

Water Pricing Changes

NEW FEES AND RENTALS IN EFFECT

February 29, 2016



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

New Water Pricing in Effect

The *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA) and the first phase of regulations were brought into force on February 29, 2016. The new fee and rental rates for water in B.C., announced last February 2015, are now in effect.

The new rates were informed by a detailed review of water pricing and were set to recover the costs of administering the new *Water Sustainability Act*, including regulating groundwater for the first time. Regulating groundwater will allow government to better manage surface water and groundwater as one resource.

Most water users will see increases to their water bill. Previously, only surface water users were licensed and paid fees. Now non-domestic groundwater users, who divert water from an aquifer for a purpose beyond meeting their household needs, will start paying the same rates as surface water users. Homeowners with wells who use groundwater for domestic use (“domestic groundwater users”) are exempt from licensing and paying annual water rentals.

What are the new fees and rental rates?

The new water fees and rentals are laid out in B.C.'s *Water Sustainability Fees, Rentals and Charges Tariff Regulation*. There are two components to water pricing: a one-time application fee (when applying for a new licence) and an annual water rental. Application fees and annual rentals typically vary by water use purpose. Additional application fees may apply for any amendments or other changes requested to be made to a water licence, once issued.

How will the increase affect me?

The increase in your water bill will depend on the water use purpose(s) specified in your water licence. Industrial and commercial rates are in the highest rate category of \$2.25/1000 m³. Water used for storage and conservation purposes are in the lowest rate category of \$0.02/1000 m³.

The minimum annual water rental rate has doubled in most cases, except for conservation and storage purposes which have remained unchanged.

The majority of licences are for domestic surface water use, for which the minimum annual water rental will increase from \$25 to \$50.

What if I use groundwater?

Non-domestic groundwater users such as irrigators, industries, and waterworks are required to apply for a water licence, and pay an application fee and annual water rentals.

- » Existing groundwater users (who were using groundwater on or before February 29, 2016) will be brought into the water licensing and First-In-Time-First-In-Right priority allocation system.
- » There is a three-year transition period (from February 29, 2016 to March 1, 2019) during which existing groundwater users who apply for a licence will be eligible for a licence date of precedence that is based on evidence of when the groundwater was first used.
- » Application fees will be waived for licence applications for existing groundwater users that are submitted during the first twelve months from when the WSA came into force (from February 29, 2016 to March 1, 2017).
- » Annual water rentals for existing groundwater use will begin to accrue from February 29, 2016, regardless of when a licence application is submitted during the three-year transition period.
- » New groundwater users must pay licence application fees and if a licence is authorized, will receive a licence date of precedence which is generally the date of application. Annual water rentals accrue from the date a licence is issued.

Domestic well owners – i.e., homeowners with a well that provides water for household use, lawn and garden watering (up to 1000 m²), and water for domestic animals – are exempt from licensing and paying water fees and rentals. Domestic well owners are encouraged to register their wells so the locations are recorded and their water use can be protected. Visit www.frontcounterbc.gov.bc.ca for information on how to register a domestic well.

Are there any exemptions?

Domestic groundwater users are exempt from licensing and paying water fees and rentals.

Water fees and rentals are generally not applied to federal and provincial governments or First Nations use of water on reserve or Treaty lands.

Do I have to do anything?

If you are a non-domestic groundwater user, you are now required to apply for a water licence and start paying annual water rentals.

For more on applying for water licences and approvals contact FrontCounter BC at 1-877-855-3222 or visit

www.frontcounterbc.gov.bc.ca.

To estimate your application fees and water rentals for a water licence or use approval, use the Water Rent Estimator at

www.gov.bc.ca/waterrentestimator.

More information:

For more on the provincial water program or water pricing changes or to access this brochure online, visit <http://gov.bc.ca/water>.

For more on the development of the legislation and implementation visit <http://engage.gov.bc.ca/watersustainabilityact>.

Still have questions?

Email: Livingwatersmart@gov.bc.ca