



February 7, 2022

Reference: 268174

**Re: *Water Sustainability Act* Groundwater Licensing Deadline March 1, 2022**

Over the last decade, we have witnessed the increasingly dramatic impact a changing climate is having on our water resources due to extreme weather events and fire. More recently, many experienced the incredible devastation to homes, businesses, and infrastructure through the November flood events in the southern Interior and Lower Fraser Valley in B.C. The loss being experienced is profound and the impacts are far-reaching.

We recognize this is a complex and demanding time for many using groundwater. That said, we need to remain vigilant on proactively preparing for future climate conditions and working together to strengthen our water security.

In 2016, the *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA) modernized B.C.'s water laws for the benefit of all British Columbians to help better manage and protect our water supplies, steward aquatic habitats, aquifers and streams, and increase water security for the businesses and livelihoods that depend on water. Under the WSA, if you use groundwater for a non-domestic purpose, such as irrigation, waterworks, or to support industrial and commercial activities, you are legally required to obtain a water licence. Licensing provides the ability to effectively manage our groundwater resources through a changing climate by ensuring we know the number of users and the quantity of water required for their use.

**March 1, 2022** is the deadline to apply for a water licence for existing non-domestic groundwater users prior to the WSA coming into effect on February 29, 2016. Those non-domestic groundwater users who have not applied for a water licence by **March 1, 2022** will be non-compliant with the law if they continue using the groundwater. Failing to apply before the deadline will also mean that existing unlicensed non-domestic groundwater users will lose recognition of their historical date of first use and may be refused a late licence application in water-stressed areas under the "first in time, first in right" WSA regulations.

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries are committed to the successful implementation of the WSA, and we are working diligently to transition non-domestic groundwater users into the licensing framework.

We understand how important groundwater may be to your business needs. Filing your application before the **March 1, 2022** deadline is the way to secure your rights and to reduce your risk in times of water scarcity. We have made many improvements to the licensing process and online application system. **Free one-on-one assistance** is available to help existing non-domestic groundwater users apply for a water licence.



We encourage non-domestic groundwater users to visit [www.groundwater.gov.bc.ca](http://www.groundwater.gov.bc.ca) to apply for a water licence and to learn more about licensing groundwater. If you are unsure whether you need a licence, or need help with your licence application, please contact FrontCounter BC by phone at **1-877-855-3222** or by email at [FrontCounterBC@gov.bc.ca](mailto:FrontCounterBC@gov.bc.ca).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katrine Conroy".

Katrine Conroy  
Minister of Forests, Lands,  
Natural Resource Operations  
and Rural Development

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "G. Heyman".

George Heyman  
Minister of Environment  
and Climate Change Strategy

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lana Popham".

Lana Popham  
Minister of Agriculture,  
Food and Fisheries