1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9		Exempt from filing fees (Gov. Code, § 6103) ELECTRONICALLY FILED Merced Superior Court 2/21/2025 12:24 PM Amanda Toste Clerk of the Superior Court By: Nengsy Moua, Deputy ia E STATE OF CALIFORNIA
10 11 12 13 14	INSURANCE COMMISSIONER OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, Applicant,	Case No. 18CV-04739 FINAL STATUS REPORT OF INSURANCE COMMISSIONER ON THE LIQUIDATION OF MERCED PROPERTY & CASUALTY COMPANY
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24	MERCED PROPERTY & CASUALTY COMPANY, a California corporation, Respondent.	 [Filed concurrently with: Notice of Application and Application for Order to Approve Liquidator's 1) Payment of Administrative and Professional Fees and Expenses for the period of November 1, 2022 to September 30, 2024; 2) Approve Executed Release Agreement with the Federal Government; 3) Authorize Final Disbursement of Merced Assets; 4) Escheat Unclaimed Funds to State; 5) Retain Closing Reserve; 6) Authorize Disposal of Legacy Records; 7) Remit Residual Estate Assets to Parent Entity; 8) Close Estate; Memorandum of Points and Authorities; Declaration of Scott Pearce; Index of Exhibits; 4. [Proposed] Order
25 26 27 28		Date: April 2, 2025 Time: 8:15 a.m. Dept: 8 Judge: Hon. Stephanie Jamieson Action Filed: November 30, 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS					
		Page			
Introduction.		4			
Commissione	er's Activities and Operations	4			
I.	The Conservation and Liquidation Office				
II.	. The Commissioner's Operations				
	A. California Insurance Guarantee Association's payment of covered claims and expenses and the Estate's satisfaction of its Class 2 Proof of Claim	5			
	B. CLO's review of remaining Proof of Claims and disbursement of Merced assets to policyholders for approved claims	7			
	C. CLO's recovery of funds from the PG&E Subrogation Trust on payments made for Camp Fire-related claims	9			
	D. Recovery on Reinsurance Contracts	9			
	E. Statement of Assets and Liabilities for the Merced estate	9			
III.	III. The Commissioner's Ongoing Activities				
	A. Administration of the Merced estate	10			
	B. Completion of claim validation and resolution	11			
	C. 2022 and 2023 Tax Returns	12			
IV. The Commissioner's Final Disbursement of Assets, Federal Release, and Closure of the Estate					
Conclusion		14			

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES **Page STATUTES** Insurance Code

INTRODUCTION

The Insurance Commissioner of the State of California (Commissioner), in his capacity as Liquidator of Merced Property & Casualty Company (Merced), hereby submits the following Final Status Report on the liquidation of Merced.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Court, Merced, and all other interested parties with information regarding the Commissioner's progress following his Third Status Report to the court on February 23, 2023, and to discuss his anticipated steps toward completing the liquidation of the Merced estate.¹

In his previous Status Reports, the Commissioner included a background discussion on the general aspects of a liquidation proceeding and summarized Merced's insolvency and placement by the Court into liquidation on December 3, 2018, following the November 8, 2018 Camp Fire in Butte County, California. The Commissioner also previously discussed his and the California Insurance Guarantee Association's (CIGA) immediate responses to the Merced liquidation. The Commissioner incorporates that previous discussion herein by reference. To the extent necessary to provide context, the Commissioner will reiterate some of that discussion herein for the Court's convenience.

COMMISSIONER'S ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONS

I. THE CONSERVATION AND LIQUIDATION OFFICE

The Commissioner created the Conservation and Liquidation Office (CLO) to assist him in fulfilling his duties as a court-appointed Conservator and Liquidator under Insurance Code² section 1035 for troubled insurance companies domiciled in the State of California. (Conservation and Liquidation Office's website at http://www.caclo.org/perl/FAQ.pl [as of January 29, 2025].) The CLO consists of insurance professionals who oversee departments that operate and

¹ The Commissioner has concurrently filed an Application for an Order to: 1) Approve

Payment of Administrative and Professional Fees and Expenses for the period of November 1,

Government; 3) Authorize Final Disbursement of Merced Assets; 4) Escheat Unclaimed Funds to

2022 to September 30, 2024; 2) Approve Executed Release Agreement with the Federal

thereof (Application).

State; 5) Retain Closing Reserve; 6) Authorize Disposal of Legacy Records; and 7) Remit

Residual Estate Assets to Parent Entity; Memorandum of Points and Authorities in support

² Unless otherwise noted, all section references will be to the Insurance Code.

liquidate troubled insurance companies. (*Ibid.*) These professionals operate under the executive oversight of a duly appointed Special Deputy Insurance Commissioner. (*Ibid.*) A company that is in conservation or liquidation is called an "estate." (*Ibid.*) Upon obtaining a conservation or liquidation order, the Commissioner may delegate his statutory administrative duties to liquidate the estate over to the CLO and/or to a Special Deputy Insurance Commissioner. (Ins. Code, § 1035.)

The CLO is located in San Francisco, California. The Commissioner delegated his statutory administrative duties to liquidate the Merced estate over to the CLO and Deputy Liquidator Joseph Holloway. (Order Approving Liquidator's Payment of Fees and Interim Disbursement of Merced Assets, dated October 26, 2021, p. 2.) Scott Pearce is the appointed Liquidation Manager of the Merced estate. All of the Merced estate's physical and electronic records are located in the CLO's office in San Francisco, and the CLO is managing all remaining closure activities and liquidation requirements from that office.

II. THE COMMISSIONER'S OPERATIONS

A. California Insurance Guarantee Association's payment of covered claims and expenses and the Estate's satisfaction of its Class 2 Proof of Claim

CIGA was created by the Legislature and is statutorily obligated to pay covered claims of an insolvent insurer up to \$500,000. (§ 1063.1, subd. (c)(7)(A).) It also pays for or furnishes loss adjustment services and defenses of claimants when required by policy provisions. (§ 1063.2, subd. (a).) CIGA's obligation to handle claims or furnish services and defenses is triggered when a member insurer is found by a court to be insolvent and ordered into liquidation. (§ 1063.2.) Upon CIGA's satisfaction of its obligations under Section 1063.2, CIGA becomes a Class 2 priority claimant to the residual assets of the estate after payment of the Commissioner's Class 1 expenses of administration. (*Id.*; § 1033, subd. (a)(1) & (2).)

Following the Court's December 3, 2018 Liquidation Order in this proceeding, the CLO transitioned all of the Merced estate claims data and claims handling processes to CIGA so that CIGA could make payment on Merced policyholder claims. CIGA immediately commenced paying Merced's covered fire claims. Subsequently, and in an effort to support the guarantee

association's continuing claim and expense payments, Merced filed for this Court's approval to release early access distributions of Merced Assets to reimburse CIGA. (Order Approving Liquidator's Payment of Fees and Interim Disbursement of Merced Assets, dated October 26, 2021, p. 2; Index of Exhibits filed September 14, 2021, Ex. E [Merced 1st Early Access Distribution].) CIGA has now resolved and paid all of the covered Merced-related policy claims and loss adjustment expenses.

After satisfying its obligations under Section 1063.2, CIGA asserted a Class 2 claim against the Merced estate for all claims and expenses it incurred on behalf of the insolvent insurer or are otherwise referable to the Merced liquidation. (§ 1033, subd. (a)(2).) CIGA submitted its claim during the proof of claim (POC) determination process. At year-end 2023, CIGA reported having paid \$77,327,108 in Merced-related claims, \$370,093 in loss adjustment expenses, \$2,984,383 in unearned premium refunds, and incurred \$1,490,424 in administrative expenses for a total of \$82,172,008 it paid on behalf of the Merced liquidation estate. In addition to allowing these paid amounts, Merced permitted CIGA to retain an additional \$6,081 in reserves to resolve the final remaining claims.

When determining CIGA's POC, the Merced estate considered CIGA's receipt of \$60,047,831 in subrogation payments and expense recoveries from the PG&E Wildfire Subrogation Trust through the 2019 PG&E bankruptcy plan³. The Merced liquidation estate approved CIGA's adjusted claim in the amount of \$22,130,258. ⁴ In addition to the amount it recovered from the PG&E bankruptcy, CIGA also received \$22,592,027 in early access distribution payments directly from the Merced estate during the course of the liquidation. After factoring in all of CIGA's recoveries, the Merced estate determined CIGA had an excess of

³ PG&E Corporation and its subsidiary Pacific Gas and Electric Company each filed a voluntary petition for bankruptcy under chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code on January 29, 2019. (First Status Report, filed August 7, 2019, p. 15.) As part of this proceeding, the bankruptcy court established a PG&E Wildfire Subrogation Trust to consider and pay claims for damages caused by the November 2018 Camp Fire. CIGA submitted a claim against the PG&E Wildfire Subrogation Trust for the losses and loss adjustment expenses it paid for Merced Camp Firerelated claims.)

⁴ \$82,172,008 (CIGA's asserted Class 2 claim) + \$6,081 (amount retained in reserves) - \$60,047,831 (reimbursements from PG&E Subrogation Trust) = \$22,130,258 (CIGA's approved adjusted claim).

\$461,769 above its approved claim. As a result, and in accordance with the August 19, 2021 Early Access Agreement signed between CIGA and the Merced estate, CIGA remitted the full amount of the excess funds back to the estate. Thus, CIGA's approved claim has been satisfied in full.

B. CLO's review of remaining Proof of Claims and disbursement of Merced assets to policyholders for approved claims

During the POC determination process, CLO's Claims Department received and reviewed 452 POCs. (First Status Report, filed August 7, 2019, p. 9.) Section 1033, subdivision (a) sets forth the priority for payment of claims, listing nine priority preferences. Policyholders and other claimants obtain priority to the Merced assets according to which Class they fall in, with all Classes being addressed after the Class 1 administration expenses have been paid. (§ 1033, subd. (a)(1)-(9).) As shown in the below chart, CLO's Claims Department has completed the review and determination of all properly submitted POCs.

Type of Claim	Number of Claims	Status/Resolution
Policyholder Class 2 Claims (§ 1033, subd. (a)(2) [claims under insurance policies])	41	Approved (including CIGA)
Policyholder Class 2 Claims (<i>Ibid.</i>)	312	Rejected.
Federal Government Class 3 Claim (§ 1033, subd. (a)(3) [claims having preference by laws of the United States])	1	Resolved through Federal Waiver/Release
General Creditor Class 7 Claims (§ 1033, subd. (a)(7) [claims of general creditors])	6	Approved
Class 8 Claims (§ 1033, subd. (a)(8) [claims of "equity" classes, such as holders of certificates of contribution])	62	Approved
Mixed Class 3 to 8 Claims (§ 1033, subd. (a) (3)-(8))	40	Rejected
Total Claims	452	

After receiving authorization from this Court, the Commissioner disbursed payments to CIGA and Merced policyholders and all approved Class 2 claims obligations have since been paid in full. (Order Approving Liquidator's Payment of Fees and Second Interim Disbursement of

Merced Assets, dated February 23, 2023.) There were 312 non-approved Class 2 Merced policyholder claims that were rejected by the Merced estate because they were handled to completion by CIGA or the asserted claim was not covered under a Merced policy. There were 40 Mixed Class claims (Classes 3 through 8) that were also rejected because the estate deemed nothing was owed on those claims. (*Ibid.*)

After the estate's Class 1 administrative expenses and the policyholder Class 2 claims, the next priority of claims to be addressed by the estate is the federal government's Class 3 Claim. The estate must first seek this Court's approval of the executed federal release and waiver agreement to resolve the Class 3 federal claim before it can make any further disbursements towards the remaining approved lower priority claims. (Index of Exhibits (Index), Ex. F [Executed Federal Release and Waiver Agreement].) Approval of the executed federal release and waiver agreement is necessary to ensure the full and proper release of the Commissioner, the Deputy Liquidator, and the Merced estate, otherwise the Commissioner would be subject to personal liability for any super-priority claims brought by the federal government. The CLO's Claim Department has received a final federal waiver and release agreement from the United States Department of Justice⁵. (*Ibid.*) After the Merced estate obtains Court's approval of the executed federal release agreement, it will then be legally cleared to complete its final distribution of assets to Class 7 and 8 claimants who hold approved and unpaid lower priority claims.

As reported above, the estate has approved six Class 7 general creditor claims in the amount of \$172,917.22 and 62 Class 8 equity class claims in the amount of \$197,286.49 for a total distribution of \$370,203.71 for Class 7 and 8 claimants. (Index, Ex. E [Merced Property & Casualty Detailed Spreadsheet: Merced Final Distribution Calculation].) After the federal release and waiver agreement is approved and effective, the estate will then pay the remaining approved Class 7 and Class 8 claims. Following this disbursement of payments, the estate will then escheat unclaimed funds to the state and reserve a closing budget to properly conclude the liquidation. At that point, the Merced estate will have sufficient assets to make a distribution to Class 9

⁵ Specific details concerning the federal release will be further discussed below in Section III.B, the portion of the status report regarding the Commissioner's ongoing activities.

"shareholder or other owners in any residual value in the estate" as provided by section 1033, subdivision (a)(9). Merced's parent company and owner, United Heritage Financial Group, owns 100% of the shares of Merced, and thus is entitled to a remittance of all the estate's remaining net assets.

C. CLO's recovery of funds from the PG&E Subrogation Trust on payments made for Camp Fire-related claims

As previously mentioned with regards to CIGA's POC, the PG&E Subrogation Trust was established by the bankruptcy court in PG&E Corporation and its subsidiary's Ch. 11 bankruptcy cases to consider and pay claims for liquidated damages caused by the Camp Fire. (Second Status Report, filed September 14, 2021, pp. 7-8.) Like CIGA, the Merced estate also submitted a proof of claim against the PG&E Subrogation Trust. Since then, the estate received reimbursements through the bankruptcy plan from the PG&E Subrogation Trust and all Class 2 liquidated claim payments associated with the Camp Fire made from the Merced estate have been submitted and approved. The Subrogation Trustee advised the estate of the Trustee's intention to close the PG&E Subrogation Trust in late 2023. At the closure of the PG&E Subrogation Trust, the Merced estate collected a final "hold-back" payment of approximately \$37,000, resulting in the Merced estate collecting a total of \$3,216,000 in subrogation recoveries from Class 2 claims. This amount does not include the \$60,047,831 recovered by CIGA for their payment of Merced-related fire claims.

D. Recovery on Reinsurance Contracts

As previously reported, the Commissioner recovered \$11,165,000 on Merced's reinsurance contracts. (Second Status Report, filed September 14, 2021, p. 4.) The reinsurance programs have been exhausted except for recoveries on individual claims greater than \$1,000,000 but less than \$4,000,000. (*Ibid.*) The CLO Reinsurance Department reports that no additional recovery is expected as there are no known individual claims for losses greater than \$1,000,000. (*Ibid.*)

E. Statement of Assets and Liabilities for the Merced estate

The Statement of Assets and Liabilities for the Merced estate as of September 30, 2024, shows that the Merced estate has cash balances or cash equivalent assets of \$8,427,300 as well as

\$59,600 in accrued investment income. (Index, Ex. D [Merced Statement of Assets and Liabilities as of September 30, 2024].) (*Ibid.*) In sum, the Merced estate has \$8,486,900 in estimated total assets as of September 30, 2024. (*Ibid.*)

Additionally, the Statement of Assets and Liabilities shows total estimated liabilities of \$633,800. (Index, Ex. D.) All Class 2 liabilities (CIGA claim and all other approved unpaid policyholder class claims) of \$26,953,300 have been paid in full through court-approved distributions. (*Ibid.*) In addition, the Statement of Assets and Liabilities reports \$213,600 in preliquidation claims, \$50,000 in estimated state and federal government claims, and \$370,200 in both the general creditor and equity classes combined. (*Ibid.*) Together, the assets and liabilities result in a net asset position of \$7,853,100. (*Ibid.*)

The Statement of Assets and Liabilities also reflects the Commissioner's payments of \$692,196 in liquidation fees and expenses for the period November 1, 2022, through September 30, 2024. Insurance Code sections 1035 and 1036 authorize payment of liquidation fees and expenses from an insolvent estate, subject to the court's approval. Such fees and expenses for these purposes are entitled to Class 1 priority status over and above all other expenses of the estate. (§ 1033, subd. (a)(1).)

III. THE COMMISSIONER'S ONGOING ACTIVITIES

A. Administration of the Merced estate

CLO's Information Technology (IT), Finance & Accounting (Accounting), and Claims⁶

Departments have continued to provide the necessary services and management of their respective operational areas. These Departments, together with the Estate Trust staff, have worked to position the Merced estate to be ready for final disbursement to approved creditors and to be closed thereafter.

The IT Department continued its routine technical assistance in updating and maintaining historical claims databases (loss and adjustment files) and contemporary electronic data files.

The IT Department will continue to provide essential monthly support through the final

⁶ CLO's Claims Department is responsible for handling non-CIGA covered claims.

disbursement of Merced assets to creditors. Thereafter, it will work on final system requirements (decommissioning) and data retention in anticipation of the estate's closure.

The Accounting Department has prepared all entries, schedules and work papers for the estate and has routinely reconciled all cash receipts and estate disbursements over the last two years. Working towards the estate's closure, the Accounting Department will continue to manage any remaining financial reports for the estate and prepare and issue the final distribution payments to approved creditors. Additionally, the Accounting Department will conduct a final independent review of Merced's financial statements by the CLO's independent auditors as well as monitor the preparation and filing of the estate's final tax return. (*Ibid.*)

The Claims Department has recently been the primary resource in positioning the estate for a final distribution of its assets and closure of the estate. It has reviewed and determined all timely received POCs. The Claims Department has also completed all notifications and follow-up actions to properly resolve any open POCs. It served as a constant resource of support for CIGA throughout the estate's liquidation. Subject to this court's approval, the Claims Department will monitor the estate's final distribution and will be available to assist any of the creditors with any issues associated with their claim payments.

B. Completion of claim validation and resolution

As previously mentioned, CIGA's claim against the Merced estate has been satisfied in full as of September 30, 2024. CIGA reported one open claim that had extenuating circumstances, so the estate has agreed to allow CIGA to retain a modest \$6,000 reserve to address any remaining policy exposure. As such, the estate has completed the settlement of CIGA's Class 2 POC. All other approved Class 2 claims obligations have also been paid in full.

As discussed above, the Claims Department has negotiated a final federal release and waiver from the U.S. Department of Justice, thereby resolving the federal government's Class 3 claim with no claim payment due from the estate. (Index, Ex. F.) Obtaining the final federal release and waiver agreement required Merced to incur unanticipated legal costs and delays necessary to secure the federal release, but the agreement does not include any claim exposure,

thus the \$50,000 reserve established by the estate will be written off. The estate must obtain the Court's approval of the executed federal agreement in order to release the Commissioner from any personal liability due to any potential super-priority claims brought by the federal government. After the estate receives approval of the executed federal release and waiver agreement, the approved Class 7 general creditors and Class 8 equity claims, filed by Merced certificate of contribution holders who represent a group of unsecured creditors who are due principal and interest payments, will then be paid through the estate's final distribution of assets.

Lastly, the Claims Department will continue to provide outreach and assistance to individual claimants through the final distribution of estate assets. As previously reported, this activity will increase in volume when the estate releases the final distribution of its assets.

C. 2022 and 2023 Tax Returns

Merced is a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of California, and it is part of a mutual holding group structure domiciled in Idaho. (First Status Report, filed August 7, 2019, p. 6.) The parent of the mutual holding group is United Heritage Mutual Holding Company who owns 100 percent of the stock of United Heritage Financial Group, who in turn owns 100 percent of the stock of Merced. (*Ibid.*) As part of the United Heritage mutual holding group, Merced prepares its tax returns in accordance with the group's tax sharing agreement. (*Ibid.*) As such, Merced prepared its 2022 and 2023 proforma returns in accordance with the group's agreement and was included as part of the group's consolidated tax filings. Merced will prepare its 2024 proforma tax return for inclusion in the group's 2024 consolidated tax return filing. (*Ibid.*)

IV. THE COMMISSIONER'S FINAL DISBURSEMENT OF ASSETS, FEDERAL RELEASE, AND CLOSURE OF THE ESTATE

After the Commissioner receives this Court's approval of the executed final release and waiver agreement from the United States Department of Justice releasing the Commissioner, the Deputy Liquidator, and the Merced estate from certain federal super-priority exposure, the estate will then be able to make a final disbursement to all approved Class 7 and 8 creditors. As explained in the concurrently filed Application, the Commissioner seeks the court's approval to

make a final disbursement of approximately \$370,203.71 in Merced assets to Class 7 and Class 8 creditors with approved claims. (§ 1033, subd. (a)(2); Index, Ex. E [Merced Property & Casualty Detailed Spreadsheet: Merced Final Distribution Calculation.) This disbursement will consist of: 1) \$172,917 for the approved unpaid claims of six Class 7 general creditors, and 2) \$197,286 for the approved unpaid claims of 62 Class 8 certificate of contribution holders.

The Merced estate will also seek in its Application authority from this Court to escheat all unclaimed funds currently held by the estate to the California State Treasurer's office. The estate reports approximately \$213,600 in unclaimed funds. If the estate cannot locate the claimants prior to closure of the estate, these funds will be escheated to the California State Treasurer. (*Ibid.*)

The Commissioner will also seek to retain \$350,000 from the \$8,486,900 in cash or cash equivalent assets of the Merced estate as a closing reserve for the payment of projected future administrative expenses incurred after September 2024 and any further disbursements as required by law. (Index, Exs. D & E.) The reserve of \$350,000 is intended to provide for all administrative expenses through the closing of the estate.

After payment of the expenses of administration, disbursement of all court-approved open claims, escheatment of unclaimed funds, and retention of a closing reserve, the Merced estate intends to remit payment of all remaining net assets to United Heritage Financial Group, the parent and owner of Merced Property and Casualty Insurance Company. Pursuant to section 1033, subdivision (a)(9), the Merced estate will have sufficient assets to make a distribution to Class 9 "shareholder or other owners in any residual value in the estate." The Commissioner seeks authority to remit the balance of estate assets to Merced's parent company because it is a Class 9 claimant and is entitled to a distribution of the residual value of the estate. The Commissioner anticipates this will be the estate's final act before the Merced estate is closed and its liquidation completed.

The Merced estate will work to accomplish all of this distribution and closure work by June 30, 2025, subject to court availability and any opposition to the application seeking approval of the final disbursement.

CONCLUSION Consistent with his obligations and authority set forth under the Liquidation Order, the Commissioner continues to conduct a diligent and efficient liquidation of Merced. The final status report is intended to inform the Court of the Commissioner's completed and ongoing operations as well as support the concurrently filed Application. Dated: February 20, 2025 Respectfully submitted, ROB BONTA Attorney General of California LISA CHAO Supervising Deputy Attorney General CAROLINE C. LAM Deputy Attorney General Attorneys for Applicant Insurance Commissioner of the State of California SA2018303475 36815735.docx

DECLARATION OF SERVICE BY ELECTRONIC MAIL

Case Name: Insurance Commissioner of the State of California v. Merced Property &

Casualty Co.

Case No.: 18CV-04739

I declare:

I am employed in the Office of the Attorney General, which is the office of a member of the California State Bar, at which member's direction this service is made. I am 18 years of age or older and not a party to this matter. I am familiar with the business practice at the Office of the Attorney General for collection and processing of correspondence for mailing with the United States Postal Service.

On <u>February 21, 2025</u>, I served the attached **FINAL STATUS REPORT OF INSURANCE COMMISSIONER ON THE LIQUIDATION OF MERCED PROPERTY & CASUALTY COMPANY** by transmitting a true copy via electronic mail, addressed as follows:

Jeffrey D. Neumeyer, Esq. Sr. Vice President, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary United Heritage Financial Group Email to jneumeyer@unitedheritage.com

Brad Roeber
Executive Director
California Insurance Guarantee Association
Email to roeberb@ciga.org

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California and the United States of America the foregoing is true and correct and that this declaration was executed on February 21, 2025, at Los Angeles, California.

Gail Agcaoili	_/s/ Gail Agcaoili
Declarant	Signature

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