EXHIBIT ElectroNically Filed Jun 01 2022 05:05 p.m. Elizabeth A. Brown Clerk of Supreme Court

EXHIBIT 6

2020 JUL 13 PM 12: 06 Case No. 110702520 LINCOLN COUNTY CLERT 2 Dept. No. 3 5 6 IN THE SEVENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA 7 IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF LINCOLN 8 9 LINCOLN COUNTY WATER DISTRICT. a political subdivision of the State of Nevada, 10 and VIDLER WATER COMPANY, INC., a Nevada corporation, PETITION FOR JUDICIAL REVIEW 11 (Exempt from Arbitration: Judicial Review of Administrative Decision) Petitioners, 12 VS. 13 TIM WILSON, P.E., NEVADA STATE ENGINEER, DIVISION OF WATER RESOURCES, DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND 14 15 NATURAL RESOURCES, 16 Respondent. 17 18 Petitioners, LINCOLN COUNTY WATER DISTRICT, a political subdivision of the 19 State of Nevada, by and through its attorney, DYLAN V. FREHNER, ESQ., LINCOLN COUNTY 20 DISTRICT ATTORNEY, and VIDLER WATER COMPANY, INC., a Nevada corporation, by and 21 through its attorneys, ALLISON, MacKENZIE, LTD., petition and allege as follows: 22 1. Petitioner, LINCOLN COUNTY WATER DISTRICT ("LINCOLN"), is a 23 political subdivision of the State of Nevada, created for the purpose of providing adequate and 24 efficient water service within Lincoln County, Nevada. 25 Petitioner, VIDLER WATER COMPANY, INC. ("VIDLER"), is a Nevada 26 corporation authorized to conduct business in the state of Nevada.

date of February 14, 2005 and jointly own groundwater right applications filed on April 10, 2006 to

Petitioners, LINCOLN and VIDLER own groundwater permits with a priority

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 appropriate water in the Kane Springs Valley Hydrographic Basin (206) ("Kane Springs") for municipal use purposes with a place of use in the Coyote Spring Valley Hydrographic Basin (210). The permits and pending applications are more specifically described below. The Kane Springs hydrographic basin and the points of diversion in the permits and applications are located entirely in Lincoln County, Nevada. Petitioners, LINCOLN and VIDLER are senior water right permit holders and jointly hold senior groundwater right applications in Kane Springs.

- 4. Respondent, TIM WILSON P.E., NEVADA STATE ENGINEER, DIVISION OF WATER RESOURCES, DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES ("STATE ENGINEER"), is empowered to act pursuant to the provisions of Chapters 533 and 534 of the Nevada Revised Statutes. The Nevada Legislature has provided that, subject to existing rights, all underground waters within the boundaries of the state of Nevada are subject to appropriation for beneficial use under the laws of the state and it is the charge of the STATE ENGINEER to put water to beneficial use for the economic benefit of the state of Nevada. The Office of the State Engineer is a creature of statute; it has no inherent power and its powers and jurisdiction are limited as provided by statute.
- 5. This Petition is brought pursuant to the procedures authorized and provided in NRS 533.450. Specifically, Petitioners are aggrieved by an order of the STATE ENGINEER that affects Petitioners' interests and Petitioners may obtain judicial review in the proper court of the county in which the matters affected are situated. Petitioners' interests and the matters affected by the STATE ENGINEER's Order 1309, including the Kane Springs basin, are situated entirely in Lincoln County, Nevada. Jurisdiction and venue of Petitioners' Petition for Judicial Review are properly before this Court pursuant to NRS 533.450. A true and correct of Order 1309 is attached hereto as Exhibit "1".
- 6. A Notice of this Petition has been served on the STATE ENGINEER and all persons affected by Order 1309 of the STATE ENGINEER as required by NRS 533.450(3).
- 7. The STATE ENGINEER's administration of the Lower White River Flow System Basins started with Order 1169 issued in March 2002. Order 1169 required all pending applications in certain basins be held in abeyance pending an aquifer test of the carbonate-rock

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aquifer system to better determine whether the pending applications and future applications could be developed from the carbonate-rock aquifer. Kane Springs was not included in Order 1169 in March 2002 as part of the administration of the Lower White River Flow System Basins.

- On February 14, 2005, LINCOLN/VIDLER filed Applications 72218, 72219, 8. 72220 and 72221 to appropriate groundwater in Kane Springs.
- 9. On August 1, 2006, LINCOLN/VIDLER and the UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE ("USFWS") entered into an Amended Stipulation for Withdrawal of Protests for Applications 72218, 72219, 72220 and 72221 ("Amended Stipulation for Withdrawal of Protests"). The Amended Stipulation for Withdrawal of Protests contains among other things, triggers acceptable to USFWS to reduce Petitioners' groundwater pumping for protection of the Moapa dace. From 2006 to date, Petitioners and USFWS have performed and continue to perform under the terms of the Amended Stipulation for Withdrawal of Protests.
- 10. On February 2, 2007, the STATE ENGINEER issued Ruling 5712, which partially approved Applications 72218, 72219, 72220 and 72221, granting LINCOLN/VIDLER 1,000 acre feet annually ("afa") of water rights in Kane Springs. In Ruling 5712, the STATE ENGINEER specifically determined Kane Springs would not be included in the Order 1169 study area because there was no substantial evidence that the appropriation of a limited quantity of water in Kane Springs will have any measurable impact on the Muddy River Springs that warrants the inclusion of Kane Springs in Order 1169. The STATE ENGINEER denied the request to hold the LINCOLN/VIDLER applications in abeyance and include Kane Springs within the provisions of Order 1169. The STATE ENGINEER specifically rejected the argument that the Kane Springs rights could not be appropriated based upon senior appropriated rights in the down gradient basins. None of the parties to the Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") entered into on April 20, 2006 by certain water right holders in the Coyote Spring Valley and California Wash hydrographic basins and none of the Order 1169 study participants objected to or appealed the STATE ENGINEER's determinations that Kane Springs would not be included in Order 1169 and Petitioners could

appropriate and develop their water rights notwithstanding senior appropriated rights in the down gradient basins.

- 11. LINCOLN/VIDLER filed a Petition for Judicial Review with the Seventh Judicial District Court on March 1, 2007, challenging the validity of the STATE ENGINEER's decision in Ruling 5712.
- 12. Following the filing of the Petition for Judicial Review, LINCOLN/VIDLER met with the STATE ENGINEER on March 15, 2007, regarding their pending Applications 74147, 74148, 74149 and 74150. LINCOLN/VIDLER requested that they perform additional data collection, testing and study in Kane Springs to support the pending applications. The STATE ENGINEER informed LINCOLN/VIDLER he would consider granting to LINCOLN/VIDLER additional unappropriated water rights in Kane Springs pursuant to their pending Applications 74147, 74148, 74149 and 74150 if LINCOLN/VIDLER collected the additional data upgradient in the Kane Springs basin and performed the testing and additional study to support the pending applications.
- 13. LINCOLN/VIDLER and the STATE ENGINEER thereafter stipulated to the dismissal of the Petition for Judicial Review regarding Applications 72218, 72219, 72220 and 72221 and Ruling 5712.
- 14. The rights the STATE ENGINEER granted to LINCOLN/VIDLER in Ruling 5712 and now held by LINCOLN/VIDLER were and are rights vested under Nevada law.
- 15. On April 29, 2009, the Acting STATE ENGINEER issued Ruling 5987 summarily denying Applications 74147, 74148, 74149 and 74150 without holding a hearing or contacting LINCOLN/VIDLER to get any information about the additional data collection, testing and study the STATE ENGINEER stated he would review.
- 16. LINCOLN/VIDLER filed a Petition for Judicial Review with the Seventh Judicial District Court on May 29, 2009 challenging the validity of the STATE ENGINEER's decision in Ruling 5987.
- 17. On April 27, 2010, LINCOLN/VIDLER and the STATE ENGINEER entered into a settlement agreement to resolve LINCOLN/VIDLER's Petition for Judicial Review

application date.

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dismissal of the Petition for Judicial Review regarding Applications 74147, 74148, 74149 and 74150 and Ruling 5987. 19. On October 29, 2008, LINCOLN/VIDLER obtained a Biological Opinion from the USFWS that pumping of groundwater pursuant to Applications 72218, 72219, 72220 and

challenging Ruling 5987. The settlement agreement required, among other things, the STATE

ENGINEER to reinstate 74147, 74148, 74149 and 74150 with the same priority as their original

LINCOLN/VIDLER and the STATE ENGINEER thereafter stipulated to the

- 72221 for their Kane Springs groundwater project was not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the endangered Moapa dace; the project could contribute to groundwater level declines and spring flow reductions, however, implementation of the project's conservation actions will minimize these impacts. With regard to incidental take, the Biological Opinion stated the level of anticipated take is not likely to result in jeopardy to the Moapa dace based in part on the implementation of the conservation measures for the project. Since 2008, Petitioners has spent substantial sums, including the direct payment of \$50,000, to the USFWS as part of the project's conservation measures in reliance on the Biological Opinion, Ruling 5712 and the settlement agreements entered into with the STATE ENGINEER to resolve Petitioners' appeals of Rulings 5712 and 5987 involving Petitioners' water rights and applications in Kane Springs. None of the parties to the April 20, 2006 Memorandum of Understanding and none of the Order 1169 study participants objected to or appealed the Biological Opinion issued by the USFWS for the LINCOLN/VIDLER groundwater applications in Kane Springs.
- 20. In reliance on the STATE ENGINEER's approval of Applications 72218. 72219, 72220 and 72221, Ruling 5712, the issuance of permits to Petitioners and the settlement with the STATE ENGINEER, LINCOLN/VIDLER have expended significant time and money since 2005 in furtherance of perfecting their water rights in the Kane Springs basin in the approximate sum of \$4,237,000.
- 21. In reliance upon the STATE ENGINEER's representations regarding the additional data collection, testing and study, and his statements that he would consider any new data

 and results regarding the basin, LINCOLN/VIDLER have expended significant time and money to collect data, test and study the Kane Springs basin and to prepare the data and information to be presented to the STATE ENGINEER to support pending Applications 74147, 74148, 74149 and 74150 in the approximate sum of \$543,000.

- 22. Petitioners were not and have never been an Order 1169 study participant. Petitioners are not and have never been a party to the Memorandum of Understanding entered into on April 20, 2006 by certain water right holders in the Coyote Spring Valley and California Wash hydrographic basins whereby such parties voluntarily agreed to certain groundwater pumping restrictions, among other things, to further their shared common interest in the conservation and recovery of the Moapa dace and its habitat, an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act.
- 23. Between 2010 and 2014, the Order 1169 basins were studied and tested, and the Order 1169 study participants were involved and participated in aquifer tests, the submission of reports, proceedings and actions taken by the STATE ENGINEER pursuant to Order 1169. The basins that were included in the Order 1169 aquifer test were acknowledged to have a unique hydrologic connection and share the same supply of water. The Kane Springs basin was not included in the Order 1169 aquifer testing, monitoring or measurements and Kane Springs basin water right holders, including Petitioners, were not involved and did not participate in the aquifer testing, submission of reports, proceedings and actions taken by the STATE ENGINEER pursuant to Order 1169 from 2010 to 2014. After the aquifer test, no Order 1169 study participants recommended that Kane Springs be included in the Order 1169 study area nor did the STATE ENGINEER make a determination that Kane Springs should be included in the Order 1169 study area based upon the Order 1169 testing and proceedings. One study participant's report (Southern Nevada Water Authority) noted there "was a lack of pumping responses north of the Kane Springs Fault and west of the MX-5 and CSI wells near the eastern front of the Las Vegas Range."
- 24. On January 11, 2019, the STATE ENGINEER issued Interim Order 1303 designating the Lower White River Flow System ("LWRFS"), a multi-basin area known to share a close hydrologic connection, as a joint administrative unit for purposes of administration of water

rights. Pursuant to Interim Order 1303, all water rights within the LWRFS were to be administered based upon their respective dates of priority in relation to other rights within the regional groundwater unit. Kane Springs was not included as part of the LWRFS multi-basin area in Interim Order 1303.

- 25. After an administrative hearing, the STATE ENGINEER issued Order 1309 on June 15, 2020 delineating the Lower White River Flow System Hydrographic Basin to include those certain hydrographic basins subject to Order 1169 and Order 1303 and for the first time included the Kane Springs basin as part of the Lower White River Flow System Hydrographic Basin.
- In Order 1309, the STATE ENGINEER stated it was necessary for spring flow measured at the Warm Springs West gage to flow at a minimum rate in order to maintain habitat for the Moapa dace. The STATE ENGINEER determined in Order 1309 that liability under the Endangered Species Act for a "take" would extend to groundwater users within the LWRFS and would so extend to the State of Nevada through the Division of Water Resources as the government agency responsible for permitting water use. The STATE ENGINEER concluded that it was against the public interest to allow groundwater pumping that will reduce spring flow in the Warm Springs area to a level that would impair habitat necessary for the survival of the Moapa dace and could result in take of the endangered species.
- 27. In Order 1309, the STATE ENGINEER relied upon six criteria from Rulings 6254-6261 as the standard of general applicability for inclusion into the geographic boundary of the LWRFS, thereby adopting policies in Order 1309 that the STATE ENGINEER then expanded for general application.
- 28. Order 1309 is in excess of the jurisdiction and statutory authority of the STATE ENGINEER because Nevada law does not authorize the STATE ENGINEER to designate a multi-basin area and effectively reprioritize basin specific water rights by administering them based upon their respective dates of priority in relation to other rights within the multi-basin groundwater area or designate a multi-basin area via an *ad hoc* ruling. By including Kane Springs in the LWRFS in Order 1309 and limiting pumping in the LWRFS to 8,000 afa, the STATE ENGINEER has made

exercising Petitioners' water rights impracticable for no legitimate government reason by reprioritizing Petitioners' water rights holding senior status in Kane Springs to the most junior water rights in the multi-basin LWRFS, destroying Petitioners' property rights, denying Petitioners all viable economic use of their property and eviscerating contractual rights related to the water rights, and interfering with Petitioners' investment backed expectations, all in violation of and to the prejudice of Petitioners' constitutional rights.

- 29. Order 1309 is arbitrary and capricious and constitutes an abuse of discretion in violation of Petitioners' rights because in the Ruling 5712 contested proceedings, the STATE ENGINEER denied the request to hold the LINCOLN/VIDLER applications in abeyance and include Kane Springs within the provisions of Order 1169 determining there was no substantial evidence that the appropriation of the water granted to Petitioners in Kane Springs will have any measurable impact on the Muddy River Springs that warranted the inclusion of Kane Springs in Order 1169. The STATE ENGINEER specifically rejected the argument that Petitioners' Kane Springs rights could not be appropriated based upon senior appropriated rights in the down gradient basins. The STATE ENGINEER is precluded from re-adjudicating and relitigating issues already determined in a contested proceeding and resolved by settlement agreements with Petitioners resulting from Petitioners' appeals of Rulings 5712 and 5987. In addition, there was no evidence presented in the proceedings leading up to the issuance of Order 1309 that appropriation of Petitioners' water rights in Kane Springs will have any impact on the Muddy River Springs that warrants inclusion of Kane Springs in the LWRFS as defined in Order 1309.
- 30. Order 1309 is arbitrary and capricious and constitutes an abuse of discretion because the STATE ENGINEER failed to consider or address the Amended Settlement Agreement entered into between Petitioners and USFWS and the Biological Opinion issued by the USFWS that Petitioners' groundwater pumping project in Kane Springs was not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the endangered Moapa dace and the level of anticipated take is not likely to result in jeopardy to the Moapa dace based in part on the implantation of the conservation measures for Petitioners' project. In issuing Order 1309, the STATE ENGINEER failed to consider the unrefuted expert opinion testimony in the record of the former USFWS Field Supervisor who signed the

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Biological Opinion and helped negotiate the Amended Stipulation for Withdrawal of Protests that Petitioners, as parties holding a Biological Opinion and the Amended Stipulation for Withdrawal of Protests, are compliant with the Endangered Species Act. The STATE ENGINEER's determination that liability under the Endangered Species Act for a "take" would extend to groundwater users within the LWRFS not parties to the MOU and would so extend to the State of Nevada through the Division of Water Resources as the government agency responsible for permitting water use is not supported by substantial evidence or any evidence in the record, is contrary to the substantial evidence of record and is contrary to law with respect to Petitioners' water rights and groundwater pumping project in Kane Springs.

- 31. Order 1309 is arbitrary, capricious and constitutes an abuse of discretion because it adopts, effects and defines the STATE ENGINEER's policy of general application for creating a multi-area basin and inclusion into the geographic boundary of the LWRFS and constitutes unlawful *ad hoc* rulemaking in violation of the STATE ENGINEER's statutory authority thereby making Order 1309 void.
- 32. Petitioners were not given notice before the STATE ENGINEER applied the ad hoc rule developed from Rulings 6255-6261 in Order 1309. LINCOLN/VIDLER were not parties to those rulings and were unable to present evidence or arguments as to why the ad hoc rule should not be applied to Petitioners and their water rights in Kane Springs because the ad hoc rule of general applicability was announced after the hearing and after Petitioners had the opportunity to present evidence on the issue before the STATE ENGINEER. Rulings from other proceedings cannot be used to bind unrelated parties in later proceedings.
- 33. The STATE ENGINEER abused his discretion by failing to consider the best available science presented to support the continued exclusion of Kane Springs from the boundaries of the LWRFS and applying criteria or standards which intentionally ignore the best available science to include Kane Springs in the boundaries of the LWRFS.
- 34. Order 1309 is arbitrary, capricious and constitutes an abuse of discretion because it applies the *ad hoc* rule criteria subjectively and in an inconsistent manner.

- 35. Order 1309 is arbitrary, capricious, unlawful and constitutes an abuse of discretion because the water right holders pumping closest to Warm Springs and impacting the endangered Moapa dace are not affected by Order 1309 and are allowed to continue to pump their water rights, while Petitioners' water rights, located the furthest distance from Warm Springs with no evidence in the record that pumping of their water rights will impact the endangered Moapa dace, are destroyed and rendered useless by Order 1309.
- 36. The STATE ENGINEER, like all administrative officers, is required to provide due process of law to all parties. The STATE ENGINEER violated LINCOLN/VIDLER's due process rights pursuant to both the Nevada and United States Constitutions.
- 37. Order 1309 violated LINCOLN/VIDLER's due process rights by applying the criteria or standards from other contested administrative proceedings before the STATE ENGINEER in which Petitioners were not parties, after the evidentiary hearing held to determine whether Kane Springs and Petitioners' water rights were to be included within the boundaries of the LWRFS. Petitioners received no prior notice the STATE ENGINEER would apply the criteria or standards and were deprived of an opportunity to address the newly developed criteria or standards applied by the STATE ENGINEER in Order 1309 to include Kane Springs and Petitioners' water rights in the boundaries of the LWRFS.
- 38. In Order 1309, the STATE ENGINEER considered and relied upon evidence submitted after the hearing in the parties' simultaneously submitted written closing statements for which Petitioners had no opportunity to address, respond or refute, all in violation of Petitioners' due process rights.
- 39. The Order 1309 proceedings violated Petitioners' due process rights because certain former Division of Water Resource employees who participated in and were decision makers in the STATE ENGINEER's proceedings and determinations resulting in Ruling 5712 and Order 1169, which excluded Kane Springs from the LWRFS and appropriated Kane Springs water rights notwithstanding senior appropriated rights in the down gradient basins, testified as private consultants and presented the same evidence relied upon by previous STATE ENGINEERs to exclude Kane Springs from multi-basin joint administration to support the inclusion of Kane Springs

in the LWRFS. The STATE ENGINEER erred as a matter of law when he reweighed evidence previously relied upon to exclude Kane Springs from the LWRFS and used the reweighed evidence to include Kane Springs in the LWRFS, all in violation of Petitioners' due process rights.

- 40. The substantial rights of LINCOLN/VIDLER have been prejudiced because Order 1309 violates constitutional and statutory provisions, is in excess of the statutory authority of the STATE ENGINEER, is clearly erroneous in view of the reliable, probative and substantial evidence, and is characterized by an abuse of discretion.
- 41. Order 1309 of the STATE ENGINEER is arbitrary and capricious, contrary to and affected by error of law, without any rational basis, beyond the legitimate exercise of power and authority of the STATE ENGINEER, all to the detriment and damage of Petitioners LINCOLN and VIDLER.
- 42. The determinations in Order 1309 that 8,000 afa is the long terms annual quantity of water that can be pumped and that Kane Springs should be included within the boundaries of the LWRFS, among other determinations, are not supported by substantial evidence in the record before the STATE ENGINEER and are without consideration of all the facts and circumstances.
- 43. Petitioners LINCOLN and VIDLER have exhausted their administrative remedies.
- 44. Petitioners have been required to engage the services of counsel to pursue their rights, and as a proximate and necessary result of the STATE ENGINEER's illegal conduct alleged above, Petitioners are entitled to reasonable attorney's fees and costs as special and foreseeable damages, or in the alternative, as costs of suit.
- 45. For all the foregoing reasons, the STATE ENGINEER acted improperly as a matter of law and did not and cannot conduct a fair assessment of the scientific evidence presented and the facts and circumstances previously relied upon to exclude Kane Springs from the LWRFS multi-basin area. The STATE ENGINEER's actions are inequitable under all the facts and circumstances and the evidence presented, and equitable relief is warranted in the form of direction

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by this Court to the STATE ENGINEER to exclude Kane Springs from the boundaries of the LWRFS as defined in Order 1309.

WHEREFORE, Petitioners pray for judgment as follows:

- 1. That the Court vacate Order 1309;
- 2. That the Court exclude Kane Springs from the LWRFS;
- 3. That the Court restore currently held water right priorities and the perennial yield determined for Kane Springs;
 - 4. That the Court award Petitioners their attorney's fees and costs; and
- 5. That the Court award such other and further relief as seems just and proper in the premises.

<u>AFFIRMATION</u>

The undersigned does hereby affirm that the preceding document **DOES NOT** contain the social security number of any person.

DATED this 13th day of July, 2020.

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~ and ~

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Attorneys for Petitioners, LINCOLN COUNTY WATER DISTRICT and VIDLER WATER COMPANY, INC.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

Pursuant to NRCP Rule 5(b), I hereby certify that I am an employee of ALLISON MacKENZIE, LTD., Attorneys at Law, and that on this date, I caused the foregoing document to be served on all parties to this action as follows:

Via Hand-Delivery to:

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Tim Wilson, P.E. State Engineer Nevada Division of Water Resources Department of Conservation and Natural Resources 901 South Stewart Street, Suite 2002 Carson City, NV 89701

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DATED this 13th day of July, 2020.	
	MANCY FORZENOT
	MANCY FONTENOT

Number of Pages