

British Columbia Water Sustainability Act

How does this new legislation affect me if:

- I am a landowner, farmer or rural resident?
- I sell water?
- I irrigate or use other water-intensive farming techniques?
- I water livestock or have a confined feeding operation?

Big Picture

Owners of **domestic water wells** have a water right of up to 2,000 litres (440 gallons) per day. Protect this right by **registering your water well(s) prior to March 1, 2019**, to ensure that you have first priority to the groundwater source.

Why do it now?

If you use **groundwater for non-domestic purposes** (irrigation, industry, conservation, agriculture, water storage, etc.) and you **license your groundwater source prior to March 1, 2017**, you do not have to pay the application fee. You will also be given a date of precedence based on the information provided to confirm when the water source was first in use.

Bottom Line

Domestic groundwater users are not required to obtain a licence and are not expected to pay water fees or rental fees under the *Water Sustainability Act*; however, domestic users should register their water well(s). Ownership of the land does not mean ownership of the water. Registering and/or licensing your water source(s) gives you first right to the groundwater / surface water.

How do I get where I need to be as a landowner?

You can collect the necessary water well information for your water well and submit the information, along with the **Well Registration Form**, to **FrontCounter BC**.

You can also hire a groundwater consulting company to collect the necessary information, submit the application on your behalf and assist you with answering any questions the Ministry of Environment may have.

What if I sell water to industry?

You will need to have a licence to sell water, and you will pay annual water rental fees.



What if I use water from my dugout for farming or ranching?

Water from a dugout that only collects water from snowmelt, rain and surface run-off does not need to be licensed, provided that you are only using the water for household or stock use.

You will need a licence if the dugout is located in a wetland or collects water from a water course, even if the water is only for personal use. You will also need a licence if you sell water from a dugout to industry or divert water from a dugout for waterworks, agriculture, irrigation or confined feeding operations. The size of the dugout does not determine the need to license; the physical location relative to other surface water features does.

Surface water priority is the same as groundwater priority – first come, first served.

What is the difference between registering/licensing a groundwater source and a surface water source?

As of February 29, 2016, it is mandatory to register **groundwater** usage from domestic water wells, and to license groundwater usage from non-domestic water wells. Water fees and rental fees are associated with non-domestic water wells only.

It has been a requirement to license and monitor **surface water** sources for decades. Surface water includes: dugouts, streams, lakes, marshes, bogs and other wetlands. Water fees and rental fees are associated with non-domestic surface water usage only.

How do I register or license my water source?

Register your water well with **FrontCounter BC** to ensure that a record of the water well is in the database, and apply for a licence to divert groundwater / surface water.

The application process may require completing numerous documents and providing information about your water source, the intended use for the water and the environment surrounding your water source.

Hiring a groundwater consultant can alleviate the pressure of compiling technical documents, submitting information, and answering questions that the Ministry of Environment may have regarding your water source and intended water use.



Groundwater and Surface Water Solutions for a Changing Environment