

# Licensing Groundwater in B.C.

## Questions and Answers on Livestock Watering and Dugouts

This is an Appendix to the main [Licensing Groundwater in B.C. Questions and Answers](#) document (“main QA document”). Included are common questions and answers related to groundwater licensing for livestock watering and dugouts in B.C.

Please refer to the main QA document for more information on applying for a water licence, how to know if you’re an “existing groundwater user”, the pros and cons of applying, and what information might be required to submit an application.

### **IMPORTANT: Apply by the Deadline**

If you use water from a well for non-domestic use, you are **legally required** to obtain a water licence. If you are an “existing user” (see main [QA document](#)) you have until **March 1, 2022** to apply for a water licence. Missing the deadline could have **significant consequences** on your water use: you must stop using, diverting and storing groundwater; your application could be refused; you could lose access to the water; and your historical date of first use will not be recognized.

For more information, please visit [groundwater.gov.bc.ca](http://groundwater.gov.bc.ca) and refer to:

- [Groundwater Licensing Questions and Answers](#)
- [Water Policy Bulletin on Dugouts](#)
- [B.C.'s Water Website](#)
- [Groundwater Licensing brochure](#)

If you still have questions or need help with your water licence application, please contact FrontCounter BC (1-877-855-3222).

## Questions and Answers

---

<b>Livestock Watering</b> .....	<b>2</b>
1. What happened to the livestock watering policy? .....	2
2. What about livestock producers using groundwater?.....	2
3. What about livestock producers using surface water?.....	2
<b>Dugouts</b> .....	<b>2</b>
4. When do I Need Authorization? .....	2
5. What if the Dugout has a Mixed Water Supply?.....	3
6. When is an Authorization Not Required? .....	4
7. What is the Difference between a Dugout and a Dam? .....	4
<b>Getting Help</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Useful Links</b> .....	<b>5</b>



## Livestock Watering

---

### 1. What happened to the livestock watering policy?

The development of a new livestock watering policy has been paused and will not be completed before the March 1, 2022 existing use groundwater (EUGW) transitioning deadline. Livestock watering remains defined as an “industrial” water use purpose and all industrial livestock watering requires a water authorization under the *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA).

### 2. What about livestock producers using groundwater?

If a livestock producer’s use of groundwater began **before March 1, 2016**, they are considered an “existing user” and are encouraged to apply for an existing use groundwater (EUGW) licence prior to the March 1, 2022 deadline.

If groundwater use began **on or after March 1, 2016**, the livestock producer is considered as a “new user” and they must apply for a water licence before they can lawfully begin diverting and using groundwater.

Existing groundwater users who have not applied by March 1, 2022 must stop using groundwater and will lose recognition of their historical date of first use.

If an existing user does not apply before the deadline, then they will become a new user and will not be legally able to divert water until a licence is issued. More information including other consequences of missing the deadline is available in the [main QA document](#).

### 3. What about livestock producers using surface water?

All livestock producers using surface water require a water authorization. A person who takes water without an authorization has no legal standing to use the water. If drought or water scarcity occurs, unauthorized users are the first to be ordered to cease diverting water. This requirement to licence surface water for livestock watering purpose was in place under the former *Water Act* and remains so under the WSA.

## Dugouts

---

### 4. When do I Need Authorization?

An authorization under the WSA is needed if any of the water in the dugout comes from groundwater or from a “stream” as [defined under the WSA](#). An authorization can be a water licence or use approval. A water licence is long-term, while a use approval is for shorter-term use of up to 24 months.

**Remember:** The WSA definition of a stream is very broad. It covers any natural watercourse or body of water, whether or not it was modified, and even where water is only available seasonally.

An authorization is needed for a dugout that:

- has groundwater seepage or water that comes from a well (figure 1). A dugout likely has groundwater seepage, unless it has an impermeable liner or was constructed with impermeable material that does not allow for any seepage (e.g., clay or bentonite clay) or
- in any way intercepts or is built within a stream (as defined under the WSA) (figures 2 and 3).

Multiple dugouts can often be placed on the same authorization, especially if they are on the same property and they share the water source. All dugouts and related works should be listed on the application.

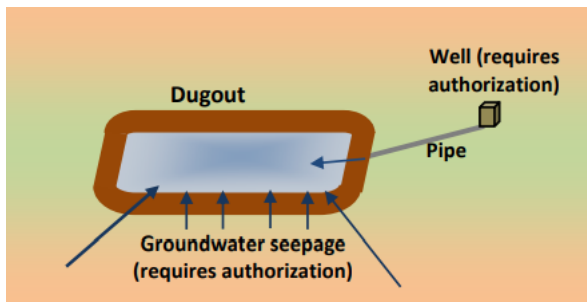


Figure 1. Dugout diverting groundwater

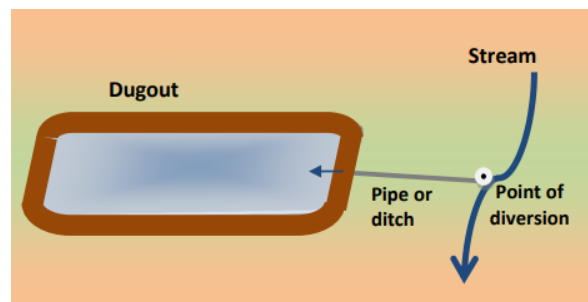


Figure 2. Water diverted from a stream into a dugout

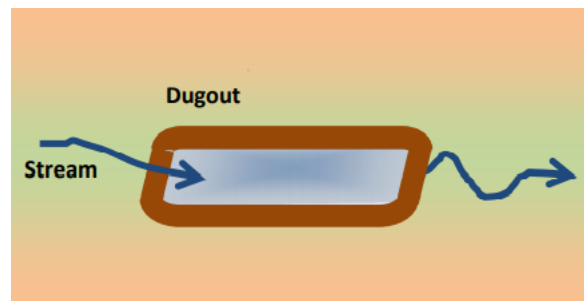


Figure 3. Dugout constructed within a stream channel

## 5. What if the Dugout has a Mixed Water Supply?

If there is stream or groundwater in the dugout, then an authorization is required. An application should be made citing the primary source of water (i.e. surface or groundwater) and listing other possible water sources.

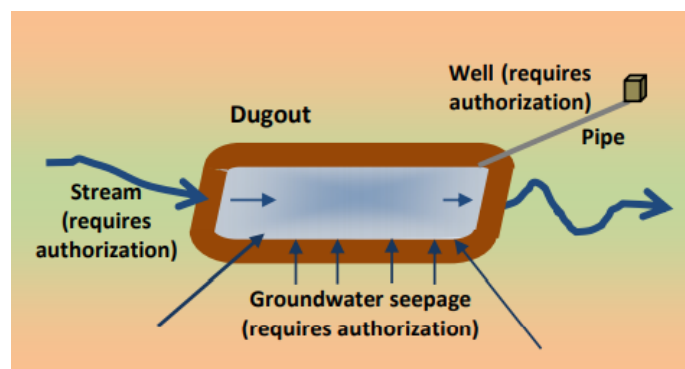


Figure 4. Mixed water supply dugout

## 6. When is an Authorization Not Required?

An authorization is not required if:

1. the diversion, use, or storage is exempted by legislation (e.g. the diversion of water while fighting a fire or the use of groundwater for domestic purposes); OR,
2. the dugout fills entirely from precipitation or runoff. This means that all the following conditions are met (see figure 5):
  - at no time is the dugout recharged by groundwater or stream water;
  - the dugout has an impermeable liner or is constructed with impermeable material that does not allow for any seepage;
  - the dugout is not constructed within a stream;
  - any runoff entering the dugout is considered overland flow (i.e. not from a water source that is considered a stream under the WSA); AND,
  - the conditions of the land surrounding the dugout prevent infiltration (e.g., frozen, saturated, or otherwise impervious).

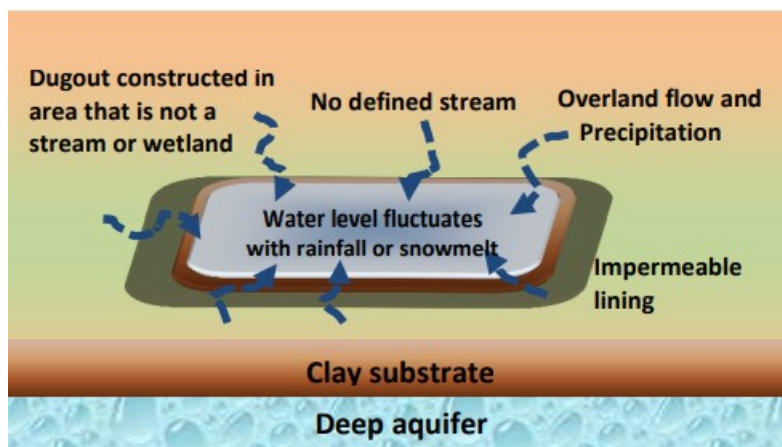


Figure 5. Dugout containing only overland flow

## 7. What is the Difference between a Dugout and a Dam?

A dam is a barrier constructed for the purpose of storing or diverting ground or surface water. Some dugouts have an artificial barrier or embankment constructed with the excavated material. If that barrier or embankment can retain water, then it is a dam. There are safety requirements under the [Dam Safety Regulation](#) if a dam is over 7.5 m tall or capable of storing more than 10,000 m<sup>3</sup> of water. More information on the Dam Safety Program can be found [online](#).

### Dam Safety Program Contact Information:

- Email: [dam.safety@gov.bc.ca](mailto:dam.safety@gov.bc.ca)
- [Local Dam Safety Officers](#)



## Useful Links

---

### Applying Online (Non-Domestic Users)

- Online application: [groundwater.gov.bc.ca](http://groundwater.gov.bc.ca)
- Register for a basic BCeID (online account) to save and continue your application later, and edit your application after it is submitted: <http://www.bceid.ca/>

### Water Fees and Rentals

- [Annual Water Rental Rates Estimator](#)
- [Application Fees and Costs](#)

### More Information on Groundwater Licensing

- [Groundwater Licensing in B.C. Brochure](#)
- [New Requirements for Groundwater Users](#)
- [Groundwater Licensing Process](#)
- [Authorization Requirements for Storage and Use of Water in Dugouts](#)

### Registering a Domestic-Use Well

- [Domestic well registration process](#)
- [Domestic Well Registration Form](#)

### Collecting Information

- Well Data Search ("GWells"): <https://apps.nrs.gov.bc.ca/gwells/>
- [Complete list of information](#) that most applicants will require
- [Joint Works Agreement](#), if you share or are connected to another person's works
- [Descriptions of water use purposes](#)
- [B.C. Agriculture Water Calculator](#) to estimate your crop irrigation or livestock water needs

### Help Drawing or Making Maps

- [Application Drawing Standards](#)
- [B.C. Agriculture Water Calculator](#) (recommended for its easy to use format)
- [FrontCounter BC Mapping Tool](#)

### Legislation

- [Water Sustainability Act](#)
- [Water Sustainability Regulation](#)

## Getting Help

---

Contact FrontCounter BC to learn about your options or get help. Please call before going to an office to get help with your application. FrontCounter BC staff can assist you in identifying necessary information to make the application process as easy as possible.

### FrontCounter BC Contact Information

- **Toll Free:** 1-877-855-3222
- **E-mail:** [FrontCounterBC@gov.bc.ca](mailto:FrontCounterBC@gov.bc.ca)