

Overview of Chandler Decree

The Chandler Decree of 27 January 1922 is a court decision stipulating mandatory water deliveries from Bishop Creek to the City of Bishop and land owners in the Bishop area. The Chandler Decree also describes diversions from Coyote, Birch and McGee creeks. Although the Chandler Decree involved the Hillside Water Company, it is different from a separate decree called the Hillside Decree.

The court case that resulted in the Chandler Decree was filed by the Hillside Water Company against the City of Bishop and about 150 land owners in the Bishop area. The specific land owners are listed and their properties are described in the decree. The City of Bishop and these listed land owners were the defendants in the case. The case was filed because the Hillside Water Company said that the city and the land owners were getting more than their share of the water. They said this was hurting their ability to use the water for the generation of electricity. Southern California Edison (SCE) now owns the rights and facilities owned by Hillside Water Company at the time of the 1922 Chandler Decree, including South Lake and Lake Sabrina.

The case was decided in favor of the defendants, including the City of Bishop. The court determined that the defendants had prior and higher water rights than the Hillside Water Company. In case of the City of Bishop, the Chandler Decree stipulates an exact flow from Bishop Creek to the city. The flow is a 1.7 cubic feet per second constant flow from Bishop Creek. This 1.7 cubic feet per second equates to about 760 gallons per minute.

The decree stipulates total flow to the remaining defendants that must be provided during the irrigation season, defined as 1 April to 30 September of each year. Each land owner was not given specific flows in the decree. It has been the role of the Bishop Creek Water Association to distribute flow equitably in the land once owned by the defendants in the Chandler Decree. Most private property in the Bishop area receives water from Bishop Creek as stipulated by the Chandler Decree.

The City of Los Angeles and the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) were not mentioned in the decree and were not parties to the case. DWP is involved now because it purchased most of the property owned by the defendants in the Chandler Decree case.

The Chandler Decree is available on the city website <http://www.ca-bishop.us/Misc/ChandlerDecree27Jan1922.pdf>