

# Licensing Groundwater Users

**NEW: Application Fee Waiver Period extended to  
December 31, 2017**

**NEW REQUIREMENTS IN EFFECT**  
*February 29, 2016*



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

## *Water Sustainability Act now in force*

BC's new *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA) and the first phase of regulations were brought into force on February 29, 2016. New regulations include licensing requirements for non-domestic groundwater users.

### *What are the new licensing requirements for non-domestic groundwater users?*

- » All irrigators, industries, waterworks and others who divert and use groundwater for non-domestic purposes are required to apply for a water licence, 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 **on or before December 31, 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 will be charged from the date the licence is issued.

### *What if I am a domestic well owner?*

Domestic well owners – i.e., homeowners with a well that provides water for household use, lawn and garden watering, and water for domestic animals – are exempt from licensing and paying provincial water fees and rentals. Domestic well owners are encouraged to register their well by contacting **FrontCounter BC** to make their water use known so it can be protected.

## ***Does groundwater use on First Nations reserve or Treaty lands require a groundwater licence?***

Existing or new non-domestic groundwater 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.

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

## ***How do I apply for a groundwater licence?***

Existing and new groundwater users can submit an application for a water licence through [FrontCounter BC](#). Application and guidance information on the FrontCounter BC website will help applicants assemble their applications. Information requirements may be different if you are an existing or new groundwater user.

To prepare for the application process groundwater users can take the following steps:

### **1. Apply for a BCeID if you don't already have one**

Having a BC online account ([BCeID](#)) will allow you to save your application and return to it later so you won't have to complete the entire process in one session.

### **2. Gather information about your well(s)**

Compile all available information about your well regarding its location, depth and construction. The well identification plate number, well construction reports, invoices from work done on the well or installation of the well pump, pumping records, pump test reports and water quality test results are examples of useful sources of information. You can also search the [Provincial WELLS database](#), using the well identification plate number or property location to see if a record for your well exists.

### **3. Determine the appurtenancy, water use purpose and quantity**

All water licence applications must include the legal description of the land, mine or undertaking where the water will be used (known as the "appurtenancy") and the applicant's title to or interest in that appurtenancy. Applications must also specify the [water use purpose\(s\)](#) (e.g., irrigation, waterworks) for which the water is being used and the quantity of water used for each water use purpose.

#### **4. Gather evidence to show when groundwater was first used**

Compile available information relating to the history of groundwater use from the well. To receive a licence date of precedence that is based on when groundwater use began, an applicant must describe the history of groundwater use, to the best of their knowledge, and provide evidence of the date of first use. Evidence can consist of documentation about the well, as detailed above, and information such as government-issued certificates or permits (e.g., Crown land occupancy permit), historical records or photographs, Traditional Land Use or archeological studies.

#### **5. Ensure you have the appropriate permits**

If your well or related works (e.g., pipelines, storage reservoirs) cross or occupy Crown land, you will be required to demonstrate that you have the appropriate permit to occupy Crown land, or that you have applied for a permit. If you do not already have a Crown land occupancy permit, you will be prompted to apply for one as part of the water licence application process.

#### **6. Estimate the annual water rental**

Visit the [Water Fees and Rental Rates](#) web page to learn about annual water rentals and the rates that will apply to your water use purpose(s). Use the [Water Rent Estimator](#) to estimate the fees and rentals that may be charged for your licence application and water use.

### ***Ready to start your water licence application?***

Visit [www.frontcounterbc.gov.bc.ca](http://www.frontcounterbc.gov.bc.ca)

Contact FrontCounter BC at 1-877-855-3222

To register for a BCeID account visit <https://www.bceid.ca/>

### ***More information:***

For more on the provincial water program or to access this brochure online visit [www.gov.bc.ca/water](http://www.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](mailto:Livingwatersmart@gov.bc.ca)