

Michael Lopez (ISB No. 8356)
OFFICE OF LEGAL COUNSEL
NEZ PERCE TRIBE
P.O. Box 305
Lapwai, ID 83540
(208) 843-7355
(208) 843-7377 (fax)
mlopez@nexperce.org

Thomas L. Murphy, *pro hac vice*
Senior Staff Attorney
Native American Rights Fund
250 Arapahoe Avenue
Boulder, CO 80302
(303) 447-8760
(303) 443-7776 (fax)
murphy@narf.org

Attorneys for the Nez Perce Tribe

DISTRICT COURT - PRBA Fifth Judicial District County of Twin Falls - State of Idaho
MAR 19 2026
By _____ Clerk Deputy Clerk

**IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE FIFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF THE
STATE OF IDAHO, IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF TWIN FALLS**

IN RE: PRBA)	
)	AMENDED NOTICE OF CLAIM
Case No.: 59576)	
)	Federal Reserved Water Right
)	
)	Claim No. 87-12173
)	

Preliminary statement:

The Nez Perce Tribe submits this amended federal reserved water right claim based on surveys performed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by teams sent by the Commissioner of the General Land Office (GLO) of the United States Department of the Interior, pursuant to Congressional authorization, to survey the Nez Perce Reservation and surrounding territory. *See* 43 U.S.C. § 751, *et seq.*, derived from acts of May 18, 1796, ch. 29, §2, 1 Stat. 465; May 10, 1800, ch. 55, §3, 2 Stat. 73; May 30, 1862, 12 Stat. 409; Mar. 3, 1877, ch. 105, 19 Stat. 348. The United States' survey teams took copious and detailed notes of their work and produced detailed maps of the land surveyed. Those notes and maps indicated the presence of springs in the area now identified as Basin 87 in the Palouse River Basin Adjudication (PRBA). Said notes and maps are public documents and readily available in the federal archives.

The Nez Perce Tribe made reasonable and ongoing efforts to corroborate the existence today of the springs identified through the GLO surveying and mapping efforts from the 19th and early 20th centuries. This included reviewing all available hydrologic or other data sources such as Historic United States Geological Survey Topo maps; National Hydrography data set; United States Fish & Wildlife Wetland Inventory; Farm Services National Agricultural Imagery Program 2006-2017; University of Idaho Water Research Maps by Jones & Ross; Washington National Guard black and white aerial imagery flown in 1933-1934; and University of Idaho Historical Aerial imagery and photo collections. The Nez Perce Tribe's review also included careful examination of satellite imagery found on Google Earth; Farm Service National Agricultural Imagery Program from years 2004 to current imagery from 2017; available Lidar imagery; and City of Moscow 3-inch pixel color digital aerial imagery flown in 2018.

These spring locations are neither the subject of existing water rights found on the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) database for Basin 87, nor are they the subject of claims filed by the end of August 2019 in the PRBA. These data sources, then, could not serve as the basis from which the Nez Perce Tribe could file a claim pursuant to its expressly reserved rights under Article VIII of the Nez Perce Treaty of June 9, 1863, 14 Stat. 647, with the United States, described in more detail below in Paragraphs 9 and 10. In addition, private land owners, the United States as trustee, and the Nez Perce Tribe are not required to have filed all claims by August 31, 2019. *See In Re PRBA, No. 59576 (D. Idaho March 1, 2017)(Order Granting Motion to File Stipulation for establishment of procedure for adjudication of de minimis domestic and stock water claims).*

These amended notices of claim are based upon information the Tribe developed in field examinations of the Tribe's provisional springs claims in 2024 and 2025.

1. Name and address of claimant:

NEZ PERCE TRIBE, acting through the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee
Contact Person: Shannon F. Wheeler, Chairman
Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee
Nez Perce Tribe
P.O. Box 305
Lapwai, ID 83540

The Tribe also provides notice that the United States of America, as Trustee on behalf of the Nez Perce Tribe and allottees of the Nez Perce Indian Reservation, acting through the Regional Director of the Northwest Region, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 911 N.E. 11th Ave., Portland, OR 97232, intends to pursue these claims as Trustee on behalf of the Nez Perce Tribe in this matter.

2. Date of Priority: Time Immemorial

3. Source: Spring and/or fountain (Federal ID #5014-1)

4. **Point of Diversion:** This claim is for a spring and/or fountain *in situ* including sufficient groundwater to maintain the wetland and/or riparian habitat surrounding the spring and/or fountain.
Amended location:
Township 40N Range 05W Section 12 SW QQ SW Q
Township 40N Range 05W Section 13 NW QQ NW Q
See Attached Map.
5. **Place of Use:**
The approximate centerpoint is located with UTM Coordinates:
5,184,782.618
506,478.6692
Amended location:
Township 40N Range 05W Section 12 SW QQ SW Q
Township 40N Range 05W Section 13 NW QQ NW Q
See Attached Map.
6. **Purpose of Water Use:**
The purpose of use includes the full range which the Nez Perce Tribe and its members have always used life and plant habitat for hunting and gathering uses, as well as other tribal traditional, cultural, spiritual, ceremonial, and/or religious uses – as components of a water right necessary to fulfill the homeland purpose of the Nez Perce Reservation pursuant to the documents referenced in Section 9 and the provisions in Section 10, *infra*.
7. **Period of Use:** January 1 through December 31.
8. **Quantity Reserved (In cfs):** Half the natural flow.
9. **Basis of Claim:**
The legal basis for this water right includes the following: the reservation of aboriginal rights recognized in *United States v. Winans*, 198 U.S. 371 (1905), and its progeny; the Treaty with the Nez Percés, June 11, 1855, 12 Stat. 957 (“1855 Treaty”); the Treaty with the Nez Percés, June 9, 1863, 14 Stat. 647 (“1863 Treaty”); the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the Nez Perce Reservation; the doctrine of federal reserved water rights articulated in *Winters v. United States*, 207 U.S. 564 (1908), and its progeny; and the interpretation of treaties in *Washington v. Washington State Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel Ass’n*, 443 U.S. 658, *modified sub nom. Washington v. United States*, 444 U.S. 816 (1979), and its progeny.
10. **Other Provisions:**
 - a. The United States has asserted other claims in the PRBA. Paragraphs 10(a) – (g) express assertions applicable to all claims filed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in its capacity as trustee for the Nez Perce Tribe in the PRBA. The United States claims waters from groundwater and surface water sources within the Palouse River Basin in the state of Idaho to satisfy the rights reserved to the Nez Perce Tribe by the 1855 Treaty and the 1863 Treaty

and to fulfill the permanent homeland purpose of the Nez Perce Reservation. Such present and future purposes include: instream flows for fish habitat; hunting, gathering, and pasturing; spring and fountain flows pursuant to Article VIII of the 1863 Treaty; and consumptive use claims on two allotments held in trust by the United States.

- b. The Nez Perce Tribe has occupied a territory in what is now central Idaho, southeastern Washington, and northeastern Oregon since time immemorial. *United States v. Webb*, 219 F.3d 1127, 1129 (9th Cir. 2000), *cert. denied*, 531 U.S. 1200 (2001). The Palouse River Basin is within the Tribe's traditional lands.
- c. There is a complex history of the United States' establishment of the Nez Perce Reservation, including negotiations of treaties and agreements. Regarding fishing rights, Article III of the 1855 Treaty reserves to the Nez Perce Tribe the "exclusive right to fish in all streams running through or bordering" the Reservation created by the 1855 Treaty. Article III of the 1855 Treaty also guaranteed the "right of taking fish at all usual and accustomed places in common with citizens of the Territory" to the Nez Perce. For purposes of the priority date of the instream flow claims, the United States claims Time Immemorial, but in the alternative, claims a priority date of June 11, 1855, pursuant to the 1855 Treaty.
- d. Article III of the 1855 Treaty further reserves to the Tribe "the privilege of hunting, gathering roots and berries, and pasturing their horses and cattle upon open and unclaimed land."
- e. Article VIII of the 1863 Treaty includes a unique provision reserving to the Nez Perce Tribe the use of "springs and fountains" within the area ceded under Article I of the 1863 Treaty. For purposes of the priority date of the springs and fountains claims, the United States claims Time Immemorial, but in the alternative, claims a priority date of June 11, 1855, pursuant to the 1855 Treaty.
- f. Pursuant to the General Allotment Act of 1887, Act of February 8, 1887, 24 Stat. 388, *amended*, Act of February 28, 1891, 26 Stat. 794, there are two allotments (Allotments 182-43 and 182-45) held in trust by the United States located within the boundaries of the Palouse River Basin and the northwestern corner of the Nez Perce Reservation. For purposes of the priority date of the domestic and stock watering claims for these two allotments, the United States claims June 11, 1855, pursuant to the 1855 Treaty.
- g. In order to comply with Idaho Code § 42-1409(1), the United States has designated "places of use," "points of diversion," and "purposes of use" in submitting this water rights claim. The use of this format as required by Idaho Code should not be construed to limit either the United States or the Nez Perce Tribe's future use of water at other points of diversion, places of use, or for other purposes within the boundaries of the Nez Perce Reservation. The statute's terminology has been employed to demonstrate that the amount claimed is necessary, justifiable, and available to fulfill the treaty rights of the Nez Perce Tribe and achieve the purpose of the Nez Perce Reservation as a homeland for the Nez Perce Tribe.

The quantification standards used in no way constitute a limitation on the use of the water by the United States or the Nez Perce Tribe.

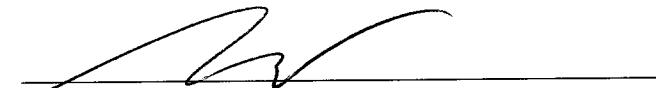
11. Signatures:

- (a) By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the form entitled "How you will receive notices in the Palouse River Basin Adjudication."
- (b) I do do not wish to receive and pay a small annual fee for monthly copies of the docket sheet.

For Organizations:

I do solemnly swear and affirm that I am Shannon F. Wheeler, and as Chairman of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee that I have signed the foregoing document in the space below as duly authorized on behalf of the Nez Perce Tribe, and that the statements contained in the foregoing document are true and correct.

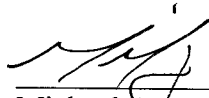
Signature of Authorized Agent:
Title and Organization:


Shannon F. Wheeler, Chairman
Nez Perce Tribe

Dated this 11th day of March, 2026.

Notice is hereby given that the Nez Perce Tribe Office of Legal Counsel and Native American Rights Fund will represent the Nez Perce Tribe, in all matters pertaining to the PRBA.

All notices, filings, and correspondence concerning this matter should be mailed to the Nez Perce Tribe at the address set forth below:



Michael A. Lopez, ISB #8356
Senior Staff Attorney
Nez Perce Tribe
Office of Legal Counsel
P.O. Box 305
Lapwai, ID 83540

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Native American Rights Fund
250 Arapahoe Avenue
Boulder, CO 80302

Attorneys for the Nez Perce Tribe

Dated this 11th day of March, 2026.

Provisional Spring Claims in the Palouse River Basin Adjudication

