

Moses Coulee Watershed, WRIA 44

This focus sheet provides information on the availability of water for new uses in the Moses Coulee Watershed. This information provides a starting point for potential water users to secure water for a future project or proposal in this area.

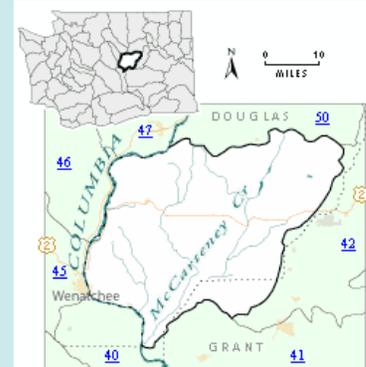
Much of central Washington is arid, receiving less than 20 inches of rain annually. Most of this precipitation arrives during the winter months when water demands are the lowest. During the summer, the snowpack is gone, there is little rain, and naturally low stream flows are dependent on groundwater inflow. At the same time the demand for water for human uses, including irrigation are at the yearly maximum. This means that groundwater and surface water are least available when water demands are the highest.

Factors affecting water availability

Much of the water in the Moses Coulee Watershed has already been spoken for. Increased demands from population growth, declining groundwater levels, and impacts from climate change are adding to the challenge of finding new water supplies in Water Resource Inventory Area 44, especially during the summer months.

Applications for surface water withdrawals from the mainstem Columbia River are subject to the Instream Resource Protection Program for the Columbia River, as are any proposed groundwater withdrawals determined to have a significant and direct impact on the Columbia River. (For more information, see <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=173-563>.)

The Moses Coulee-Foster Creek Watershed Planning Unit, led by local government and landowners, worked cooperatively with stakeholders as well as state and federal agencies to develop a watershed plan for WRIs 44 and 50. It contains local solutions to protect senior water rights, maintain ecosystems, and meet future water resource management objectives. The planning group also completed a detailed implementation plan in 2006 and is considering instream flow recommendations. For more information, see www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/wrias/Planning/44-50.html.



Definitions

WRIA: Water Resources Inventory Area; also known as a watershed or river basin. For environmental administration and planning purposes, Washington is divided up into 62 major watersheds, or WRIs.

Water supply available for new uses

Surface water and groundwater availability is currently very limited throughout the basin. Information on water availability and water storage options is available in the Moses Coulee and Foster Creek Watershed Plan, at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/wrias/Planning/44-50.html.

The Office of Columbia River (OCR) is aggressively pursuing water supply development opportunities throughout the Columbia Basin, including the Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Release Project, which could benefit the watershed. You may find further information on these efforts on the OCR Web Page at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cwp/crwmp.html.

The groundwater permit exemption allows certain users of small quantities of ground water (most commonly, single residence 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.

Additional options for finding a water supply:

- Connecting to an established water supplier. This is the fastest and simplest option.
- Processing a change application through the Douglas County or Grant County water conservancy board.
- Processing your application through the Cost Reimbursement Program. Proposing mitigation to offset the impacts to surface water will likely be required. Refer to www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0511016.pdf.

For more information on these and other options, refer to “Alternatives for Water Right Application Processing” www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/1111067.pdf.

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. Due to the backlog of pending applications, prospective applicants are advised to consider the Cost Reimbursement Program, which can help expedite application processing (See: www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0511016.pdf). Please be aware though, the Cost Reimbursement Program cannot help you obtain a new water right permit if no water is available.

For information on the total number of water right claims, certificates, permits and applications in this watershed, refer to the map: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/Images/pdf/waterright-wria-maps.pdf>.

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. Links to application forms are provided below:

- Pre-Application Form
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/publications/ecy070440.pdf>
- Apply for a New Water Right
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/newrights.html>
- Apply to Change or Transfer an existing Water Right or Claim
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/change_transfer_use.html

The map in this document shows some of the factors that we consider when evaluating water right permit applications. Here are some additional 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
- Search and view well reports using a variety of search tools
<http://apps.ecy.wa.gov/welllog/>

For more information

Ecology Central Regional Office
15 West Yakima Ave -- Suite 200
Yakima, WA 98902-3452
509-575-2490

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.

