Extending *Winters* to Water Quality: Allowing Groundwater for Hatcheries

Amy Choyce Allison
EXTENDING WINTERS TO WATER QUALITY:
ALLOWING GROUNDWATER FOR HATCHERIES

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Abstract: The Winters Doctrine of federally reserved water rights applies to
groundwater and water quality. Because most Indian tribes would have no water rights under
state law, the reserved water rights doctrine, known as the Winters Doctrine, emerged to
establish a federal right to water on Indian reservations sufficient to fulfill the purposes of the
reservation. The reserved water rights doctrine originated in Winters v. United States, which
was preceded by two cases upholding the federal government's right to reserve certain water
rights. Winters rested on one of the Canons of Construction for Indian treaties that require
agreements involving Indians be liberally construed in their favor. Whether Winters applies to
water quality as well as quantity has never been directly litigated. However, courts have
implied that this right extends to water quality by upholding water uses that do not actually
require consumption of water, such as maintenance of minimum instream flows. Winters and
the Canons of Construction also require an extension to water quality. This Comment uses the
Lummi Nation to illustrate a real example of water rights problems faced by Indian tribes and
concludes that because the Winters Doctrine extends to groundwater and water quality, the
Lummi Nation is entitled to enjoin non-Indian groundwater users contaminating their
groundwater source.

The Lummi Nation of Western Washington has always depended on
salmon fishing for its livelihood and culture. But, during the past
decade, salmon resources available to the Lummi have begun dwindling
due to pollution, logging practices, and dams on salmon streams. These
activities have caused some areas of the Nooksack river to reach high
temperatures fatal to salmon. In order to preserve and manage salmon
populations, the Lummi have introduced fish hatcheries on the
reservation.

The Lummi's efforts to rescue the diminishing salmon population are
at risk of failure. While hatcheries can help recover naturally spawning
populations of salmon, they require fresh, high quality water to function

1. See Don Newman Taylor, Changes In The Economy Of the Lummi Indians of Northwest
author); Kurt Russo, The Lummi Indian Tribe and Life with the Salmon, at
http://www.sustainable.org/casestudies/washington/WA_of_Lummi.html (last modified Sept. 18,
1996).

2. See Russo, supra note 1.

3. See id.

4. See id. Hatcheries are pools of fresh water where fish are artificially raised and were first
established in the late 19th century to combat diminishing natural fish runs. See United States v.
Washington, 759 F.2d 1353, 1360 (9th Cir. 1985).

5. See Russo, supra note 1.
successfully.⁶ The Lummi have relied on groundwater underlying the reservation because the surface water available to them is of poor quality.⁷ However, the underground water source is in danger because the State of Washington has issued permits to withdraw the groundwater, and other landowners have pumped the groundwater.⁸ This has resulted in overuse and salt-water intrusion into the reservation’s fresh groundwater.⁹ The United States has filed suit on behalf of the Lummi in the Western District of Washington to remedy this intrusion, presenting a dilemma for the courts.¹⁰

The court that hears the Lummi case will have the opportunity to apply the reserved water rights doctrine, also known as the Winters Doctrine, to the groundwater in order to preserve the quality of the Lummi’s water. In Winters v. United States,¹¹ the U.S. Supreme Court held that Congress impliedly reserved enough water for the Indians to fulfill the purposes of their reservation.¹² The scope and extent of the Winters Doctrine is a treaty-based inquiry that requires courts to liberally interpret treaties and other documents establishing reservations under the Canons of Construction.¹³ Yet, the scope of Winters is uncertain with regard to water quality.¹⁴ No court has specifically extended Winters to water quality. Nevertheless, courts have allowed water rights for non-consumptive uses, such as maintenance of instream river flows and preservation of certain water temperatures for fish survival.¹⁵ In addition, the Supreme Court of Arizona broke new ground by extending Winters to groundwater when surface water is inadequate.¹⁶

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⁶. Telephone Interview with Greg Johnston, Certified Fisheries Professional (July 20, 2002).
⁷. See Russo, supra note 1; United States’ Complaint, United States v. Washington, Western District of Washington, 8–9 (Jan. 19, 2001) (No. C01-0047Z). For purposes of this Comment, the assertions in the Complaint are assumed to be true.
⁸. United States’ Complaint at 8–9, Washington (No. C01-0047Z).
⁹. Id.
¹⁰. See id
¹¹. 207 U.S. 564 (1908).
¹³. See Winters, 207 U.S. at 576–77; see also infra Part II.
¹⁴. See infra Part IV.
¹⁵. See United States v. Adair, 723 F.2d 1394, 1411 (9th Cir. 1983); United States v. Anderson, 591 F. Supp. 1, 5–6 (E.D. Wash. 1982), rev’d in part, aff’d in part, 736 F.2d 1358 (9th Cir. 1984). See also infra Part III.B.
This Comment argues that the *Winters* Doctrine reserves groundwater of sufficient quality, as well as quantity, to fulfill the purposes of Indian reservations when surface water is inadequate. The experience of the Lummi Nation illustrates the *Winters* Doctrine when applied to tribes maintaining fish hatcheries on reservations. Part I of this Comment discusses water law in general. Part II explains the *Winters* Doctrine of reserved water rights. Part III discusses the scope of reserved water rights, including how water is quantified, how courts have upheld water rights for non-consumptive uses, and whether *Winters* applies to groundwater. Part IV argues that tribes have a right to a quality of groundwater sufficient to fulfill the purposes of their reservation when surface water is inadequate. Part IV then applies this argument to the Lummi as an example of a fishing tribe using water for fish hatcheries.

I. WATER RIGHTS, THE WEST, AND PRIOR APPROPRIATION

Water rights, unlike other property rights, are held "in common for the public good" and are not subject to a possessory interest. An individual cannot own water. Instead, he or she can own the right to use water.

With the exception of federally reserved water rights, the laws governing water rights vary as a matter of state law. The Equal Footing Doctrine provides that the United States holds title to navigable waterways on submerged land in trust for the states, and the states receive the title when they are admitted to the Union. Moreover, the Desert Land Act requires water rights belonging to recipients of federal lands to be determined by and subject to state water law. The federal government must comply with state law when obtaining water rights for

17. CHRISTINE GREGOIRE ET AL., AN INTRODUCTION TO WASHINGTON WATER LAW 1 (2000).
18. See A. DAN TARLOCK, LAW OF WATER RIGHTS AND RESOURCES 3-12-3-13 (2002 ed.).
19. See GREGOIRE, supra note 17, at I.1-I.2; TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 3-13.
20. See GREGOIRE, supra note 17, at I.1-I.2; TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 3-12-3-12.1.
21. See Murphy v. Kerr, 296 F. 536, 540 (D.N.M. 1923) (stating that "waters are owned by the state in trust for the people"); see also GREGOIRE, supra note 17, at I:5, III:1. Water quality and pollution issues are usually determined by state and federal pollution control programs like the Clean Water Act. See TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 2-9.
22. See TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 8-8.
federal lands. However, land that has been reserved by the federal government is not subject to state law.

In the West, state courts apply the doctrine of prior appropriation to surface water rights. This doctrine establishes a “prior in time, prior in right” notion. The first individual to put water to a beneficial use gets priority as long as he or she continues using the water. In water shortages, the first users can require the “junior” users to stop using water. Consequently, the issue of timing is essential.

Groundwater has traditionally been treated differently than surface water. Most courts originally granted the owners of the overlying land absolute rights to underlying groundwater sources under the absolute ownership rule. A few states still follow this rule. Yet, other rules have emerged in other states. For example, the correlative rights rule allows for equitable sharing of the groundwater source. A third rule, the reasonable use rule, allows owners to take all water required for reasonable use of the overlying land. Finally, some western states have applied the prior appropriation doctrine to groundwater as well as surface water, usually by statute.

For example, in 1945 the Washington Legislature enacted laws extending the prior appropriation standard to

25. See Fisher, supra note 24, at 1081.
27. See GREGOIRE, supra note 17, at 3. States that use some form of the prior appropriation doctrine include: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. See TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 5-10-5-20; Fisher, supra note 24, at 1077 n.2. Courts in the eastern United States generally use the doctrine of riparian rights which allows persons owning the land adjacent, over or under the water to make reasonable and beneficial use of the water. See GREGOIRE, supra note 17, at 3. In times of insufficiency, equal shares of the water are reduced proportionally. See GREGOIRE, supra note 17, at 3.
28. See TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 5-52. Washington has also embraced the prior appropriation doctrine through legislation by establishing a permit system for surface water use. WASH. REV. CODE § 90.03.250–340 (2002).
29. See TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 5-48–5-49, 5-112.4.
30. See GREGOIRE, supra note 17, at 3; TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 5-50–5-51.
31. See TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 4-2.
32. See id. at 4-6.
33. See id. at 4-8 (naming Texas, Connecticut, Louisiana, Maine, and Rhode Island).
34. See id. at 4-20 (discussing the rule of correlative rights in California). For a discussion on the common law principles of groundwater in Washington, see GREGOIRE, supra note 17, at V:4.
35. See TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 4-10–4-11 (discussing the reasonable use rule).
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groundwater. With few exceptions, the Washington groundwater code requires a water user to obtain a permit before pumping groundwater and resembles the surface water code that requires a permit for surface water use.

II. INDIAN TRIBES HAVE A FEDERALLY IMPLIED RIGHT TO WATER THAT TAKES PRIORITY OVER NON-INDIAN USERS

The reserved water rights doctrine gives Indian tribes an opportunity to use water without having to comply with state law. Without such rights, tribes in the west would rarely receive water because of the complicated priority system employed in western state water law. Prior to *Winters*, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the federal government can reserve certain rights and that Indians retain rights not ceded by treaty. In *Winters*, the Court granted Indians on reservations an implied right to water sufficient to fulfill the purposes of the reservation. The legal basis for reserved water rights is provided by the Canons of Construction, which are rules for interpreting documents dealing with Indians. These water rights also stem from the federal government’s ability to reserve certain rights for the Indians. Reserved water rights are favorable to Indians because they do not carry the strict requirements of state water law in the West.

37. 1945 Wash. Laws ch. 263 § 3 (codified in WASH. REV. CODE § 90.44 (2002)).
38. WASH. REV. CODE § 90.44.050. Permits are not required for stock watering, lawn watering, domestic uses in an amount not exceeding five thousand gallons a day, and industrial purposes not exceeding five thousand gallons a day. See GREGOIRE, supra note 17, at V:10; see also WASH. REV. CODE §§ 90.03.250–340 (establishing a mandatory permit system for surface water use).
43. See *Winters*, 207 U.S. at 576–78.
45. See *Winters*, 207 U.S. at 577.
A. Pre-Winters Case Law Establishing the Federal Reservation of Water Rights

Until 1908, no courts had considered whether a reserved water right for federal reservations existed.\footnote{See TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 9-71.} Yet, several U. S. Supreme Court cases provided significant legal background for the federal reservation of water rights.\footnote{See United States v. Rio Grande Dam & Irrigation Co., 174 U.S. 690, 703 (1899); United States v. Winans, 198 U.S. 371, 382 (1905); see also GREGOIRE, supra note 17, at VIII:3; Worcester v. Georgia, 31 U.S. 515, 557 (1832) (holding that state regulatory law was inapplicable on Indian reservations).} The first, United States v. Rio Grande Dam & Irrigation Co.,\footnote{174 U.S. 690 (1899).} held that the federal government could preserve the navigability of rivers.\footnote{Id. at 703.} The second, United States v. Winans,\footnote{198 U.S. 371 (1905).} held that certain Indian treaty rights trumped state law.\footnote{Id. at 382–83.}

States may govern their own property and water laws with a few salient exceptions.\footnote{See Rio Grande Dam, 174 U.S. at 702–03; Winans, 198 U.S. at 382.} The Court examined one such exception in Rio Grande Dam when it considered whether the United States retained any rights over a non-navigable tributary of the Rio Grande River.\footnote{See Rio Grande Dam, 174 U.S. at 690.} The defendant dam builders had planned to build a dam on the tributary and divert water for irrigation.\footnote{Id. at 692–93.} They had complied with all state laws regarding dam building and diversion of public waters.\footnote{Id. at 690–92.} Thus, construction of the dam was allowed under state law. The United States argued, however, that the defendant dam builders should be enjoined from building a dam that hindered the downstream navigability of the river.\footnote{Id. at 703.}

The Supreme Court agreed and held that the jurisdiction of the federal government over interstate commerce allows it to preserve the navigability of water courses “even against any state action.”\footnote{Id. at 703.} Although the Court recognized the ability of a state to govern its own water law, it
acknowledged a limitation on this right. Specifically, the Court stated that

in the absence of specific authority from Congress a State cannot by its legislation destroy the right of the United States, as the owner of lands bordering on a stream, to the continued flow of its waters; so far... as may be necessary for the beneficial uses of the government property.

Thus, the Court held in Rio Grande that the federal government has the ability to reserve certain federal water rights.

Six years later, the U.S. Supreme Court held that Indians have reserved rights not ceded by treaties in United States v. Winans. In Winans, the Court considered whether treaty fishing rights allowing Indians to take fish in common with the citizens of a territory survived after the federal government conveyed the land out of the public domain. The United States brought suit on behalf of the Indians when the defendants took virtually all the fish in the river and made Indian fishing physically impossible. The defendants built fishing devices, called fish wheels, on the Columbia River pursuant to licenses given by the State of Washington. The United States asked the court to enjoin use of the fish wheels. The defendants argued that by complying with state law, they had a legal right to maintain the fish wheels and that the state had control over the shorelines under the Equal Footing Doctrine. Under this doctrine, states are admitted to the union on an equal footing with the original states, giving them ownership of water shorelines.

In Winans the Supreme Court held that treaties and federal law, not state law, define Indian fishing rights. Further, the Court held that these

59. Id. at 702–03.
60. Id. at 703.
61. Id.
62. 198 U.S. 371, 381 (1905).
63. Id. at 379. Public domain refers to land owned by the United States. See BLACK’S LAW DICTIONARY 1229 (6th ed. 1990).
64. Id. at 380.
65. Id.
66. Id. at 377.
67. Id. at 379.
68. Id. at 382–83.
69. See TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 8–5–8–9.
70. Winans, 198 U.S. at 382; see also COHEN, supra note 24, at 581 (stating that Winans established this principle later relied upon in Winters).
rights survive the state’s power to control riverbeds under the Equal Footing Doctrine. Thus, the Court required the private landowners to allow Indians access to fishing areas, essentially granting the Indians an easement. The Court also required the defendants to stop using the fish wheels, declaring that “the treaty was not a grant of rights to the Indians, but a . . . reservation of those not [ceded].” Therefore, Winans established the notion that Indians retain all rights not ceded and confirmed the federal government’s ability to reserve certain rights even after they have been conveyed out of the public domain.

B. Winters v. United States

Strictly applying the prior appropriation doctrine to Indian reservations would severely limit tribes’ use of water because few tribes put water to beneficial use first, few continued to put it to beneficial use, and few complied with the respective state’s procedural requirements. Moreover, most rivers are over-appropriated and have been for some time. The U.S. Supreme Court addressed the problem of prior appropriation and Indian Reservations in Winters v. United States.

In Winters, the Court considered whether Indians on the Fort Belknap Reservation had an implied right to water allowing them to enjoin non-Indian dam builders from building dams or otherwise preventing water flow to the reservation. The case turned on interpretation of the 1888 treaty establishing the Fort Belknap Reservation. The tribes agreed

72. Id. at 384.
73. Id.
74. Id. at 381.
75. See id. at 381–83.
76. See, e.g., Winters v. United States, 207 U.S. at 571 (1908); Colville Confederated Tribes v. Walton, 647 F.2d 42, 46 (9th Cir. 1981); see also Tarlock, supra note 40, at 633 (stating that “tribes seldom had the financial capability to put their potential reserved rights to actual beneficial use, even with subsidies”). Even in the fifty years following Winters, the federal government did nothing to protect or define Indian water rights. See NAT’L WATER COMM’N, WATER POLICIES FOR THE FUTURE: FINAL REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT AND TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES 474–75 (June 1973); see also Getches, supra note 44, at 833.
78. 207 U.S. 564 (1908).
79. Id. at 565.
80. 25 Stat. 113, 213 (1888).
under the treaty to cede a large area of land to the federal government. 81 The treaty reserved the land for the creation of "a permanent home and abiding place" for the tribes at issue. 82 In addition, the government's policy was to establish the reservation in order to change Indians into "pastoral and civilized people." 83 However, the agreement was silent on water rights. 84 Montana settlers, ditch companies, and irrigation companies took advantage of this silence by diverting water upstream from the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. 85 These diversions allegedly deprived the Indians of the use of water from the Milk River. 86

The federal government brought suit on behalf of the Indians to enjoin dam building or any other water diversion. 87 Under the prior appropriation doctrine, the settlers would have won due to their beneficial use of the water prior to the Indians. 88 Consequently, the United States alleged that because water was necessary to further the purposes of the reservation, Congress had implied water rights in the Treaty. 89 The defendants contended that the Indians had given up their water rights when they ceded their land. 90 Further, the defendants argued that the Indians' failure to reserve water rights for themselves must have been conscious because the lands ceded to the government for settlement were valueless without water. 91

The Winters Court held that the treaty implied a water right for tribes on the reservation under the rules of Indian treaty interpretation. 92 The Court's statement that "ambiguities occurring will be resolved from the standpoint of the Indians" 93 has become known as one of the Canons of Construction for Indian treaties. 94 The Court noted that there was an

81. Winters, 207 U.S. at 567.
82. Id. at 565 (quoting 25 Stat. 113, 213 (1888)).
83. Id. at 576.
84. Id.
85. Id. at 569.
86. Id. at 567.
87. Id. at 565.
88. Id. at 566.
89. Id. at 567.
90. Id. at 576.
91. Id.
92. Id. at 576–77.
93. Id. at 576.
94. See COHEN, supra note 24, at 221. The three Canons of Construction are: (1) ambiguous terms or words must be resolved in favor of the Indian parties concerned, (2) Indian treaties must be interpreted as the Indians themselves would have understood them, and (3) the treaty's meaning or purpose must be liberally construed in favor of the Indians. See Wilkinson, supra note 44, at 608–17.
ambiguity in the agreement establishing the reservation because it was silent on water rights.⁹⁵ Therefore a "conflict of implications" arose.⁹⁶ One implication was that a water right was implied because the Indians realized that the purpose of the reservation, to become civilized and pastoral, would not be met without water.⁹⁷ Another implication was that the Indians impliedly waived their water rights because they realized that the ceded land was valueless without irrigation, and failed to reserve water rights.⁹⁸ But, construing this ambiguity from the standpoint of the Indians led the Winters Court to conclude that Indians were not aware that by accepting the reservation, they gave up the rights to make it prosperous.⁹⁹ When the Indians agreed to relocate to the reservation, they would not have contemplated having to expressly reserve water rights.¹⁰⁰ The Court resolved the ambiguity in favor of the Indians and thereby established an implied right to water on Indian reservations sufficient to fulfill the purpose of the reservation.¹⁰¹

In Winters, the Court established that although state law generally governs water rights, federally reserved water rights are not subject to state law.¹⁰² Like the defendants in Winans, the defendants in Winters argued that the Equal Footing Doctrine gave states the right to determine all water rights.¹⁰³ The Court disagreed, citing Rio Grande Dam and Winans for the proposition that the state's right to regulate water is subject to the federal government's reservation of certain rights.¹⁰⁴ The Court recognized that the agreement contained an implied water right in 1888, when the reservation was established.¹⁰⁵ The Winters Court reasoned that Congress must have intended the implied water right to be continued throughout the years, and not be revoked a year later with the

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The Canons are comparable to rules of construction for adhesion contracts. See Wilkinson, supra note 44, at 617.


96. Id.

97. Id.

98. Id.

99. Id. at 577.

100. See id.


102. See United States v. Winters, 207 U.S. 564, 577 (1908). See also Colville Confederated Tribes v. Walton, 647 F.2d 42, 46 (9th Cir. 1981); Martinis, supra note 46, at 448.

103. See Winters, 207 U.S. at 577. For discussion on the Equal Footing Doctrine see supra note 22 and accompanying text.

104. See Winters, 207 U.S. at 577.

105. Id. at 576–77.
admission of Montana to the Union. Thus, in Winters the Court established the reserved water rights doctrine, which has come to be known as the Winters Doctrine.

C. The Unique Nature of Winters Rights In the Reservation Context

Courts and commentators have recognized that the Winters Doctrine provides three unique privileges: first, reserved water rights may be asserted at any time; second, they are need-based and thus do not require continued beneficial use; and third, they take priority over all junior water users in water shortages. These characteristics have become apparent in cases subsequent to Winters and by various commentators and have been collectively referred to as “Winters rights.” Applied in the context of an Indian reservation, Winters rights guarantee an adequate water supply to fulfill the purposes of the reservation. Many tribes benefit from the safeguards offered in Winters to fulfill the purposes of their reservations.

Winters rights can be asserted at any time. The priority date—the date the water right commences—depends on the nature of the reserved water rights. For example, treaty confirmed aboriginal rights, such as

105. Id. at 577.
111. See, e.g., Gila IV, 35 P.3d at 77; In re Gen. Adjudication of All Rights To Use Water in the Big Horn River Sys., 899 P.2d 848, 854 (Wyo. 1995).
114. See Cappaert, 426 U.S. at 138; Helton, supra note 108, at 990; Fisher, supra note 24, at 1090.
116. Aboriginal rights are rights to use and occupy. See Johnson v. McIntosh, 21 U.S. 543, 574 (1823); Getches, supra note 44, at 70.
the right to hunt and fish in all usual and accustomed places, carry a priority date of time immemorial.\(^8\) Indian users with a priority date of time immemorial take priority over all non-Indian users, no matter when the reservation was established.\(^9\)

All other implied water rights vest on the date the federal reservation was established.\(^2\) These rights carry a priority date of the establishment of the reservation.\(^2\) Thus, under prior appropriation, Winters rights trump all other uses that were established after the reservation.\(^12\) This is in contrast to the general prior appropriation doctrine that gives priority to the first water user to establish a beneficial use.\(^12\) Consequently, tribes on reservations in western states receive implied water rights senior to non-reservation users as long as the government created the reservation before any other user could put the water to use.\(^12\)

Second, unlike prior appropriation, Winters rights do not depend on any continued beneficial use.\(^12\) Water users under state law must continually put their water to use, or lose the right to use it.\(^12\) By contrast, water users with Winters rights can let their water lie dormant for years before using it.\(^12\) Winters rights are need-based rights instead of use-based rights.\(^12\) Thus, as long as a federally reserved piece of land needs water to satisfy its purpose, a water right exists.\(^12\)

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118. See Adair, 723 F.2d at 1412–15; COHEN, supra note 24, at 578 n.20; GREGOIRE, supra note 17, at VIII:7. But see Martinez v. Lewis, 861 P.2d 235, 238 (N.M. Ct. App. 1993) (refusing to address a tribe’s reserved water right claim with a priority date of time immemorial).

119. See Adair, 724 F.2d at 1412–15.

120. See id.; COHEN, supra note 24, at 578.


122. Although the federal right is limited by state law because Winters rights only take priority over non-Indian uses that commence after the reservation is established, this issue does not usually arise in the Indian reservation context. See Helton, supra note 108, at 989; GREGOIRE, supra note 17, at VIII:7. This is because most Indian reservations were established before any other user could claim a water use. See Helton, supra note 108, at 989; GREGOIRE, supra note 17, at VIII:7.

123. See COHEN, supra note 24, at 578; Helton, supra note 108, at 990.

124. See Adair, 724 F.2d at 1412–15, COHEN, supra note 24, at 578.

125. See COHEN, supra note 24, at 578; Fisher, supra note 24, at 1090; Helton, supra note 108, at 990; Ranquist, supra note 109, at 655.

126. See TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 5-112.4.

127. See Fisher, supra note 24, at 1090.

128. See Helton, supra note 108, at 990–91 (stating that Winters rights are based on the existence of reserved land in need of water).

129. See id. at 991.
Doctrine is meant to provide enough water to satisfy present and future needs.  

Third, consistent with the doctrine of prior appropriation's priority system, users with Winters rights are not required to share water with other users in water shortages. During a water shortage, non-reservation users with a late priority must stop using the water until the purposes of the reservation are met. Read together, these three points illustrate the elevated status the courts have afforded Winters rights and the priority they receive over other water users.

III. THE SCOPE OF WINTERS RIGHTS

The scope of Winters rights has been heavily litigated. Courts are often called upon to quantify water rights on Indian reservations. These courts quantify the amount of water necessary to fulfill the purpose of the reservation and no more. Courts have utilized several methods to quantify water. First, the traditional practicably irrigable acreage standard allows tribes enough water to irrigate tribal land. Second, preservation of instream flows allows tribes to maintain a certain quantity of water to stay in streams to protect fish populations. Third, a new multifaceted approach quantifies water based on factors including history, culture, geography, economic base, and past water use. No courts have explicitly extended the scope of Winters rights to water quality. Courts are divided on whether Winters rights extend to groundwater.

130. See Arizona v. California, 373 U.S. 546, 600–01 (1963); United States v. Ahtanum Irrigation Dist., 236 F.2d 321, 326 (9th Cir. 1956).
131. See COHEN, supra note 24, at 578; Helton, supra note 108, at 990.
132. See COHEN, supra note 24, at 578; Helton, supra note 108, at 990.
134. See, e.g., Arizona, 373 U.S. at 600–01; Big Horn, 753 P.2d at 100-12.
136. See Arizona, 373 U.S. at 600–01.
137. See Adair, 723 F.2d at 1417; Anderson, 591 F. Supp. at 5.
138. See Gila IV, 35 P.3d at 80.
A. Quantifying Water For Indian Reservations

Courts quantify water according to the purpose of the reservation, \(^{140}\) thereby limiting how much water a tribe receives. \(^{141}\) Once a court determines the purpose of a reservation, it is sometimes asked to quantify the water needed to fulfill that purpose. \(^{142}\) Courts have awarded water for consumptive uses like irrigation of agricultural land, \(^{143}\) and for non-consumptive uses like maintaining instream flows \(^{144}\) and water temperature. \(^{145}\)

Indians on reservations are limited to using only enough water necessary to fulfill the purpose of the reservation. \(^{146}\) The U.S Supreme Court, in *Winters*, allowed the Indians water because without it the purposes of the reservation, providing a pastoral homeland and lifestyle, could not have been fulfilled. \(^{147}\) Water that is used in excess of the right or water that is used for non-reservation purposes is subject to state water law. \(^{148}\) Therefore, courts are faced with the essential task of determining the purpose of the reservation. \(^{149}\) Some courts have applied a narrow interpretation to Indian reservations, finding very specific agricultural purposes. \(^{150}\) Other courts have defined purpose broadly, finding several

\(^{140}\) See Adair, 723 F.2d at 1408–09; Big Horn, 753 P.2d at 99–101 (finding a sole agricultural purpose to the reservation and applying the practicably irrigable acreage standard to measure the water right).

\(^{141}\) See United States v. New Mexico, 438 U.S. 696, 702 (1978); see also Cappaert v. United States, 426 U.S. 128, 141 (1976). Another possible backstop to the implied right to water is the “sensitivity doctrine” which “requires reserved water rights to be quantified with sensitivity to the impact on state and private appropriators.” See Andrew C. Mergen & Sylvia F. Liu, *A Misplaced Sensitivity: The Draft Opinions in Wyoming v. United States*, 68 U. COLO. L. REV. 683, 702 (1997); see also NAT’L WATER COMM’N, supra note 76, at 481 (recommending that the United States provide water from alternative sources or compensate Indians when fulfilling the *Winters* right would impair non-Indian use).

\(^{142}\) See Adair, 723 F.2d at 1408–09; Big Horn, 753 P.2d at 99–101.

\(^{143}\) See Big Horn, 753 P.2d at 100–12.

\(^{144}\) See Adair, 723 F.2d at 1417–18.


\(^{146}\) See Cappaert v. United States, 426 U.S. 128, 141 (1976); Adair, 723 F.2d at 1408–09.

\(^{147}\) See *Winters* v. United States, 207 U.S. 564, 576 (1908).

\(^{148}\) See Colville Confederated Tribes v. Walton, 647 F.2d 42, 46 (9th Cir. 1981).

\(^{149}\) See, e.g., United States v. New Mexico, 438 U.S. 696, 702 (1978); Cappaert, 426 U.S. at 141; Gila IV, 35 P.3d 68, 73–77 (Ariz. 2001); Big Horn, 753 P.2d 76, 94–99 (Wyo. 1988).

\(^{150}\) See, e.g., Big Horn, 753 P.2d at 94–98 (finding the primary purpose of the Wind River Indian Reservation was apparent from treaty language referring to agriculture).
primary purposes in Indian reservations. A few courts have broadly stated that the purpose of all reservations is simply to create a permanent homeland. Under this interpretation, purpose encompasses a wide array of water use on reservations and reserves water for uses that were not necessarily contemplated at the time of the creation of the reservation.

After courts determine the purpose of a reservation, they must often quantify the water needed to fulfill that purpose. Courts have used several methods to quantify the water available under Winters rights. The Practicably Irrigable Acreage (PIA) standard was introduced in Arizona v. California and has been traditionally used to quantify water for reservations created with agricultural purposes. In Arizona, the U.S. Supreme Court determined the water rights of the Colorado River and its tributaries. The case was referred to a special master to recommend a decree because the litigation involved Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and several Indian tribes. The special master introduced the PIA standard to quantify water rights on the Indian reservations. The PIA standard allows tribes enough water to irrigate all of the acres on the reservation that are practical to irrigate.

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151. See Adair, 723 F.2d at 1409 (finding two primary purposes of the Indian reservation: fishing and agriculture); Colville Confederated Tribes v. Walton, 647 F.2d 42, 47–48 (9th Cir. 1981) (considering the historical importance of fishing and finding both a fishing and agricultural purpose); see also COHEN, supra note 24, at 584 (“[T]he relevant inquiry in ascertaining Indian reserved rights is not whether a particular use is primary or secondary but whether it is completely outside the scope of a reservation’s purposes.”).

152. See, e.g., Adair, 723 F.2d at 1410; Colville Confederated Tribes, 647 F.2d at 47–48.

153. See Ranquist, supra note 109, at 658; see also United States v. Ahtanum Irrigation Dist., 236 F.2d 321, 327 (9th Cir. 1956) (stating that the right to use water “was not limited to the use of the Indians at any given date but this right extended to the ultimate needs of the Indians as those needs and requirements should grow”).


155. Compare Arizona, 373 U.S. at 600–01 (using the practicable irrigable acreage standard), with Anderson, 591 F. Supp. at 5–6 (quantifying enough water to keep a creek’s temperature below 68 degrees).


157. See, e.g., Big Horn, 753 P.2d at 100–01; see also Tarlock, supra note 76 at 662–71 (discussing the use of the PIA standard in water rights settlements); TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 9–76 (stating that practicable irrigable acreage remains the presumptive standard).

158. See Arizona, 373 U.S. at 551.

159. Id. at 550–51.

160. Id. at 600.

161. Id.
type of analysis involves examining factors such as soil, slope, drainage, and economic feasibility to determine how much of the reservation land is irrigable.\textsuperscript{162} The state of Arizona rejected this standard, arguing that quantification should be based on the tribes' "reasonably foreseeable needs."\textsuperscript{163} The Court, however, disagreed and concluded that the reasonably foreseeable needs approach would create too much uncertainty and adopted the PIA standard as the only fair way to quantify reserved water on reservations.\textsuperscript{164} Arizona is still the only case in which the U.S. Supreme Court has quantified reserved water rights.\textsuperscript{165}

In In re General Adjudication of All Rights To Use Water In the Gila River System and Source [hereinafter Gila IV]\textsuperscript{166} the Supreme Court of Arizona held that the U.S. Supreme Court did not intend for the PIA standard to be the sole method for quantification.\textsuperscript{167} After determining that the purpose of all Indian reservations was to provide a homeland, the court concluded that the PIA standard was flawed.\textsuperscript{168} The U.S. and several tribes argued that prior cases had determined that the PIA standard must be used. The court reasoned, however, that the PIA standard was advantageous for tribes with land conducive to agriculture but was unfair to tribes on mountainous land or land that could not be irrigated.\textsuperscript{169} In addition, the court stated that the PIA standard forced tribes to become agricultural even though farming is sometimes risky.\textsuperscript{170} Although the court did not completely disregard the PIA standard, stating "future irrigation projects are subject to a PIA-type analysis . . ."\textsuperscript{171} it expressly required a multifaceted approach instead of a strict PIA approach.\textsuperscript{172} Under the multifaceted approach, the court called for consideration of the tribe's history, culture, geography, economic base, infrastructure, and past water use to determine the water necessary to fulfill the homeland purposes of the reservation.\textsuperscript{173} The case was then

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{162} See Getches, supra note 44, at 833.
  \item \textsuperscript{163} See Arizona, 373 U.S. at 600–01.
  \item \textsuperscript{164} Id. at 601.
  \item \textsuperscript{166} 35 P.3d 68, (Ariz. 2001).
  \item \textsuperscript{167} See id. at 79.
  \item \textsuperscript{168} See id. at 78–79.
  \item \textsuperscript{169} Id.
  \item \textsuperscript{170} Id.
  \item \textsuperscript{171} Id. at 80.
  \item \textsuperscript{172} Id. at 79.
  \item \textsuperscript{173} Id. at 79–81.
\end{itemize}
remanded to the trial court to implement the multifaceted approach.\textsuperscript{174} Thus, \textit{Gila IV} broke new ground in holding that the U.S. Supreme Court’s PIA standard was not appropriate for all Indian tribes.

\textbf{B. A Strong Relationship Exists Between Water Quality and Quantity}

Courts frequently imply that water rights on Indian reservations allow a certain quality of water as well as quantity, although no court has ever spoken to the issue directly.\textsuperscript{175} For example, a federal district court in the District of Arizona found that quantity alone is insufficient when granting tribes water for consumptive uses in \textit{United States v. Gila Valley Irrigation District}.\textsuperscript{176} Although it never considered \textit{Winters} rights, the court awarded a certain quality of water for Indian agricultural use.\textsuperscript{177} The district court held that users upstream from a reservation had to cease using water in order to allow the tribe water of sufficient quality.\textsuperscript{178}

In \textit{Gila Valley}, the court considered a 1935 Consent Decree that provided for a system of priorities, based on the law of prior appropriation.\textsuperscript{179} The Decree provided the Apache tribe with 6,000 acre feet per year\textsuperscript{180} and gave them a right to the “natural flow” of the stream.\textsuperscript{181} Because of farming and groundwater pumping in the upper valleys, the tribe’s water was becoming concentrated with salt because the flow rate was diminished.\textsuperscript{182} This high salt concentration forced the Apache tribe to stop growing some salt-sensitive crops.\textsuperscript{183} The \textit{Gila Valley} court held that injunctive relief was necessary to restore the water to a sufficient quality to sustain the salt-sensitive crops that were grown by the tribe at the time of the Decree.\textsuperscript{184}

Courts recognize that where a primary purpose of a reservation is fishing, the \textit{Winters} Doctrine protects reserved water rights for non-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{174} See \textit{id.} at 81.
\item \textsuperscript{176} 920 F. Supp. 1444, 1448 (D. Ariz. 1996), aff’d, 117 F.3d 425 (9th Cir. 1997).
\item \textsuperscript{177} \textit{Id.} at 1454–55.
\item \textsuperscript{178} \textit{See id.} at 1448.
\item \textsuperscript{179} See \textit{United States v. Gila Valley Irrigation Dist.}, 31 F.3d 1428, 1430 (9th Cir. 1994).
\item \textsuperscript{180} \textit{Id.} at 1431.
\item \textsuperscript{181} See \textit{Gila Valley}, 920 F. Supp. at 1448.
\item \textsuperscript{182} \textit{Id.} at 1450–51.
\item \textsuperscript{183} \textit{Id.} at 1454.
\item \textsuperscript{184} \textit{Id.} at 1454–55.
\end{itemize}
consumptive uses, such as maintenance of certain instream flows of streams and rivers containing fish. In United States v. Adair, the Ninth Circuit held that because the Klamath tribe’s right to fish was preserved in the treaty establishing the reservation, water should be reserved to fulfill this fishing purpose. The Ninth Circuit held that the fishing right required maintenance of a natural stream flow to ensure that enough water flowed through the areas used by the tribe to fish. According to the Ninth Circuit, this right was non-consumptive in nature and prevented other water users from depleting the stream waters below a minimum level.

At least one court has recognized that Winters protects the temperature of streams. In United States v. Anderson, a federal district court in the Eastern District of Washington held that Winters rights reserve water to maintain a certain instream flow and a certain temperature. The Anderson court determined that one of the purposes of the Spokane Indian Reservation was to preserve the tribe’s access to fishing. In order to preserve this right, the temperature of the Lower Chamokane Creek had to be maintained at sixty-eight degrees because at any higher temperature, fish in the creek would not thrive. The temperature of the Creek related directly to the quantity of water flowing into the creek. In sum, the Anderson court upheld a special master’s recommendation on a flow sufficient to maintain a sixty-eight degree temperature.

185. See United States v. Adair, 723 F.2d 1394, 1417 (9th Cir. 1984); see also Joint Bd. of Control of the Flathead, Mission and Jocko Irrigation Dist. v. United States, 832 F.2d 1127, 1132 (9th Cir. 1987) (finding that treaty fishing rights allowed tribe to maintain instream flows); Colville Confederated Tribes v. Walton, 647 F.2d 42, 48 (9th Cir. 1981) (holding that an implied reservation of water existed to maintain replacement fishing grounds); Muckleshoot Indian Tribe v. Trans-Can. Enters., Ltd., 713 F.2d 455, 458 (9th Cir. 1983) (holding that the grant of an Indian reservation included the bed of the river and its waters).

186. 723 F.2d 1394 (9th Cir. 1984).

187. See Adair, 723 F.2d at 1410; see also Colville Confederated Tribes, 647 F.2d at 47–48 (finding a fishing purpose behind a reservation established by a mere one-paragraph executive order stating only that the land would be reserved “for said Indians”).

188. See Adair, 723 F.2d at 1411, 1418.

189. Id. at 1418.


191. 591 F. Supp. 1 (E.D. Wash. 1982), rev’d in part, aff’d in part, 736 F.2d 1358 (9th Cir. 1984)

192. See id. at 5.

193. Id. at 4–5.

194. See id. at 5.

195. See id.

196. See id. at 5–6.
A strong link exists between water quantity and water quality. Instream flow is directly related to water quality because without a certain quantity of water to dilute pollutants, rivers will become too contaminated to sustain a fish population. A minimum instream flow of water is also imperative because reductions in flow result in increased temperatures and poor water quality that impair fish survival and reproduction. Many times, higher quantities of water in a stream equal a better quality of water.

C. Courts are Divided on Whether Winters Applies to Groundwater

The U.S. Supreme Court has never directly considered whether Winters applies to groundwater and lower courts are divided on the issue. Although the Ninth Circuit held that reserved water rights include groundwater in United States v. Cappaert, the U.S. Supreme Court did not reach this conclusion on appeal because it determined that the water at issue was surface water, not groundwater. The Supreme Court of Wyoming, when confronted with this issue, refused to extend Winters to groundwater because no court had ever done so. In contrast, the Supreme Court of Arizona held that Winters extends to groundwater because of the policies behind Winters.

1. United States v. Cappaert

In United States v. Cappaert, the Ninth Circuit extended Winters to groundwater. Although the U.S. Supreme Court did not reach this

197. See PUD No. 1 of Jefferson County v. Wash. Dept. of Ecology, 511 U.S. 700, 719 (1994) (recognizing that water quality is closely related to water quantity); COHEN, supra note 24, at 587; NAT'L WATER COMM'N, supra note 76, at 4; TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 2-8 (recognizing that if water quality is to be improved, water use must be limited).

198. See supra note PUD No. 1 of Jefferson County, 511 U.S. at 719, NAT'L WATER COMM'N, supra note 76, at 4; TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 2-8.

199. Telephone Interview with Greg Johnston, Certified Fisheries Professional (July 20, 2002); see also Anderson, 591 F. Supp. at 5; COHEN, supra note 24, at 587.

200. See PUD No. 1 of Jefferson County, 511 U.S. at 719, NAT'L WATER COMM'N, supra note 76, at 4; TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 2-8.

201. See United States v. Cappaert, 508 F.2d 313, 317 (9th Cir. 1974).


203. See Big Horn, 753 P.2d 76, 99–100 (Wyo. 1988).


205. 508 F.2d 313 (9th Cir. 1974).

206. Id. at 317.
issue on appeal, the Ninth Circuit's reasoning continues to be persuasive.\textsuperscript{207} \textit{Cappaert} involved a non-Indian federal reservation called Devil's Hole.\textsuperscript{208} The reservation housed a cavern containing a pool with a rare species of desert fish.\textsuperscript{209} The case arose when ranch owners began pumping groundwater from an underground aquifer that was also the source of water for the unique Devil's Hole pool.\textsuperscript{210} The United States sued to enjoin the ranch owners from pumping in several locations because it harmed the survival of the rare fish.\textsuperscript{211} The United States argued that the 1952 proclamation reserving the pool from public domain contained an implied right to enough groundwater to assure the preservation of the rare fish.\textsuperscript{212} The defendant ranch owners denied that Devil's Hole reserved any water rights for the United States and asserted that \textit{Winters} rights did not apply to groundwater.\textsuperscript{213}

The Ninth Circuit disagreed and explicitly extended the \textit{Winters} Doctrine to groundwater.\textsuperscript{214} The court held that it made no difference where the waters were located.\textsuperscript{215} The court reasoned that the purpose of the federal reservation was to assure that the pool would not suffer changes in its condition.\textsuperscript{216} Because the pool and the rare fish were located underground, the Ninth Circuit determined that in order to protect the reservation's purpose, it had to extend \textit{Winters} to

\begin{enumerate}
\item See \textit{Cappaert}, 508 F.2d at 313. The \textit{Winters} Doctrine arose in an Indian reservation context but applies to all federally reserved lands. The federal government has reserved land for many purposes such as for Indian reservations, military reservations, or to establish national forests, parks, or monuments. See, e.g., United States v. New Mexico, 438 U.S. 696, 718 (1978) (holding that a reserved right existed to preserve timber in national forest); United States v. Dist. Court for Eagle County, 401 U.S. 520, 522-23 (1971) (holding that the federal government's authority to reserve lands extended to any federal enclave); Arizona v. California, 373 U.S. 546, 600-01 (1963) (holding that the federal government impliedly reserved enough water to fulfill the purposes of the Indian reservations and non-Indian federal land in the area); Fed. Power Comm'n v. Oregon, 349 U.S. 435, 448 (1955) (implying that federal reserved lands are not subject to state water law).
\item \textit{Cappaert}, 508 F.2d at 313-16.
\item \textit{Id.} at 315-16.
\item See \textit{Cappaert}, 508 F.2d at 318.
\item \textit{Id.} at 317.
\item See \textit{id}.
\item \textit{Id.} at 318.
\end{enumerate}
The Winters Doctrine and Water Quality

groundwater. The Ninth Circuit reasoned that the purpose of the reservation was more important that the location of the water source.

The Ninth Circuit rejected the defendants' argument that under Nevada law a landowner has dominion over all water beneath his or her property. The Cappaert court noted that Nevada groundwater rights were governed by the prior appropriation doctrine until a 1913 Nevada statute declared that the water belonged to the public and required groundwater permits. The defendants did not begin using the groundwater until 1968. Thus, the Ninth Circuit held that they had not established a water right under prior appropriation before the Nevada statute came into effect. Further, the court dismissed the state of Nevada's argument that state water laws bind the federal government with respect to federal reservations. The court held that state water law does not apply to federal reservations and that an implied reserved water right existed to sustain the rare fish. The Ninth Circuit remanded the case with instructions to act to preserve the pool's water level and protect the rare fish.

On appeal the U.S. Supreme Court avoided ruling on the Ninth Circuit's conclusion that Winters applies to groundwater by holding that the pool was surface water, not groundwater. After examining the Proclamation establishing the reservation, the Supreme Court reasoned that one of the purposes of the reservation was to preserve the scientific interest of the pool. Because the surface water and groundwater are "physically interrelated as integral parts of the hydrologic cycle," the Court determined that the ranch owners' pumping threatened the fish, and thereby prevented the reservation from fulfilling its scientific

217. See id.
218. See id.
219. See id.
220. Id. at 319.
221. Id.
222. Id.
223. See id. at 320.
224. See id.
225. See id. at 322.
226. United States v. Cappaert, 426 U.S. 128, 142 (1976). Tribes can also claim groundwater based on ownership of the overlying land. See TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 9-81. This claim is beyond the scope of this Comment.
227. See Cappaert, 426 U.S. at 140-41.
228. Id. at 142 (internal quotations omitted).
The Court stated that, "since the implied-reservation-of-water-rights doctrine is based on the necessity of water for the purpose of the federal reservation, we hold that the United States can protect its water from subsequent diversion, whether the diversion is of surface or ground water."230 The Supreme Court recognized that when diversions from groundwater hinder the purpose of the reservation, pumping can be enjoined.231 Although the Supreme Court did not consider the Ninth Circuit’s conclusion, at least one court has found the Supreme Court’s rationale to be persuasive enough to include groundwater in *Winters* rights.232

2. The Supreme Court of Wyoming Has Refused to Extend *Winters* to Groundwater

In *In re the General Adjudication of All Rights to Use Water in the Big Horn River System* [hereinafter *Big Horn*], the Supreme Court of Wyoming considered an action to determine all Indian water rights in the Big Horn River drainage basin in western Wyoming.233 The basin encompassed the Wind River Indian Reservation as well as parts of Yellowstone National Park and various other national forests and parks.234 The case arose from a special master’s general adjudication that had been divided into three phases, including Indian reserved water rights, non-Indian reserved water rights, and state water rights.235 On appeal, the *Big Horn* court examined the special master’s decision regarding the Indian reserved water rights.236 The main issues on appeal were how to quantify the water and for what purposes.237 The United States and the tribes also claimed a *Winters* right to the groundwater,

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229. See id. at 142–43.

230. Id. at 143; see also New Mexico v. Aamodt, 618 F. Supp. 993, 1010 (D.N.M. 1985) (stating that the surface water and groundwater of the stream system at issue were interrelated and therefore the Pueblos had a prior right to use groundwater as well); Colville Confederated Tribes v. Walton, 460 F. Supp. 1320, 1325 (E.D. Wash. 1978), aff’d in part, rev’d in part, 647 F.2d 42 (9th Cir. 1981) (stating that *Winters* rights “extend to ground water as well as surface water”).

231. See Cappaert, 426 U.S. at 143.

232. See Walton, 460 F. Supp. at 1326.

233. See Big Horn, 753 P.2d 76, 83 (Wyo. 1988).

234. Id. at 83.


236. Id.

237. See Big Horn, 753 P.2d at 88–112.
even though surface water from the Big Horn River System was available to the tribes.238

Regarding groundwater, the Wyoming Supreme Court stated that because groundwater and surface water are often interconnected, "[t]he logic which supports a reservation of surface water to fulfill the purpose of the reservation also supports reservation of groundwater."239 However, the Big Horn court refused to extend Winters to groundwater because "not a single case applying the reserved water doctrine to groundwater" had been cited.240 Because of the lack of strong precedent, the court refused to break new ground.241 One commentator has suggested that the court may have refused to extend Winters because of the possible implications for state law that would result.242 Changing the established state law would impact many of the more than twenty-thousand water users who were affected by the Big Horn adjudications.243

3. The Supreme Court of Arizona Extended Winters to Groundwater

The Supreme Court of Arizona extended the Winters Doctrine to groundwater in In re the General Adjudication of All Rights to Use Water In the Gila River System and Source [hereinafter Gila III].244 The court conducted a general adjudication to determine the rights of all water claimants asserting rights to use water from the Gila River system.245 Specifically, the court considered whether federal reserved rights include groundwater.246 The petitioners argued that the court should "decline to extend the doctrine to groundwater out of deference to state water law" and that deferring to state law would not defeat federal water rights because Arizona state law allowed overlying landowners an equal right to pump as much groundwater as they could put to reasonable use.247

238. See id. at 99–107 (adjudicating the right to groundwater and quantifying the amount of surface water for the Wind River Indian Reservation).

239. Id. at 99.

240. Id.

241. See id.

242. See Shane, supra note 207, at 403.

243. See Rogers, supra note 235, at 434.

244. See Gila III, 989 P.2d 739, 745 (Ariz.1999).

245. See id. at 742.

246. See id.

247. See id. at 747–48.
Unlike the *Big Horn* court, the *Gila III* court found guidance in *Winters* and *Cappaert*. Referring to *Big Horn*, the Supreme Court of Arizona stated the fact "[t]hat no previous court has come to grips with an issue does not relieve a present court . . . of the obligation to do so." The Arizona court found the reasoning in *Winters*, that arid reservation land is valueless without water, to be persuasive and held that it supported an implied right to groundwater. Recognizing that some reservations do not have surface water to sustain life, the court insisted that certain reservations must be able to pump groundwater in order to make their arid land workable. The Supreme Court of Arizona reasoned that if *Winters* reserved water to use for the purpose of the reservation, and groundwater was the only water source, then *Winters* must apply to groundwater. That notion, combined with the acknowledgment from *Cappaert* of the interrelated nature of groundwater and surface water, led the court to determine "that if, the United States implicitly intended, when it established reservations, to reserve sufficient unappropriated water to meet the reservations' needs, it must have intended that reservation water to come from whatever particular sources each reservation had at hand." Consequently, the Supreme Court of Arizona held that groundwater can be an implied reserved water right under *Winters*.

In response to the petitioners' arguments that the Supreme Court of Arizona should defer to state water law, the *Gila III* court concluded that it could not defer to state law when doing so would defeat federal water rights. Arizona state law interfered with the federal water rights because under the Arizona system, groundwater would have eventually become depleted. The state had consumed "more groundwater than nature [could] replenish." The Supreme Court of Arizona limited its holding, however, by stating that the reserved right to groundwater only exists "where other waters are inadequate to accomplish the purpose of a reservation." Thus, in *Gila III* the Supreme Court of Arizona stated

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248. See id. at 746.
249. Id. at 745.
250. See id. at 746.
251. Id.
252. See id. at 747.
253. Id.
254. Id. at 747-48.
255. See id. at 748.
256. Id.
257. Id.
that the adequacy of the other waters and the purpose of a reservation must be determined on a case-by-case basis.\textsuperscript{258}

In sum, despite the Supreme Court of Wyoming's refusal to include groundwater in the scope of \textit{Winters} rights in \textit{Big Horn}, the Supreme Court of Arizona has in \textit{Gila III} expressly extended \textit{Winters} to groundwater. The \textit{Gila III} court's rationale is consistent with the U.S. Supreme Court's holding in \textit{Cappaert} that groundwater diversions can be enjoined if the purpose of the reservation is compromised. Both courts determined that the purpose of the reservation is more important than the location of the water source.

\section*{IV. \textit{WINTERS} RESERVES WATER OF A QUANTITY AND QUALITY SUFFICIENT TO FULFILL THE PURPOSES OF THE RESERVATION, INCLUDING GROUNDWATER FOR HATCHERIES WHEN SURFACE WATER IS INADEQUATE}

The reserved water rights doctrine should mandate a quality of water sufficient to support the purposes of a reservation.\textsuperscript{259} The holding in \textit{Winters}, that tribes are allowed water sufficient to fulfill the purposes of the reservation,\textsuperscript{260} along with its rationale, and the Canons of Construction,\textsuperscript{261} support this conclusion. In addition, courts have already implied a right to water quality in cases granting water for instream flows and water temperature.\textsuperscript{262} When surface water is inadequate due to quality problems or the expense of obtaining such supplies, groundwater should be awarded to tribes because reservation purposes cannot be fulfilled without water from an underground source.\textsuperscript{263}

Applying these general premises to the case of the Lummi Nation leads to the conclusion that groundwater use should be awarded to the Lummi. Their homeland and fishing purposes are threatened because the surface water available to them is of inadequate quality to maintain the purposes of the reservation\textsuperscript{264} and the groundwater quality is threatened

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{258} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{259} See Treuer, \textit{supra} note 175, at 368.
\item \textsuperscript{261} See \textit{Winters}, 207 U.S. at 576–77.
\item \textsuperscript{262} See United States v. Anderson, 591 F. Supp. 1, 5 (E.D. Wash. 1982), rev'd in part, aff'd in part, 735 F.2d 1358 (9th Cir. 1984); United States v. Adair, 723 F.2d 1394, 1411 (9th Cir. 1984).
\item \textsuperscript{263} See \textit{Gila III}, 989 P.2d 739, 745 (Ariz. 1999).
\item \textsuperscript{264} United States' Complaint, United States v. Washington, Western District of Washington, 8–9 (Jan. 19, 2001) (No. C01-00477).
\end{itemize}
by overuse.\textsuperscript{265} Therefore, the Lummi should be able to enjoin users that threaten the quality of the groundwater they receive.

\textbf{A. Winters Rights Should Entitle Fishing Tribes to Water of a Quality Sufficient to Fulfill the Fishing Purpose of the Reservation}

\textit{Winters} should extend to water quality for two reasons. First, the rule and rationale in \textit{Winters} require courts to award water to Indian tribes in order to fulfill the purposes of a reservation.\textsuperscript{266} Second, courts have established a strong relationship between water quantity and quality.\textsuperscript{267}

\textbf{1. Winters's Holding and Rationale Support Extending Reserved Water Rights to Water Quality}

Water quality is required in order to comply with the holding in \textit{Winters}. In \textit{Winters}, the U.S. Supreme Court guaranteed a tribe's right to water sufficient to maintain the purposes of the reservation.\textsuperscript{268} The Court contemplated the fact that arid Indian lands are uninhabitable without water.\textsuperscript{269} The purpose of reserving these lands was to allow tribes the right to make these lands prosperous.\textsuperscript{270} This could not be done without water, nor could it be done with poor water. Thus, courts should grant tribes an implied right to water of sufficient quality to fulfill the purposes of their reservations under \textit{Winters}.

Without a right to water quality, \textit{Winters} rights would be meaningless. The goal in \textit{Winters} was to allow tribes water to make their land valuable and fulfill the purposes of their reservations.\textsuperscript{271} Not upholding a quality of water frustrates this goal because the purposes of reservations, whether they be homeland, fishing, or agricultural, cannot be fulfilled with polluted or otherwise unsatisfactory water.\textsuperscript{272} Crops do not grow, fish to not swim, and people do not survive without water of a minimum quality.\textsuperscript{273} If tribes need water of a sufficient quality to support the

\textsuperscript{265} Id.
\textsuperscript{266} See supra note 101 and accompanying text.
\textsuperscript{267} See supra notes 175–200 and accompanying text.
\textsuperscript{269} See Winters, 207 U.S. at 576.
\textsuperscript{270} See id.
\textsuperscript{271} See id.
\textsuperscript{272} See Treuer, supra note 175, at 368.
\textsuperscript{273} See, e.g., id. at 365–67.
purpose of the reservation, *Winters* requires an implied right to water quality.\(^\text{274}\) Thus, denying tribal injunctions against activities that pollute tribal waters violates the reserved water rights theory because an inadequate quality of water prevents the purposes of the reservation from being fulfilled.

The right to quality water should trump non-Indian users' water rights because of the priority attached to federally reserved water rights under the prior appropriation doctrine. The priority date for *Winters* rights is the date of the reservation's establishment, and sometimes time immemorial.\(^\text{275}\) Because of this early priority date on reservations, Indian water users almost always trump non-Indian water diverters.\(^\text{276}\) In water shortages, non-Indians must cease using the water.\(^\text{277}\) Many times, decreased quantities of water result in poor quality water.\(^\text{278}\) Thus, when quality is poor and cannot be used to fulfill the purpose of a reservation, there is in fact a water shortage. Therefore, tribes should be able to enjoin non-Indian diverters when water quality is poor.

*Winters* relied on the Canons of Construction, which require courts to resolve ambiguities in favor of the Indians and look at the treaty from the Indians' standpoint.\(^\text{279}\) The dispute in *Winters* arose because no mention was made regarding water in the agreement establishing the reservation.\(^\text{280}\) This ambiguity permitted two possible inferences: (1) by signing the agreement, the Indians gave up their water rights, or (2) water rights were implied in the agreement because the purpose of the reservation, to become civilized and pastoral, could not be met without water rights.\(^\text{281}\) This ambiguity was resolved in favor of the Indians and the latter inference was accepted.\(^\text{282}\) Looking at the dilemma from the Indians' standpoint, the *Winters* Court found that, when agreeing to give up land and live on a reservation pursuant to a treaty, the Indians would not have given up the waters that made the reservation valuable and adequate.\(^\text{283}\) When considering water quality, courts must look at treaties

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\(^{274}\) See Treuer, *supra* note 175, at 365–68.


\(^{276}\) See *supra* note 122.

\(^{277}\) See *TARLOCK*, *supra* note 18, at 5-49.

\(^{278}\) See *supra* notes 197–200 and accompanying text.


\(^{280}\) See *Winters*, 207 U.S. at 576–77.

\(^{281}\) See *id*.

\(^{282}\) *Id*.

\(^{283}\) *Id*.
from the standpoint of the Indians and resolve all ambiguities in the Indians' favor. Courts should conclude that because Indians would not have given up the means to make their land valuable, and water of poor quality makes their land valueless, Indians would not have interpreted the establishment of their reservation to imply that polluted water would be satisfactory even though their land remained valueless and its possibilities limited.

2. Courts Have Preserved Water Quality Through Reservation of Water Quantity

Courts have already acted to preserve water quality by making changes in water quantity. By restricting withdrawals from junior users, the Ninth Circuit in Adair has reserved minimum instream flows where fishing is a primary purpose, thereby preserving water quality for non-consumptive uses. In addition, a federal district court in the Eastern District of Washington in Anderson held that the Winters right extends to maintain a certain instream flow and a certain temperature to preserve a fishing purpose. Although these courts did not expressly extend Winters to imply a certain water quality, applying their rationale and results suggests that Winters does reserve quality as well as quantity. Fish need a certain quantity of water in the streams so that pollutants are diluted and temperatures are minimized. Without a certain water quantity, the water is of an inadequate quality to support fish life.

Courts should account for water quality when determining quantity because tribes need a sufficient quality to accomplish the fishing purposes of their reservations. Courts must determine the amount of water necessary to sustain fishing and if water quality is poor, then they must reserve more water instream flows until fish can thrive. Instream flow is directly related to water quality because without a certain flow,

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284. See supra notes 93–101 and accompanying text.
286. See Adair, 723 F.2d at 1417–18.
289. See PUD No. 1 of Jefferson County, 511 U.S. at 719; NAT'L WATER COMM’N, supra note 76, at 4; TARLOCK, supra note 18, at 2–8.
290. See supra notes 185–200 and accompanying text.
rivers will become too contaminated or too warm to sustain a fish population.\textsuperscript{291}

Further, quality water should be guaranteed for consumptive uses as well. For example, under the PIA standard, courts quantify enough water to irrigate the irrigable acreage.\textsuperscript{292} In adjudicating water rights, courts should reduce the amount of water allocated to non-Indian users if the quality of water is insufficient to allow crops to grow on the Indian reservations. \textit{Gila Valley} best illustrates this situation.\textsuperscript{293} Although the case dealt with a Consent Decree instead of \textit{Winters} rights, it enjoined non-Indian users in order to restore the water to a quality sufficient to sustain the salt-sensitive crops that were grown by the tribe at the time of the Decree.\textsuperscript{294} Thus, water quality was implied when a certain water quantity was granted under the Consent Decree.

In sum, many factors support the extension of the \textit{Winters} Doctrine to water quality for fisheries, most importantly, the holding of \textit{Winters}, that tribes are allowed water sufficient to fulfill the purposes of the reservation. In addition, the Canons of Construction for Indian treaties, relied on in \textit{Winters}, apply to situations involving water quality. Moreover, several courts have implied that water quality accompanies water rights by holding that tribes can maintain minimum instream flows and certain temperatures of rivers in order to dilute pollution and ensure fish survival. Consequently, courts should extend the \textit{Winters} doctrine to include water quality.

\textbf{B. Winters Rights Extend to Groundwater When Surface Water is Inadequate to Fulfill the Purposes of the Reservation}

Washington, and other states with fishing tribes, should apply the \textit{Winters} Doctrine to groundwater for several reasons. First, the U.S. Supreme Court acknowledged the connection between surface water and groundwater in \textit{Cappaert v. United States}.\textsuperscript{295} Second, the only opinion holding that there is no reserved right to groundwater, \textit{Big Horn}, is not  

persuasive or binding.\textsuperscript{296} Third, some reservation purposes cannot be met without groundwater.\textsuperscript{297}

In \textit{Cappaert}, the U.S. Supreme Court held that "the United States can protect its water from subsequent diversion, whether the diversion is of surface or ground water."\textsuperscript{298} The Court acknowledged the strong connection between groundwater and surface water.\textsuperscript{299} When one source is overused, the other source suffers.\textsuperscript{300} Courts should not differentiate between depleted groundwater or depleted surface water when adjudicating reserved water rights issues because groundwater and surface water are so interconnected.

Besides the favorable language from the U.S. Supreme Court, \textit{Winters} rights should include groundwater because the only court to refuse to extend \textit{Winters} rights to groundwater is not persuasive. In \textit{Big Horn}, the Supreme Court of Wyoming declined to extend \textit{Winters} rights to groundwater because the parties had not cited a case where a court had included groundwater in \textit{Winters} rights.\textsuperscript{301} \textit{Big Horn}'s rationale is no longer accurate since the \textit{Gila III} court expressly extended \textit{Winters} to groundwater.\textsuperscript{302} Further, a court should not shirk its responsibility to analyze and rule on legal issues purely because no other court has done so.\textsuperscript{303}

In addition, \textit{Big Horn} can be distinguished from cases involving other fishing tribes with the need for quality groundwater. Adequate surface water was available to the agricultural reservation in \textit{Big Horn}.\textsuperscript{304} Although the court did not indicate that availability of surface water was a reason for refusing to extend \textit{Winters} to groundwater, the court awarded ample surface water to the tribes in \textit{Big Horn}.\textsuperscript{305} This shows that perhaps the purpose of the reservation in \textit{Big Horn} was already being fulfilled with surface water and groundwater was not necessary. Thus, \textit{Big Horn} is not persuasive because the reasoning is flawed and the facts

\textsuperscript{296} See \textit{Big Horn}, 753 P.2d 76, 99 (Wyo. 1988).
\textsuperscript{297} See \textit{Gila III}, 989 P.2d 739, 746 (Ariz. 1999); \textit{Cappaert} v. United States, 508 F.2d 313, 317 (9th Cir. 1974).
\textsuperscript{298} \textit{Cappaert}, 426 U.S. at 143.
\textsuperscript{299} See id. at 142.
\textsuperscript{300} See id.
\textsuperscript{301} \textit{Big Horn}, 753 P.2d at 99.
\textsuperscript{302} See \textit{Gila III}, 989 P.2d at 747.
\textsuperscript{303} See id. at 745.
\textsuperscript{304} See \textit{Big Horn}, 753 P.2d 99–107.
\textsuperscript{305} See id.
are distinguishable from cases involving tribes depending on groundwater for their only adequate water source.

The third reason to include groundwater in *Winters* rights is the importance courts have placed on the purpose of a reservation. If surface water does not satisfy the purposes of a reservation, groundwater must be reserved if it is available.\(^{306}\) Using the Supreme Court’s decisions in *Winters* and *Cappaert* as “guidepost[s],” the *Gila III* court asserted that it was illogical that *Winters* would not apply to reservations that lacked streams and instead depended on groundwater.\(^{307}\) In *Winters*, the Court reserved an implied water right without limiting where the water was found.\(^{308}\) Thus, as the *Gila III* court articulated, “[t]he significant question . . . is not whether the water runs above or below the ground but whether it is necessary to accomplish the purpose of the reservation.”\(^{309}\) Some tribes have only one natural source of freshwater to use for drinking, hatcheries, and other homeland purposes.\(^{310}\) It makes little sense to allow a reserved right to tribes whose land runs appurtenant to adequate surface water, but not to tribes whose land lies above a groundwater source. An implied water right is an implied right to any water necessary to fulfill the purposes of the reservation, no matter the source.

The Supreme Court of Arizona’s holding is buttressed by the Ninth Circuit’s declaration in *Cappaert* that, “the United States may reserve not only surface water, but also underground water.”\(^{311}\) The Ninth Circuit found that it made no difference whether the water was found on the surface of the land or under it.\(^{312}\) Although the holding was never affirmed by the Supreme Court on review, the Ninth Circuit’s view is persuasive because *Winters* guarantees water sufficient to fulfill the purposes of the reservation and tribes without surface water must sometimes use groundwater to fulfill these purposes. Because groundwater and surface water are intricately related and both are sometimes required in order to fulfill purposes of reservations, *Winters* rights should include groundwater.

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306. See *Gila III*, 989 P.2d at 747.
307. See id. at 746–47.
309. See *Gila III*, 989 P.2d at 747.
311. See *Cappaert v. United States*, 508 F.2d 313, 317 (9th Cir. 1974).
C. The Lummi Nation is Entitled to Enjoin Other Users to Protect the Quality of Their Reserved Water Rights in Groundwater

The Winters Doctrine should be extended to allow the Lummi to protect the quality of their groundwater. The Lummi reservation has a fishing purpose that must be fulfilled.  

Because surface water is inadequate to fulfill some fishing activities, like hatcheries, the Lummi need to use the groundwater underlying the reservation. However, this groundwater is becoming contaminated by overuse. Under Winters, the Lummi should be able to enjoin non-Indian groundwater pumpers until the groundwater is of a sufficient quality to maintain the fish hatcheries.

The Lummi Nation is entitled to the quantity and quality of water to fulfill the fishing purposes of its reservation. Fishing has historically been and still is the primary way of life for the Lummi. The 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott, the agreement establishing the Lummi reservation, confirmed the importance of fishing in Article V allowing Lummi to take fish in usual and accustomed places. This provision demonstrates that the U.S. government meant to preserve a fishing way of life. Like the tribe in Adair, the Lummi Nation deserves water rights sufficient to satisfy this fishing purpose, including preserving instream flows and maintaining fish hatcheries.

Because the Lummi's fish hatcheries cannot be maintained with the polluted surface water available to the tribe, the Lummi should be entitled to clean groundwater for hatcheries. The tribe is entitled to groundwater because surface water is inadequate to fulfill the purpose of

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313. See infra notes 316–320 and accompanying text.
314. See supra notes 5–7 and accompanying text.
317. 12 Stat. 927 (January 22, 1855).
318. Id. at art. V.
319. See United States v. Adair, 723 F.2d 1394, 1417–18 (9th Cir. 1984).
320. See Colville Confederated Tribes v. Walton, 647 F.2d 42, 48 (9th Cir. 1981) (holding that fishing purpose includes replacement fisheries). The result would possibly be the same if the court used the legal analysis set forth in Gila IV after finding a homeland purpose of the reservation. However, that analysis is beyond the scope of this Comment.
The Winters Doctrine and Water Quality

The reservation. The *Gila III* court declared that when the Supreme Court in *Winters* found an implied right to water for federal reservations, it must have intended the water to come from whatever sources each reservation had at hand. The Lummi Nation has a groundwater source at hand to fulfill the fishing purposes of its reservation and can protect its water from subsequent diversion, whether the diversion is of surface water or groundwater.

The Lummi Nation should be entitled to enjoin junior users from pumping until the water is no longer contaminated with saltwater intrusion. Under *Winters*, the Lummi are entitled to water to fulfill the purposes of the reservation. The purposes of the Lummi reservation are not being met without uncontaminated groundwater. The purposes can only be fulfilled if the non-Indian users are enjoined from pumping the groundwater.

The Canons of Construction, used as the rationale for *Winters*, also support an injunction. The Treaty of Point Elliot, which established the Lummi reservation, must be construed from the standpoint of the Lummi. The Lummi would not have understood the Treaty as giving up the right to water quality sufficient to sustain their fishing lifestyle. Like the tribe in *Winters*, the Lummi would not have believed that the Treaty required them to give up the means to make their land prosperous. Here, the Lummi require access to high quality water as the means to make their land prosperous.

Just like in *Winters*, an ambiguity exists in the Treaty establishing the Lummi reservation, because no mention of water or water quality exists. Two inferences could be made from this fact. First, it could be inferred that by signing the treaty, the Lummi gave up its prior landholdings without reserving good quality water. Second, it could be inferred that the Lummi realized that the purpose of the reservation, to become civilized and prosperous using a fishing lifestyle, would only be met with quality water for fish survival and such a water right must be

322. See id.
326. See *Winters* v. United States, 207 U.S. 564, 577 (1908); *Cappaert*, 426 U.S. at 141.
328. See *Winters*, 207 U.S. at 576–77; see also Wilkinson, supra note 44, at 608–19.
329. See *Winters*, 207 U.S. at 577.
implied. Because this ambiguity must be resolved in favor of the Indians, the latter inference must be accepted because it is more favorable to the Indians, under the Canons of Construction.

In sum, *Winters* rights give Indian tribes like the Lummi Nation priority over non-Indian water users. The *Winters* Doctrine guarantees water sufficient to fulfill the purposes of a reservation. Therefore, when these purposes are threatened by poor quality water, tribes like the Lummi are entitled to enjoin non-Indian users contributing to the contamination. Considering water quality issues from the standpoint of the Indians should lead courts to the conclusion that Indians would not have given up their land in exchange for reservations with poor water.

V. CONCLUSION

The *Winters* Doctrine gives tribes an implied right to water to fulfill the purposes of their reservations. Although no court has extended *Winters* to imply a certain quality of water, many factors support such a notion. Without adequate water quality, reservation purposes cannot be fulfilled, in violation of *Winters*. The Canons of Construction for agreements with Indians also require a liberal view of the water quality issue: tribes would not have given up the quality of water needed to make their reservations prosperous. In addition, courts have recognized the strong link between water quality and quantity by granting tribes non-consumptive water rights to increase river flows and dilute pollutants.

When surface water is inadequate, the purposes of reservations must be fulfilled by the sources available, including groundwater sources. The *Winters* Doctrine is an implied right to water, no matter the source. The Supreme Court has expressly recognized the strong hydrologic connection between surface water and groundwater in *Cappaert*.

Tribes, like the Lummi of Western Washington, should be able to enjoin overuse of their water sources. Surface water on the Lummi Nation’s reservation is inadequate to fulfill all of the fishing purposes of the reservation. Therefore, the Lummi should be entitled to groundwater. Since the Lummi’s groundwater source is becoming contaminated through overuse, the Lummi should be able to enjoin non-Indian junior users from pumping the groundwater source. This analysis should be applied to other Northwest fishing tribes facing similar problems.