

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Matthew Chapman v. United States Forest Service

Chapman · No. 1:22-cv-01531-BAM · Decided December 23, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California dismissed Matthew Chapman’s action against the United States Forest Service with prejudice. The court found that Chapman failed to obey orders requiring him to file a Second Amended Complaint or notice of dismissal and failed to state a claim, after considering the applicable dismissal factors.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Barbara A. McAuliffe
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	December 23, 2025
DOCKET	1:22-cv-01531-BAM
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	After dismissing the claims in Plaintiff's First Amended Complaint and granting limited leave to amend, the court dismissed the action with prejudice because Plaintiff failed to file either a Second Amended Complaint or a notice of dismissal as ordered.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the Ninth Circuit's five-factor framework for dismissal as a sanction for failure to obey court orders or comply with local rules: the public interest in expeditious resolution, the court's need to manage its docket, prejudice to the defendant, the policy favoring disposition on the merits, and the availability of less drastic sanctions.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	Matthew Chapman v. United States Forest Service

TOPICS

- sanctions
- civil procedure
- pleadings
- motions to dismiss
- appellate procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

appellate procedure

sanctions

pleadings

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the court could dismiss the action with prejudice for Plaintiff's failure to obey orders requiring him either to amend his complaint or file a notice of dismissal.
2. Whether the Ninth Circuit's five-factor dismissal framework supported dismissal with prejudice under the circumstances.
3. Whether Plaintiff's failure to amend also warranted dismissal for failure to state a claim.

HOLDINGS

1. A district court may use its inherent power and Local Rule 110 to dismiss an action with prejudice when a party fails to obey court orders or comply with applicable local rules.
2. Dismissal with prejudice was warranted because the five relevant factors, including docket management, prejudice, the limited remaining merits issue, and the availability of lesser sanctions, weighed in favor of dismissal, while the merits policy did not overcome Plaintiff's repeated noncompliance.
3. The action was also properly dismissed for failure to state a claim because Plaintiff did not file the permitted amendment alleging facts sufficient to state a claim concerning the alleged fourth permit.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“District courts have the inherent power to control their dockets and “[i]n the exercise of that power they may impose sanctions including, where appropriate, . . . dismissal.”” (at 1)

“The fact that the Court allowed Plaintiff an additional twenty-one days to amend his complaint constitutes an attempt at a less drastic sanction than dismissal.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff failed to file either a Second Amended Complaint or a notice of dismissal after being ordered to do so within twenty-one days. The court had warned Plaintiff that failure to comply would result in dismissal with prejudice. Plaintiff also failed to comply with a second order issued after the Ninth Circuit dismissed his premature appeal, and he did not otherwise communicate with the court.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff initiated the action on November 29, 2022, and proceeded pro se and in forma pauperis. The court granted Defendant's motion to dismiss the First Amended Complaint in part and denied it in part, allowing amendment only as to an alleged fourth permit. Plaintiff did not amend or voluntarily dismiss within the ordered deadline. The Ninth Circuit dismissed Plaintiff's interlocutory appeal for lack of jurisdiction, and after the mandate issued, the district court again ordered Plaintiff to amend or dismiss. Plaintiff again failed to comply, leading to this dismissal with prejudice.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Thompson v. Hous. Auth., 782 F.2d 829, 831 (9th Cir. 1986)
- Ghazali v. Moran, 46 F.3d 52, 53-54 (9th Cir. 1995)
- Ferdik v. Bonzelet, 963 F.2d 1258, 1260-61 (9th Cir. 1992)
- Malone v. U.S. Postal Serv., 833 F.2d 128, 130-33 (9th Cir. 1987)
- Henderson v. Duncan, 779 F.2d 1421, 1423 (9th Cir. 1986)
- Carey v. King, 856 F.2d 1439, 1440 (9th Cir. 1988)
- Harrison v. Hernandez, 2022 WL 17722349, at *1-*2 (E.D. Cal. Dec. 15, 2022)
- Anderson v. Air W., 542 F.2d 522, 524 (9th Cir. 1976)
- Pagtalunan v. Galaza, 291 F.3d 639, 643 (9th Cir. 2002)
- In re Phenylpropanolamine (PPA) Prods. Liab. Litig., 460 F.3d 1217, 1228 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Gastelum v. Petco Animal Supplies Stores, Inc., 2022 WL 17822092, at *2 (E.D. Cal. Dec. 20, 2022)