

Entiat Watershed, WRIA 46

This focus sheet provides information on the availability of water for new uses in the Entiat 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.

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 for new uses when water demands are the highest.

Factors affecting water availability

Much of the water in the Entiat Watershed has already been spoken for. An Adjudication of water rights was conducted in the Roaring Creek subbasin in 1919. Adjudications are typically an indication that most if not all of the available water in an area has already been allocated to existing uses. An adjudication is intended to review all claimed water rights and to rule on their validity, quantification, and priority.

Increased demands from population growth, declining groundwater levels, and impacts from climate change are adding to the challenge of finding new water supplies in WRIA 46, especially during the summer months.

Stream flows are another major limiting factor in this basin. An instream flow rule was adopted in 2005, developed through local watershed planning. The Entiat Planning Unit, led by local governments and landowners, worked cooperatively with stakeholders as well as state and federal agencies to develop local solutions that would protect senior water rights, maintain ecosystems, and meet water resource management objectives. The rule, which affects all surface water and connected groundwater, contains:

- Specified levels of instream flows, to meet the objectives of the Entiat Watershed Plan. For further information on the adopted instream flows, refer to [173-546-050 WAC](http://173-546-050.WAC).
- To view the watershed plan, visit www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/wrias/Planning/46.html.



Definitions

Adjudication: A legal process conducted through a superior court to determine the extent and validity of existing water rights.

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.

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 WRIAs.

- Additionally, there are maximum allocation limits of water available during periods of high flows. Allocations from the maximum allocation limits are also subject to the instream flows. For specific information, refer to [173-546-080 WAC](#).

Applications for surface water withdrawals from the mainstem Columbia River are subject to the Instream Resource Protection Program for the Columbia River ([173-563 WAC](#)). In addition, proposed groundwater withdrawals which are determined to have a significant and direct impact on the Columbia River are also subject to the Instream Resource Protection Program for the Columbia River.

Water supply available for new uses

There is currently five cubic feet per second (cfs) of water set aside in a reservation for future appropriation in this basin. Surface water and groundwater availability, outside of the reservation, is currently very limited throughout the watershed. The use of water from the reservation is defined within Chapter 173-546 WAC and is summarized below:

- 1 cfs is reserved for domestic and stock watering uses.
- 3 cfs is reserved for commercial agriculture uses, but in the lower Entiat stream management unit only (below River Mile 16.2).
- 1 cfs is reserved for commercial and light industrial uses, but in the lower Entiat stream management unit only (below River Mile 16.2).

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.

The Office of Columbia River (OCR) is aggressively pursuing water supply development opportunities throughout the Columbia Basin. You can find additional information at the OCR Web site at: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cwp/crwmp.html.

Additional options for finding a water supply include:

- Connecting to an established water supplier. This is the fastest and simplest option.
- Processing a change application with the Chelan County Water Conservancy Board.
- Processing an application through the Cost Reimbursement Program. Mitigation to offset the impacts to surface waters will likely be required 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. Because there is a 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).

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/>

Further Information

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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.

