

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF UTAH

Jennifer Cartwright, individually and as the personal representative
of the heirs and Estate of Cameron Rutherford, and Scott
Rutherford, individually v. HooDoo Land Holdings, LLC dba
Preston Nutter Ranch, Preston Nutter Range Creek Holdings, LLC,
Hunt Consolidated, Inc., and Hunt HooDoo Land Holdings

Cartwright v. HooDoo Land Holdings · No. 2:24-cv-00376-TS-JCB · Decided February 2, 2026

SUMMARY

The court grants Plaintiffs’ motion to amend their amended complaint to add Hunt Oil Company as a defendant in an action arising from Cameron Rutherford’s death at a Utah cabin. Applying Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 15(a)(2), the court declines to resolve personal-jurisdiction and negligence-futility arguments at the amendment stage and directs Plaintiffs to file a second amended complaint within seven days.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Utah
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Ted Stewart
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Utah
DECIDED	February 2, 2026
DOCKET	2:24-cv-00376-TS-JCB
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiffs moved under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 15 to amend their amended complaint to add Hunt Oil Company as a defendant. Defendants opposed the motion, arguing that amendment would be futile because the court lacked personal jurisdiction over Hunt Oil and because the proposed negligence claim failed to state a claim.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the discretionary standard governing leave to amend under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 15(a)(2), under which leave should be freely given when justice so requires. The court also recognized that it has discretion to decline a futility analysis when the futility arguments are more appropriately addressed through dispositive motions.

PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; district court memorandum decision and order
PARTIES	Jennifer Cartwright, individually and as the personal representative of the heirs and Estate of Cameron Rutherford, Scott Rutherford, individually v. HooDoo Land Holdings, LLC dba Preston Nutter Ranch, Preston Nutter Range Creek Holdings, LLC, Hunt Consolidated, Inc., Hunt HooDoo Land Holdings

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether plaintiffs should be granted leave under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 15(a)(2) to amend the amended complaint and add Hunt Oil Company as a defendant.
2. Whether the court should deny amendment as futile based on alleged lack of personal jurisdiction over Hunt Oil Company.
3. Whether the court should deny amendment as futile because the proposed negligence claim allegedly failed to state a claim.

HOLDINGS

1. Leave to amend should be freely given when justice so requires, and defendants did not establish undue delay, undue prejudice, bad faith or dilatory motive, failure to cure deficiencies, or another sufficient basis to deny amendment.
2. The court was not required to determine whether personal jurisdiction existed over Hunt Oil before allowing plaintiffs to amend, particularly because Hunt Oil had not appeared or asserted a lack of personal jurisdiction.
3. The court exercised its discretion not to analyze whether the proposed negligence claim was futile because defendants' arguments were more appropriately addressed in dispositive motions after the operative complaint was filed.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“[T]he court should freely give leave [to amend] when justice so requires,”

“there is no requirement that “a court . . . determine whether personal jurisdiction exists before allowing amendment to add a new party, particularly where the new party has not appeared or asserted lack of personal jurisdiction.””

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiffs allege that Cameron Rutherford died on June 25, 2023, at a cabin on Preston Nutter Ranch in Carbon County, Utah. They allege that the existing defendants owned, managed, operated, or maintained the ranch and cabin where Rutherford resided and died. Plaintiffs sought to add Hunt Oil Company based on discovery that allegedly implicated Hunt Oil in the matter.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiffs filed an action arising from Cameron Rutherford's death and sought leave to file a second amended complaint adding Hunt Oil Company. The district court granted the motion to amend and directed plaintiffs to file the second amended complaint within seven days.

DISPOSITION

other

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

Plaintiffs were directed to file their Second Amended Complaint within seven days of the February 2, 2026 order.

CASES CITED

- Minter v. Prime Equip. Co., 451 F.3d 1196, 1204 (10th Cir. 2006)
- Hardin v. Manitowoc-Forsythe Corp., 691 F.2d 449, 456 (10th Cir. 1982)
- Frank v. U.S. West, Inc., 3 F.3d 1357, 1365 (10th Cir. 1993)
- Foman v. Davis, 371 U.S. 178, 182 (1962)
- Carrazco v. Morrison, 2022 WL 2666031, at *2 (D. Colo. July 11, 2022)
- Simple Prods. Corp. v. Chia-Ling Huang, 2021 WL 2210308, at *4 (D. Utah June 1, 2021)
- Lambe v. Sundance Mountain Resort, 2018 WL 4558413, at *3 (D. Utah Sept. 21, 2018)
- JDK, LLC v. Hodge, 2015 WL 5766466, at *2 (D. Colo. Oct. 2, 2015)
- Gen. Steel Domestic Sales, LLC v. Steelwise, 2008 WL 2520423, at *4 (D. Colo. June 20, 2008)