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British Columbia News

Six months remain for groundwater users to apply for licence

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/25397>

Saturday, September 25, 2021 8:30 AM

Victoria - A deadline for select groundwater users is less than six months away.

March 1, 2022, is the deadline to apply for a water licence for those who were using groundwater from a well or dugout on or before Feb. 29, 2016, for non-domestic purposes such as irrigation, commercial or industrial use. A water licence is not required for a household well or groundwater used for domestic purposes, such as watering lawns and gardens. Domestic groundwater users are encouraged to register their well for free.

Existing groundwater users who have not applied by the deadline will be unlicensed and must stop using groundwater after March 1, 2022, until a licence is obtained. They will be treated as a new user and will not receive recognition for their historical date of first use. That historical date is important because during water shortages, older licences get priority access to water.

Missing the deadline could be costly and may include fines for unlicensed use of groundwater. Late applications will not benefit from the waived application fee and may require costly studies to support an application. Application fees are waived for existing groundwater users who apply before the deadline.

In response to feedback, the Province has made an effort to improve the online application. Applicants are recommended to have several key pieces of information ready when making an online application to help the process go as smoothly as possible. For example, the well's location, depth and construction, property and water use, evidence of when groundwater was first used, history of use from the well and other information about water use and works.

Groundwater is water naturally occurring below the surface of the ground. Licensing groundwater helps protect aquifers and streams, along with businesses and livelihoods that depend on reliable access to water. B.C.'s water licensing system is a fair and transparent process that helps reduce conflicts between water users, particularly in times of drought and water scarcity.

There may be consequences for businesses if they miss the March 1, 2022, deadline to apply for an existing use groundwater licence.

Learn More:

To learn more about water licences, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/air-land-water/water/gwlicensingqas-2020.pdf>
(<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/air-land-water/water/gwlicensingqas-2020.pdf>)

Apply online: <https://portal.nrs.gov.bc.ca/web/client/-/secure-your-water-rights-today>
(<https://portal.nrs.gov.bc.ca/web/client/-/secure-your-water-rights-today>)

“How to apply video” using irrigation as an example:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zoYMs5OZMHc> (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zoYMs5OZMHc>)

Register a domestic well:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/groundwater-wells-aquifers/groundwater-wells/well-records-registration> (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land->

[water/water/groundwater-wells-aquifers/groundwater-wells/well-records-registration](#))

For more information, contact FrontCounter BC: <https://portal.nrs.gov.bc.ca/web/client/contact>

(<https://portal.nrs.gov.bc.ca/web/client/contact>)

Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

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