

Update on Groundwater

This report is prepared for you by the water management teams within the *Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (ENV)* and the *Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development (FLNRORD)*.

In the June 2020 issue:

- New Guidance on Implementation of Managing Artesian Flow in Exceptional Circumstances
- Groundwater Wells and Aquifers (GWELLS) - Update
- Groundwater Licensing Ad Campaign
- Provincial Government Groundwater Program Regional Update
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Report Non-Compliance

Have you noticed a well that does not meet the construction standards of the Groundwater Protection Regulation? Know of someone who is drilling a well or installing a well pump without being registered?



Contact Us

The contact information for various groundwater staff across the province is available in every newsletter. We look forward to industry reaching out to

New Guidance on Implementation of Managing Artesian Flow in Exceptional Circumstances

The *Water Sustainability Act (WSA)* introduced more stringent requirements for flowing artesian wells, which must now be stopped or brought under control in accordance with s. 52(1) of the WSA. However, in “exceptional circumstances” s. 52(6) of the WSA enables the comptroller or a water manager to issue directions, based on the report of a professional, to allow the flow to be “managed in another manner” (i.e. the well may continue to flow) provided that the artesian flow does not cause a threat to property, public safety or the environment.



The document provides guidance to statutory decision makers on matters related to implementation of s. 52(6) of the WSA including:

- What might constitute ‘exceptional circumstances’
- When it may not be appropriate to allow flow to be managed in another manner
- Issuing directions.

The guidance is provided on determining a person responsible (s. 48 WSA) for a flowing artesian well. The guidance can be found online at:

[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/air-land-water/water/laws-rules/policy_public -](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/air-land-water/water/laws-rules/policy_public_-_guidance_on_implementation_of_s_526_wsa_managing_artesian_flow_in_exceptional_circumstances.pdf)

[_guidance on implementation of s 526 wsa managing artesian flow in exceptional circumstances.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/air-land-water/water/laws-rules/policy_public_-_guidance_on_implementation_of_s_526_wsa_managing_artesian_flow_in_exceptional_circumstances.pdf)

Groundwater Wells and Aquifers (GWELLS) - Update

Do you have ideas on how we can improve the Groundwater Wells and Aquifers (GWELLS) application? Send your suggestions to gwells@gov.bc.ca!

Submit your well records online

The B.C. government is moving towards online submission of well construction, alteration, and decommission reports.

Benefits of submitting your reports online include:

- faster and more accurate data entry of well records;
- quick access to well records for clients and proof of compliance with regulations;
- promotion of your company by pointing clients to previously submitted well records, showcasing your registration as well drillers and well pump installers with the Province; and,
- improved access to well and groundwater information for everyone, including following artesian well data for better resource management.

Groundwater Wells and Aquifers (GWELLS) - Update Continued

Get access in three easy steps

1. Visit the GWELLS BCeID registration page to obtain either a Basic BCeID account or Business BCeID account.
2. Note, if you already have a Basic or Business BCeID account, you do not need to create a new one to access GWELLS.
3. After obtaining your BCeID, go to GWELLS and select the login button (top right of the application screen).

Once you have logged in, email gwells@gov.bc.ca to request access for your BCeID user account.

Groundwater Licensing Ad Campaign

In March 2020, the government completed a province-wide advertising campaign to raise awareness of licensing requirements for non-domestic groundwater and well users in B.C.

Local newspaper and journal ads were published by region from October 2019 to March 2020. In addition to customized print ads, the Province was raising awareness of groundwater licensing requirements by sending mail directly to well owners who might not have applied for a licence yet.

Notification letters were sent by region to the West Coast, Thompson-Okanagan, Kootenay-Boundary, Lower Mainland, and Fraser Valley. Due to COVID-19 disruptions, the remaining letters to Skeena, Omineca, Cariboo, and the Northeast regions have been postponed until further notice.

Non-domestic groundwater users who began their use before March 1, 2016 must apply by March 1, 2022. Applications can be made online at groundwater.gov.bc.ca.

For more information, please contact FrontCounter BC at 1-877-855-3222.



Secure Your Water Rights

A water licence is required by law for non-household groundwater, well or dugout users in British Columbia.

The Province's water licensing system helps manage water use in B.C. to sustain environmental, economic and human needs. A water licence gives you a right to water for non-household uses, such as water supply systems, irrigation, industrial and commercial. It also prioritizes your rights over future developments.

Apply today!

Start your application now and learn more at groundwater.gov.bc.ca

For more information call FrontCounter BC at
1-877-855-3222



Provincial Groundwater Program Regional Update – West Coast Region

The West Coast Region (the Region) is pleased to provide an update of groundwater-related activities that have been carried out over the past year.

Groundwater Science

The Region has been involved in completion of several groundwater science projects in the past year including:

1. Review and mapping of aquifers on Quadra Island, Malcom Island, and around Port McNeil and Campbell River;
2. Detailed mapping of Aquifer 408 in the Comox-Merville area;
3. Chemainus River Hydraulic Connectivity Study;
4. French Creek Area Hydraulic Connectivity and Aquifer Mapping Study; and,
5. Water Use and Curtailment in the Koksilah River Watershed study.



Reports from these projects (once published) can be found on the BC Water Sciences Series website (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/water-science-data/water-science-series>), and revised aquifer mapping can be viewed on iMap BC or downloaded from the DataBC catalogue: <https://catalogue.data.gov.bc.ca/dataset>. It may take some time for all reports and datasets to be published.

Groundwater Protection Regulation Compliance

Over the past year, West Coast Region staff have responded to enquiries and complaints related to the *Water Sustainability Act (WSA)* and *Groundwater Protection Regulation (GWPR)*. Staff continue to work collaboratively with the Natural Resource Officers to conduct inspections and provide education and compliance support where needed. Common issues of non-compliance have included well maintenance and operation, driller and pump installer requirements, artesian flowing wells and saltwater intrusion. The Region is also working on developing an Artesian Advisory for areas on Quadra Island. Another upcoming project is currently being planned to improve the well record database. This is a province-wide initiative that will involve addressing well records that are submitted late or not at all and will help improve the well drilling data. Improving this database and well submissions will benefit well drillers and pump installers, well owners, municipalities and support informed decision-making for groundwater resources.

Due to COVID-19, compliance of the WSA and GWPR continues but with measures implemented as necessary. These measures have included prioritising fieldwork based on risk and adapting compliance goals and timelines. FLNRORD staff are available to help and support any compliance-related questions and concerns.

Authorizations

Groundwater Authorizations in the Region from March 1, 2016 to May 4, 2020

- Existing Use Groundwater Licence Applications - 872
- Existing Use Groundwater Licence Decisions - 108
- New Use Groundwater Licence Applications - 46
- New Use Groundwater Licence Decisions - 32



Update on Groundwater

If you are an existing non-domestic groundwater user who has not yet applied for a licence, you must apply on or before March 1, 2022. Your one-time application fees will be waived.

Drought Management

Streams across the Region naturally experience low-flow conditions in summer. Water use can exacerbate this and flows can fall low enough to cause harm to fish and aquatic ecosystems. In 2019, flows in the Koksilah River fell low enough to threaten the survival of fish populations. Following efforts to communicate with water users and encourage voluntary reductions in water use, a Temporary Protection Order was issued to curtail water use for irrigation of forage crops and industrial purposes. Similar river conditions could return this year, and preparation for the 2020 season is currently underway, including additional outreach to water users. The West Coast Stream Watch website can be viewed through the BC Drought Portal

(<https://governmentofbc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=838d533d8062411c820eef50b08f7ebc>), for the latest assessment of drought and conservation level within watersheds in the region that are likely to be particularly susceptible to aquatic ecosystem impacts due to water use, low flow and rising water temperatures.

Provincial Groundwater Observation Well Network

A new observation (OW493) well was installed adjacent to the Koksilah River in bedrock Aquifer 198. The objective for this new well is to monitor long-term changes in aquifer water levels and how they relate to water levels in the river and the nearby overburden observation wells drilled last year. An existing well was added to the network on Mayne Island (OW484; Aquifer 632) in cooperation with the Village Point Improvement District. The first official year of observation well status marks the third year of monitoring water levels at this site. One well was removed from the network in Mill Bay (OW380; monitored for five years from 2014-2019) and returned to the well owner for water system production capacity. Groundwater level data are available online through the Real Time Water Data website.

Koksilah Water Sustainability Plan Scoping

On February 7, 2020 Cowichan Tribes' Chief Seymour and FLNRORD's Minister Donaldson signed an Interim Letter of Agreement outlining how Cowichan Tribes and FLNRORD will work together in partnership to ensure water sustainability in the Koksilah Watershed. Section Heads from Water Protection (Jessica Doyle currently Acting for Pat Lapcevic) and Water Authorizations (Cali Melnechenko) are on the Steering Committee which is also comprised of Cowichan Tribes representatives. The first step is to complete work to determine if a Water Sustainability Plan (WSP) under the WSA is appropriate for this Watershed, and if so, to develop a scope towards a draft a WSP Terms of Reference as detailed in Section 68 of the WSA.

Update on Groundwater

Contact Information for Groundwater Staff with Statutory Designation

Office	Name	Statutory Designation	Phone	Email	Ministry
West Coast (Nanaimo)	Pat Lapcevic, P. Geo.	Assistant Water Manager	250-751-3149	Pat.Lapcevic@gov.bc.ca	FLNRORD
	Graeme Henderson	Officer	250-751-7119	Graeme.Henderson@gov.bc.ca	
	Sylvia Barroso, P. Geo.	Assistant Water Manager	250-751-3265	Sylvia.Barroso@gov.bc.ca	
	Jessica Doyle, P. Geo.	Assistant Water Manager	778-693-3035	Jessica.Doyle@gov.bc.ca	
	Nicole Fulcher	Groundwater Protection Officer	250-751-3266	Nicole.Fulcher@gov.bc.ca	
South Coast (Surrey)	Emma Webster, P. Geo.	Officer	778-572-2160	Emma.Webster@gov.bc.ca	FLNRORD
	Michele Lepitre, P. Geo.	Assistant Water Manager	778-572-2168	Michele.Lepitre@gov.bc.ca	
	Shirley Wang, P. Geo.	Assistant Water Manager	778-572-2167	Shirley.Wang@gov.bc.ca	
South Area (Penticton)	Skye Thomson, P. Geo.	Assistant Water Manager	250-490-8276	Skye.Thomson@gov.bc.ca	FLNRORD
	Twyla Legault	Officer	250-490-8287	Twyla.Legault@gov.bc.ca	
	John Pogson, P. Geo.	Assistant Water Manager	250-490-8220	John.Pogson@gov.bc.ca	
	Arthur Vanjecek	Groundwater Protection Officer	250-480-8267	Arthur.Vanjecek@gov.bc.ca	
South Area (Vernon)	David Thomson, P. Geo.	Assistant Water Manager	250-260-4641	David.Thomson@gov.bc.ca	FLNRORD
South Area (Kamloops)	Laurie Lyons	Officer	250-371-6280	Laurie.Lyons@gov.bc.ca	FLNRORD
	Melissa Wade, P. Geo.	Assistant Water Manager	250-371-6206	Melissa.Wade@gov.bc.ca	
North Area (Prince George)	Jun Yin, P. Geo.	Assistant Water Manager	778-693-3015	Jun.Yin@gov.bc.ca	FLNRORD
North Area (Smithers)	Johanna Wick, P. Geo.	Assistant Water Manager	778-693-2671	Johanna.Wick@gov.bc.ca	FLNRORD
Victoria	Amy Sloma, P. Eng.	Deputy Comptroller	778-698-4866	Amy.Sloma@gov.bc.ca	ENV
	Uelun Tuvshinjargal	Officer (GW Data Specialist)	236-478-0448	Uelun.Tuvshinjargal@gov.bc.ca	

For general enquiries, contact Groundwater@gov.bc.ca