Property Rights Articles

In each of the following article one or more of the characteristics of efficient property rights appears to not be satisfied either completely or in part. We will read the articles one at a time and identify which characteristics are not satisfied. For each article, teams should write on their white boards the 3 characteristics, transferability, enforceability and exclusivity, and the paragraph that most clearly shows how the right is or is not satisfied.

Article #1

Bored of the ring: Students have right to sell college rings to others (Opinion)
The Battalion, June 9, 2003
By George Deutsch
June 04, 2003

1 The recent actions by members of the Georgia football team have done little to quell a debate that raged on in the Texas A&M community last semester: do students have the right to sell rings and other merchandise earned through personal college achievements?

2 When A&M student Matt Shomer attempted selling his Aggie ring on eBay in April, he was met with unwarranted criticism and harassment from members of the student body, as was evident in an April 9 Battalion mail call. Shomer was singled out, embarrassed and called "disgraceful" in print by another Aggie. It was this Aggie who did a disservice to the A&M community through needlessly harassment; Shomer was just a victim of others' overzealous criticism and his own ambition.

3 Shomer apologized, but apologies really aren't in order. The decision was made to exchange money for merchandise, and in the real world, transactions such as this happen by the thousands every day. If a ring's owner cannot sell it, who can?

4 The achievement and emotion associated with these rings, whether an SEC ring or an Aggie ring, doesn't somehow make them sacred or priceless, it only makes them valuable. These students were aware of the value their belongings held and simply wanted to capitalize off of it. Really, what is more American than that?

Article #2

Water proposal could devastate Texas rice industry
Associated Press Published Wednesday, September 21, 2011 8:05 AM
By April Castro

1 AUSTIN -- Barbara Corporon and her husband Victor depend on water from the Colorado River to grow rice, a staple of their farm near the Texas coast.

2 But as the Lower Colorado River Authority contemplates cutting off that water because of one of the worst droughts the state has ever seen, the Corporons and hundreds of other South Texas farmers are trying to figure out how they'll keep their farms going.

3 While most of Texas and the Southwest are under moderate to extreme drought conditions, agricultural water rationing and curtailment proposals are becoming more widespread, even affecting parts of the Deep South.

4 In Texas, the board of directors for the LCRA, which manages the southern part of the massive river, is considering a proposal that could cut off water to about 250 farmers in the state's three biggest rice-producing counties -- Matagorda, Wharton and Colorado.

5 They say it's an emergency measure to protect the water that's left. Several Central Texas communities, including Austin, depend on the reservoirs for drinking and other utilities.

6 The 862-mile Colorado River starts near the Texas Panhandle and flows into the Gulf of Mexico. At its southern end, tributaries flow into canals, where the LCRA releases flows to be used by farmers who have longstanding water rights' agreements.

7 The proposals being considered would only be considered if climate forecasts for Texas continue to call for a dry fall and winter.

Article #3

Rancher feuds with feds over water, shoots at helicopter
September 2003
U.S. Water News Online

1 PHOENIX -- Rancher Fred Conway had been feuding with the U.S. Forest Service over water it had taken from his property to fight wildfires last year when he heard a helicopter near his stock pond again.

2 So he grabbed his shotgun, drove an all-terrain vehicle across his pasture near Punkin Center and tried to wave the pilot away. But the pilot dropped the 240-gallon rubber bucket anyway and Conway fired at it.

3 He now faces up to a year in jail and $7,000 in restitution if convicted of one count of interfering with the performance of a federal contractor.

4 Forest Service district rangers usually try to assess availability of private water before the fire season begins.

5 "We try really hard not to use somebody's water without their approval," Van Driel said.

6 Especially in drought years, water is a precious commodity, but it's unclear whether Conway has an inviolable right to the water in his stock pond.

7 There aren't any black-and-white answers because questions regarding water rights and the value of water are particular to the facts surrounding a case, said Pat Schiffer, chief legal counsel to the Arizona Department of Water Resources.

8 But other attorneys are more certain. "It's his water," says Michael McNulty, a water attorney in Tucson. "The government has no more right to take it than to take his dining room furniture."