

Sanpoil Watershed, WRIA 52

This focus sheet provides information on the availability of water for new uses in the Sanpoil 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 Sanpoil Watershed located in northeastern Washington includes the Sanpoil River and its numerous tributary creeks and streams. Curlew Creek a tributary to the Sanpoil River is not part of this Watershed. The annual precipitation in the Kettle Watershed ranges from 11 inches per year near its confluence with the Columbia River to 30 inches in the higher elevation mountainous area. Only a fraction of this precipitation becomes groundwater available for human and economic uses. Most of the 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.

Much of the water in the Sanpoil 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 WRIA 52, especially during the summer months.

The Department of Ecology has put together this document to describe factors that affect water availability in your watershed, and to tell you about some options you may have to get the water you need.

Factors affecting water availability

In 2004, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation filed notice with the Department of Ecology that the United States intends to make examinations and surveys for the utilization of the unappropriated waters of the Columbia River and its tributaries above Priest Rapids Dam, pursuant to [Section 90.40.030](#) of the Revised Code of Washington. The withdrawal of these waters from future appropriations is currently in effect until December 23, 2014.

All new applications for surface water and groundwater connected to surface water, within WRIA 52 cannot be processed until a release from

MORE INFORMATION



Definitions

Surface water source

limitation: A recommendation from the Department of Fish and Wildlife that flows be protected to maintain fish populations. See RCW 77.57.020

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.

the Bureau of Reclamation is obtained, or the withdrawal has expired. The withdrawal may be extended, and Ecology expects BOR to request an extension before the withdrawal expires.

The Colville Indian Reservation make up much of the lands located within WRIA 52. The Tribes are concerned about maintaining flows and fish habitat in the watershed and water right applications and mitigation plans are routinely sent to them for their review. Federally Reserved Rights are not quantified at this time and thus the legal availability of water in these areas is undetermined.

Groundwater

In general, availability and yield of groundwater from bedrock in this WRIA is very limited by climate and geology.

Surface Water

The Sanpoil watershed has administrative restrictions known as Surface Water Source Limitations (SWSLs), which limit most water sources in the watershed. Groundwater connected to the surface sources are also subject to SWSL restrictions. Often these restrictions require that new water uses stop during low flow periods. These restrictions indicate that most water has been appropriated within the watershed. In addition, Granite Creek and Long Lake are “closed” by SWSL, meaning the water body is closed to new uses.

Water supply available for new uses

The Sanpoil watershed is not closed to new water uses. However, the majority of water has been appropriated and new uses are subject to the above listed restrictions. In addition, because the lower Sanpoil River lies within the Colville Indian Reservation boundaries, it is likely any new appropriations may impact the Federal Reserved Water Rights of the tribes.

In some situations, surface water applications for single in-house domestic use or stockwatering may be approved if no alternate source of water supply is available and the proposed use will not impair existing water rights including Federal Reserved Rights.

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.

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 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 more expedited processing of new or change applications include:

- Connecting to an established water supplier. This is the fastest and simplest option.
- Proposing mitigation to offset the impacts to surface water and groundwater.
- Processing your change application with the Ferry County Water Conservancy Board.
- Processing your application through the Cost Reimbursement Program.
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.

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.

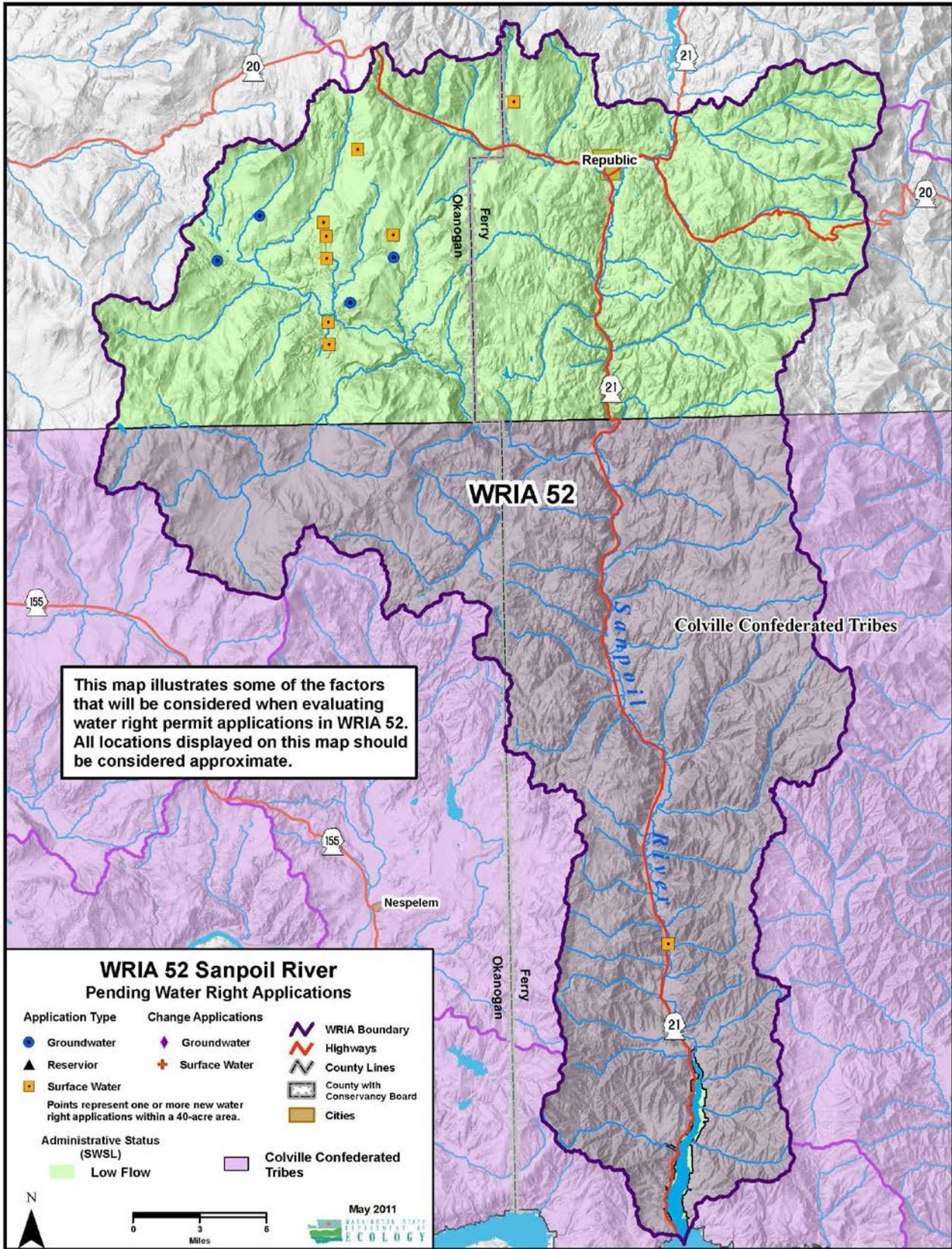
- Apply for a New Water Right
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/newrights.html>
- Apply to Change or Transfer a Water Right or Claim
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/change_transfer_use.html

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

For more information

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