

## Queets-Quinault Watershed, WRIA 21

This focus sheet provides information on the availability of water for new uses in the Queets-Quinault Watershed. This information provides a starting point for potential water users in determining the best strategies for securing water for a future project or proposal in this area.

The Queets-Quinault Watershed, located on Washington's north coast, consists of the Queets, Quinault, Moclips and Copalis Rivers, and many additional tributary creeks and streams.

Annual precipitation in the Queets-Quinault Watershed ranges from 100 along the coastal lowlands to 180 inches per year in the Olympic Mountains. Most precipitation arrives during the winter months when water demands are the lowest. During the summer, the snowpack is gone, there is little rain, and naturally low stream flows are dependent on groundwater inflow. This means that groundwater and surface water are least available when water demands are the highest.

This watershed has many small farms and permit-exempt domestic well uses.

### Factors Regarding Water Availability

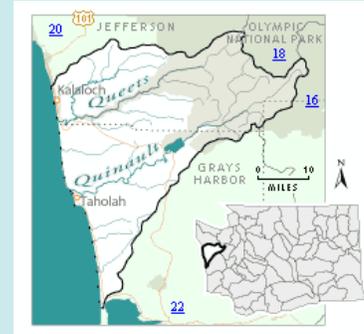
Low summer and early fall streamflow levels, and impacts from climate change add to the challenge of finding new water supplies in WRIA 21, especially during the summer months.

At the present time, there is no instream flow rule for the Queets-Quinault River watershed.

There may be limited water available for new uses, especially given that river levels need to be maintained to ensure adequate water quality and fish migration. The Quinault Indian Tribe is very concerned about maintaining flows and fish habitat in the watershed and water right applications and mitigation plans are routinely sent to the Tribe for their review.

Some areas located near the Pacific Ocean may have the potential for seawater intrusion.

### MORE INFORMATION



### Definitions

**Consumptive use:** A use of water that diminishes the amount of water in the water source.

**Instream flows:** Flow levels adopted into an administrative rule that create a water right for the stream to protect fish, wildlife, stock watering, recreational uses, and other instream uses and values. Typical instream flow rules now include broader water management strategies.

**Mitigation plan:** A scientifically-sound plan to offset the impacts of a proposed water use.

**Seawater intrusion:** The movement of salt water into freshwater aquifers.

**Surface water source limitations (SWSLs):** A determination by State Fish and Wildlife that water is not available based on needs for fish. See RCW 77.55.050.

Applicants seeking new water appropriations may need to develop a mitigation plan and mitigate for the impacts their use of water will have on surface water bodies.

### **Water supply available for further appropriation**

Connecting to an established water supplier is generally the fastest and simplest approach for obtaining new supplies of water.

The groundwater permit exemption allows certain users of small quantities of ground water (most commonly, single residential well owners) to construct wells and develop their water supplies without obtaining a water right permit from Ecology. For more information about the groundwater permit exemption, refer to [www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/fwr92104.pdf](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/fwr92104.pdf).

Additional options for finding a water supply include processing a water right application through the [Cost Reimbursement Program](#). The applicant may need to develop mitigation to offset the impacts of their water use to surface water.

For more information on these and other options, refer to “[Alternatives for Water Right Application Processing](#).”

### **Pending water right applications in this watershed**

Washington water law is based on the “prior appropriation” system, often called “first in time, first in right.” Applications for water from the same source must be processed in the order they are received.

Ecology asks anyone who needs a water right (new, change, or transfer) to submit the pre-application consultation form and meet with us to review your water supply needs and project proposal.

- Apply for a New Water Right  
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/newrights.html>
- Apply to Change or Transfer a Water Right or Claim  
[http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/change\\_transfer\\_use.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/change_transfer_use.html)

The map in this document shows some of the factors that will be considered when evaluating water right permit applications. Here are some information sources to assist you with your research:

- Locate and research water rights on land parcels anywhere in the state (Water Resource Explorer)  
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/info/webmap.html>
- Pending Water Right Applications by County  
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/tracking-apps.html>
- Subscribe to a water right application RSS feed for a county or WRIA  
[http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/wr\\_app\\_rss.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/wr_app_rss.html)
- WRIA map showing the total number of water right claims, certificates, permits and applications  
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/Images/pdf/waterright-wria-maps.pdf>

- Search and view well reports using a variety of search tools  
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/waterresources/map/WCLSWebMap/default.aspx>

**For more information**

Ecology Southwest Regional Office  
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Lacey, WA 98503  
360-407-6300

*If you need this document in a version for the visually impaired, call the Water Resources Program at 360-407-6872.  
Persons with hearing loss can call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability can call 877-833-6341*

