

Skokomish-Dosewallips Watershed, WRIA 16

This focus sheet provides information on the availability of water for new uses in the Skokomish-Dosewallips 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.

This watershed consists of the Skokomish and Dosewallips Rivers and many tributary creeks and streams. Annual precipitation in the Skokomish-Dosewallips Watershed ranges from 40 to 100 inches per year. 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. This means that groundwater and surface water are least available when water demands are the highest.

The topography in this watershed limits large residential development potential to areas situated close to Hood Canal and in the Skokomish Valley.

Factors affecting water availability

The Skokomish River portion of the watershed has many exempt domestic wells and farms with senior irrigation rights. Additionally, Tacoma Power has senior water rights to maintain reservoir levels in Lake Cushman. As a result much of the water in the Skokomish-Dosewallips Watershed has already been spoken for.

Increased demands from population growth, naturally low summer and early fall stream flow levels, and impacts from climate change add to the challenge of finding new water supplies in WRIA 16.

Some areas located near Hood Canal may have the potential for seawater intrusion.

River and stream flows also need to be maintained to ensure adequate water quality and fish migration. The Skokomish, Jamestown-S'Klallam, and Port Gamble S'Klallam Indian Tribes are very concerned about maintaining flows and fish habitat, and are routinely sent water right applications and mitigation plans for their review.



Definitions

Aquifer: A rock formation that is capable of storing and transmitting groundwater.

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.

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 WRIsAs. WRIA's were defined by Chapter 173-500 WAC in 1976.

Water supply available for new uses

Applicants seeking new water rights will likely need to mitigate for the impacts their use of water will have on surface water bodies and on groundwater.

The state Department of Fish and Wildlife has recommended that Ecology not issue water rights in a portion of this WRIA, in order to protect fish populations. See [RCW 77.57.020](#) for more information.

Adequate water supply from wells drilled in bedrock is extremely limited outside of river valley bottoms and nearby river bed deposits. Areas of potential water supply in the Skokomish-Dosewallips watershed include various municipal sources and private water supply companies. Connecting to an established water supplier is generally the fastest and simplest option.

The groundwater permit exemption allows certain users of small quantities of groundwater (most commonly, owners of single residence wells) 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 <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/1511016.html>.

The permit exemption may not be available to prospective water users in certain areas that have been closed to further appropriation because there is limited or no water available. Check with Ecology staff at the regional office for more information.

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 a more complete look at alternatives for water right application processing, 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.

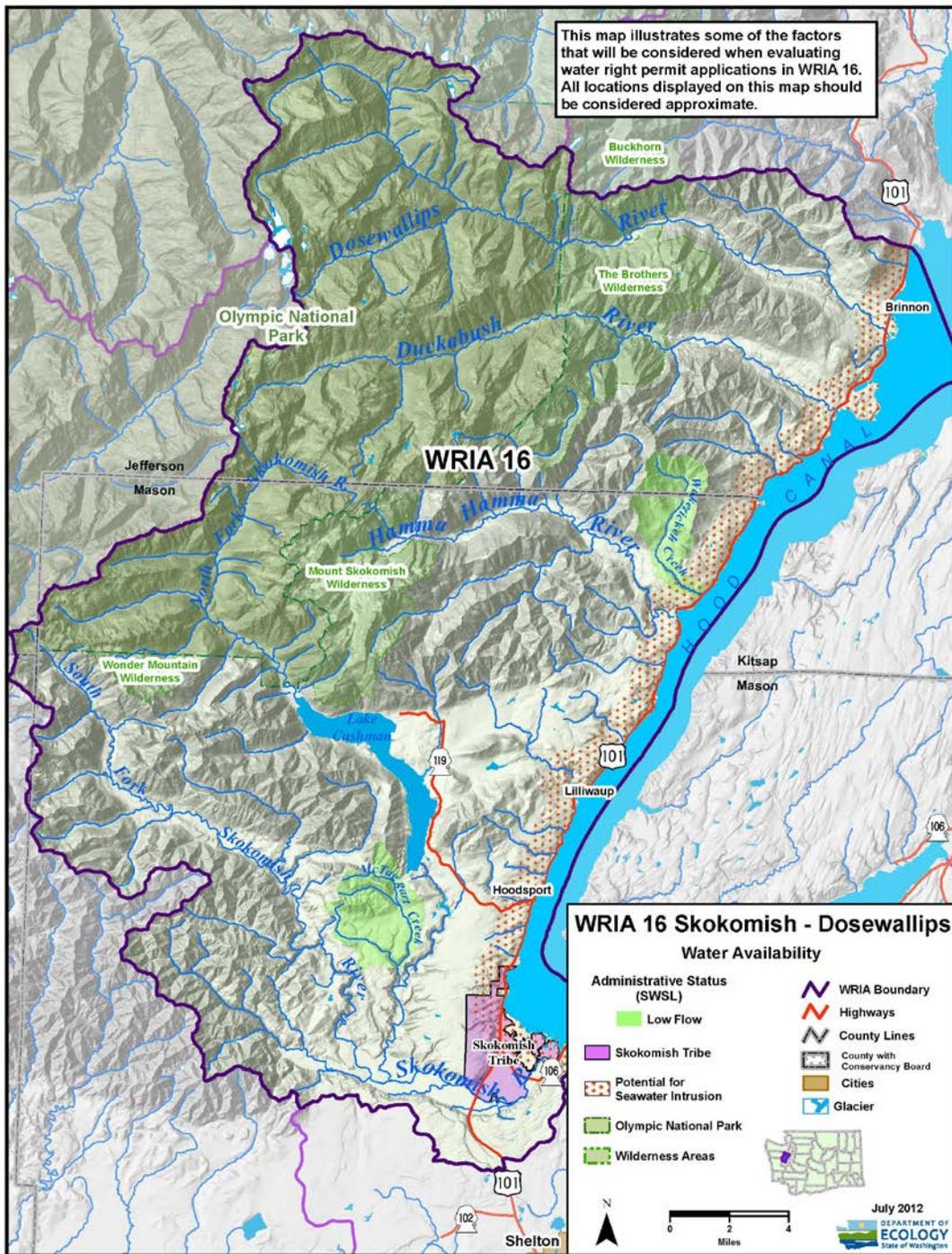
- Apply for a New Water Right
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/newrights.html>
- Apply to Change or Transfer a Water Right or Claim
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/change_transfer_use.html

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
- 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

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