

NEW!
Save at least \$250 on the one-time
application fee until March 1, 2019!

Licensing Groundwater in BC

*Do you use groundwater?
Secure your water rights by licensing today!*



**BRITISH
COLUMBIA**

Do you use groundwater for non-domestic purposes?

All irrigators, industries, waterworks and others who divert and use groundwater from a well or dugout for non-domestic purposes are required to apply for a water licence. This new requirement was brought in by the *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA) in February 2016.

What if I am a domestic well owner?

Domestic use is exempt from licensing. This includes water for household use by the occupants of a private dwelling, fire prevention, private lawn and garden watering (up to 1,000 m²), and domestic animals. Domestic well owners are encouraged to register their well for free to make their water use known so it can be protected.

For more information visit **Register your Well** at www.frontcounterbc.gov.bc.ca/start/ground-water

Existing users must apply by March 1, 2019.

After this date, users who have not applied will be committing an offence under the WSA and can be subject to fines and penalties, and ordered to cease using the water.

After March 1, 2019, you will need to apply as a new applicant, your priority date will be the date of the application, and your application could be refused if there is not enough water.

Apply today to secure your water rights!

Groundwater licensing ensures there is a fair and transparent mechanism in place for determining who uses the water during shortages. A water licence is tied to your land, and provides four major benefits to your business.

- A licence gives you a right to a specific volume of water when available to support your business
- A licence protects your usage from new users and future developments
- A licence provides a fair system for reducing usage in times of water scarcity
- A licence can enhance the value of your property

How do I secure my groundwater rights?

Existing users (use began before March 1, 2016) must apply by March 1, 2019. If you submit by the deadline government will consider when you first used the water to establish your first-in-time, first-in-right (FITFIR) priority date. This gives your water use precedence over newer users during times of scarcity.

New users (use began after February 29, 2016) must apply for a licence before the water can lawfully be diverted, used or stored.

How much does a licence cost?

The one-time application fee (minimum \$250) for existing users has been waived if your application is received by March 1, 2019. Annual rental fees are not waived and are charged from March 1, 2016 for existing groundwater users. Fees vary based on how much water you are using and for what purpose.

While existing or new users are required to apply for a water licence, water fees and rentals are generally not applied to First Nations use of water on Reserve or Treaty lands.

Before You Apply:

Applications are submitted online through the FrontCounter BC website and require several pieces of information about your well and water usage. To save time during the application process:

1. Register for a basic BCeID. Having a BC online account (BCeID) will allow you to save your application and return to it later if you are not able to complete the application in one session. Register at www.bceid.ca and select a basic BCeID, which is a one-step process.

2. Gather information on your well(s) regarding its location, depth and construction. For example:

- Search apps.nrs.gov.bc.ca/gwells to see if a record for your well exists (well identification plate number)
- Well construction reports
- Pumping records
- Pump test reports and water quality test results

3. Gather property and water use information,

including:

- Parcel ID number (9 digit PID number on your property tax notice)
- If there is more than one name on your notice, they are considered a co-applicant
- What purpose the water is used for
- Estimates of water use volume for each water use purpose
- You can estimate agricultural water usage at www.bcagriculturewatercalculator.ca

4. Gather evidence to show when groundwater was first used and the history of use from the well.

If you apply by March 1, 2019, your date of precedence will be based on when groundwater use began. Evidence might include well documentation, government-issued certificates or permits, historical records or photographs, or Traditional Land Use and archaeological studies.

5. Ensure you have the appropriate permits.

If your well or any works occupy or cross Crown land you will need to have permission to use that land. Authorization can be in the form of a Permit Over Crown Land, or a more formal tenure under the *Land Act*. If you require a Crown Land authorization, but do not already have one, you will be prompted to apply as part of the water licence application process.

6. Create a map of the properties where the water is used.

It should include:

- Property boundaries
- Works (well location, pumps, pipes, etc.)
- Major features (buildings, fields, etc.)
- Labels identifying all of the above

www.bcagriculturewatercalculator.ca is a quick and easy tool for creating a map of your property.

Ready to start your water licence application?

Visit www.frontcounterbc.gov.bc.ca/start/ground-water

Contact FrontCounter BC at **1 877 855-3222**

or FrontCounterBC@gov.bc.ca

For more on the provincial water program visit

www.gov.bc.ca/water

Still have questions? Email: Livingwatersmart@gov.bc.ca