, 2021. The Order admonishes the parties that "[i]t is a denial of due process, as well as fundamentally unfair, for a party to be forced to pay a bill that the party has not seen. In order for a party to contest a bill, the party must be able to see and examine it first." (¶ 8.B.III.) The Court Order goes on to specify that it must be possible to determine whether the "fees for actions benefitting the Ag Pool . . . at least [are] not adverse to the Appropriative Pool." (¶ 8.B.III.a.) Additionally, any **"redactions cannot be so extensive as to make the bills meaningless for review by opposing counsel and determination by the court."** (¶ 8.B.III.b.)

The approach taken by the Agricultural Pool's Motion is at odds with the letter and spirit of the Court Order, for several reasons. First, the Agricultural Pool has not provided invoices for the entire time period in question. No invoices were provided for any time frame before January 2020, making it impossible to review the Agricultural Pool's legal expenses in Fiscal Year ("FY") 2019-2020. Because the invoices do not exactly correspond with the time frame and the amount in dispute, it is impossible to identify the individual line items of expense for which reimbursement is sought. Second, the invoices provided are so heavily redacted as to be meaningless. Numerous pages are completely redacted so that they provide no information whatsoever about the nature of the legal work performed by your firm. We have roughly estimated that overall, the redactions cover approximately 90 percent of all the legal fees invoiced. Such extensive redactions make it impossible for the AP Moving Parties and the Court to meaningfully examine the invoices.



The Agricultural Pool's approach will result in extensive briefing on the insufficiency of the information presented. This unnecessary additional dispute will need to be resolved before reaching the merits of the Agricultural Pool's request for reimbursement.

In light of ongoing settlement discussions, and in the interest of efficiency and ultimately reaching a mutual resolution of the dispute, the Appropriative Pool/AP Moving Parties are willing to provide an opportunity for the Agricultural Pool to cure the non-compliance of its Motion with the Court Order. To accomplish this, we propose that the Agricultural Pool provide minimally redacted invoices as soon as possible to the AP fully covering the time frame FY 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, and file such information with the Court. To be of assistance to the parties and the Court, the minimally redacted invoices must show the nature of each line item of expense for which reimbursement is sought.

In case settlement efforts are not borne out in the next several weeks (which may be a tall order given that more time than that is probably needed), and in order for the AP Moving Parties to prepare their response to your Motion based on such minimally redacted invoices, rather than upon the insufficient information filed on July 26, we would appreciate receiving the invoices by the end of August. Should you need additional time to provide the minimally redacted invoices, we could accommodate such a request in conjunction with a stipulated extension of the relevant Motion deadlines.

Feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Very truly yours,



John J. Schatz  
Attorney for Appropriative Pool

and

Counsel for Undersigned Appropriative Pool  
Members

*Gina Nicholls*

Gina Nicholls, Nossaman LLP, Attorney for City of Ontario

*Tom Bunn*

Tom Bunn, Lagerlof, LLP, Attorney for City of Pomona

*Tom McPeters*

Tom McPeters, Attorney for San Antonio Water Company and Fontana Union Water Company

*Andrew Gagen*

Andrew Gagen, Kidman Gagen Law LLP, Attorney for Monte Vista Water District and Monte Vista Irrigation Company

*Steve Anderson*

Steve Anderson, Best Best & Krieger LLP, Attorney for Cucamonga Valley Water District

*Shawnda Grady*

Shawnda Grady, Ellison Schneider Harris & Donlan, LLP, Attorney for Jurupa Community Services District

*Elizabeth Calciano*

Elizabeth Calciano, Hensley Law Group, Attorney for City of Chino Hills

*Jimmy Gutierrez*

Jimmy Gutierrez, Attorney for City of Chino

*Kyle Brochard*

Kyle Brochard, Richards, Watson & Gershon PC, Attorney for City of Upland

# **EXHIBIT B**

## Nicholls, Gina R.

---

**From:** John Schatz <jschatz13@cox.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 3, 2021 5:05 PM  
**To:** Andrew Gagen; Arthur Kidman; Elizabeth Calciano; Fudacz, Fred A.; Gene Tanaka; Jeff Ferre; Jimmy@city-attorney.com; jimmylaredo@hotmail.com; Kyle Brochard; Nicholls, Gina R.; Robert Donlan; Shawnda M. Grady; Steve Anderson; thmcp@aol.com; Tom Bunn  
**Subject:** [External] FW: Chino Basin; Attorneys Letter re Invoice Redactions

FYI.

John

---

**From:** Tracy J. Egoscue [mailto:tracy@egoscuelaw.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, September 3, 2021 2:53 PM  
**To:** John Schatz  
**Cc:** Tracy J. Egoscue  
**Subject:** Re: Chino Basin; Attorneys Letter re Invoice Redactions

Good afternoon.

Thank you for your correspondence of August 27, 2021 wherein you requested additional information regarding past legal invoices submitted by me to my client the Agricultural Pool. At the outset let me express my profound apology for not meeting your deadline of Tuesday August 31, 2021. It took me some time to confer with my client and receive direction.

As you indicate, our clients have been engaged in settlement discussions for many weeks. As you are aware, we as the attorneys have not been present during these discussions. As a result, attorneys fees for the Ag Pool have been minimized. In response to your letter, it is the Ag Pool's direction to me to continue this conservative approach with my time, and thereby preserve the remaining funds left in the reserve account for staffing the Pool meetings and any necessary review of settlement related documents.

My client looks forward to resolution of this matter in the very near future.

Thank you again for your correspondence.

Tracy J. Egoscue, Esq.  
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CHINO BASIN WATERMASTER

Case No. RCVRS 51010

Chino Basin Municipal Water District v. City of Chino, et al.

PROOF OF SERVICE

I declare that:

I am employed in the County of San Bernardino, California. I am over the age of 18 years and not a party to the within action. My business address is Chino Basin Watermaster, 9641 San Bernardino Road, Rancho Cucamonga, California 91730; telephone (909) 484-3888.

On September 27, 2021 I served the following:

1. DECLARATION OF GINA NICHOLLS IN SUPPORT OF OPPOSITION TO AGRICULTURAL POOL'S MOTION FOR ATTORNEY'S FEES

/X/ BY MAIL: in said cause, by placing a true copy thereof enclosed with postage thereon fully prepaid, for delivery by United States Postal Service mail at Rancho Cucamonga, California, addresses as follows:

**See attached service list:** Mailing List 1

/ BY PERSONAL SERVICE: I caused such envelope to be delivered by hand to the addressee.

/ BY FACSIMILE: I transmitted said document by fax transmission from (909) 484-3890 to the fax number(s) indicated. The transmission was reported as complete on the transmission report, which was properly issued by the transmitting fax machine.

/X/ BY ELECTRONIC MAIL: I transmitted notice of availability of electronic documents by electronic transmission to the email address indicated. The transmission was reported as complete on the transmission report, which was properly issued by the transmitting electronic mail device.

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

Executed on September 27, 2021 in Rancho Cucamonga, California.



By: Janine Wilson  
Chino Basin Watermaster

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CBWM BOARD MEMBER  
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