

Changes to water use in the Quilcene-Snow Watershed



What homeowners, builders and real estate agents need to know about water for a new home

Effective December 31, 2009, the Quilcene-Snow watershed has a water resources management program rule (WAC 173-517). The rule protects existing water rights, guides decisions on new water uses to stretch supplies as far as possible, and establishes instream flows to help protect streams. It applies to the Jefferson County portion of the Quilcene-Snow Water Resources Inventory Area (WRIA) 17.

For management purposes, the rule breaks the watershed into 22 areas or subbasins. Groups of subbasins with similar water conditions are managed together. The three major groupings are coastal management areas, reserve areas, and the Chimacum subbasin. Refer to the map and flowchart at the end of this document for an overview.

It is important to know that the rule only affects those who apply for new water rights or start a new well use *after* the rule took effect on December 31, 2009. It also applies to a new use from an existing well. In this situation only the new use is affected; the use that predates the rule is not. If you already have a water right, are using a well, or are served by a public water supplier, the rule *does not* impact your use.

The rule does not preempt any applicable local ordinances.

“Domestic use” means use of water associated with human health and welfare requirements, including water for drinking, bathing, sanitary requirements, cooking, laundering and other incidental household uses, including potable domestic water requirements associated with commercial and industrial purposes.

Q: So what’s the bottom line for water for new homes?

A: In brief: 1) **In coastal management areas:** Metering is required, but there are no changes in water availability at this time.

2) **In reserve management areas:** A new “conservation

standard” applies, described below. Reserves are finite amounts of water, so must be used carefully.

3) **In Chimacum subbasin:** Water is only available for domestic use.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Ecology Quilcene-Snow webpage:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/program/s/wr/instream-flows/quilsnowbasin.html>

The webpage includes links to the WRIA 17 publications noted in this document.

Water rights:

“FAQ about Water Rights in Washington” (Ecology publication #96-1804-S&WR)
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/961804swr.html>

“Changing or Transferring an Existing Water Right” (Ecology publication #98-1802-WR)
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/981802wr.html>

“Assessing Your Water Right” (Ecology publication 97-1804-WR)
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/971804wr.html>

Rainwater collection:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/program/s/wr/hq/rwh.html>

Contact

Ecology’s Southwest Regional Office
360-407-6300

Special accommodations

To ask about the availability of this document in a version for the visually impaired call the Water Resources Program at 360-407-6872.

Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.

- 4) **Water measuring:** For all new water uses throughout the watershed, the user must install and maintain a water meter.
- 5) **Rainwater:** Use of rainwater is allowed, under certain conditions.
- 6) **New water rights:** Water has been reserved for new water rights in the Big Quilcene, Little Quilcene, and Thorndyke subbasins, and parts of the Miller and Quimper Peninsulas.

The rule also allows for **new farms** using permit-exempt wells in the Salmon, Snow, and Big Quilcene subbasins. For more information about water for farm use, see [Ecology publication #10-11-009](#). The rule does not affect farm uses existing before December 31, 2009.

Q: What are the limits and conditions on new private household wells in reserve management areas?

A: As the water available from the reserves is limited, new homes must hook-up to a public water system if service can be provided in a timely and reasonable manner.

The **groundwater permit exemption** (RCW 90.44.050) allows for use of small amounts of groundwater for specific uses without going through the regular permitting process (“*permit-exempt*”). While exempt from the permitting process, these withdrawals are still subject to all other state water laws.

If not, you will need to confirm that groundwater is still available in your subbasin. (County staff can help you with this.) Reserves are finite amounts of water. You can use a new permit-exempt well in subbasins with reserves (see map on page four) if you comply with the following **conservation standard**:

- 1) Single residence: 500 gallons per day (gpd) maximum for all uses; 350 gpd annual average use.
- 2) Group domestic: 500 gallons per day (gpd) maximum and 350 gpd annual average use for each residence; 5,000 gpd total group maximum.
- 3) You must install and maintain a water measuring device.

Conservation standards do not apply to water uses existing before the rule took effect on December 31, 2009.

Q: What if I want to use more than 500 gallons per day (gpd) from a permit-exempt well in a reserve management area?

A: If you cannot hook-up to a public water system and want to use more than 500 gpd (up to 5,000 gpd) in a reserve area, you must have an Ecology-approved mitigation plan.

Your mitigation plan must show how you will offset, or compensate for, the impacts of your new water use on a stream basin reach or water source. A mitigation plan can cover an individual withdrawal or a group of withdrawals in a subbasin. For more information on mitigation, refer to [Ecology publication #10-11-010](#) or contact Ecology’s Southwest Regional Office at 360-407-6300.

Q: What are the limits and conditions for new permit-exempt groundwater use in the Chimacum subbasin?

A: You must hook-up to a public water system if service is available in a timely and reasonable manner. Reserve water from the Chimacum subbasin is only available for domestic use. New permit-exempt well

users may be able to use water for irrigation and other uses sometime in the future when an alternative water supply is available. If an existing well was used for irrigation or stockwatering before December 31, 2009, that use can continue. You must be able to provide proof of that use to Ecology.

Ecology is committed to working with local officials as they develop strategies to provide water for new uses, including agriculture.

Q: I have already drilled a well but not started to use it. Is my water use subject to the rule?

Beneficial use refers to the regular application of a reasonable quantity of water to a non-wasteful use, such as irrigation, domestic water supply, or stockwatering.

A: Yes. If you did not start using the well for your intended purpose before December 31, 2009, your water use is subject to the rule. You do not have an existing right unless you used water from the well for “regular beneficial use” prior to that date.

Q: Why do I need to follow conservation standards when my neighbor does not?

A: The rule does not apply to water uses that started before the rule took effect. The rule’s conservation standards apply to permit-exempt well uses in reserve areas started after December 31, 2009.

Q: I am building a new home in an existing subdivision and sharing a well with existing homes. Does the rule apply to me?

A: Water uses that begin after the rule is adopted but are part of a shared well agreement may qualify as an existing group use. If so, you may not be subject to the rule requirements. This will be determined by Ecology on a case-by-case basis depending on factors associated with the well agreement, the well development, and the property.

Remember that the existing state law (RCW 90.44.050) states that the total water use for an existing subdivision cannot exceed 5,000 gallons per day for domestic use for all homes combined.

Q: How will I know how much water I use?

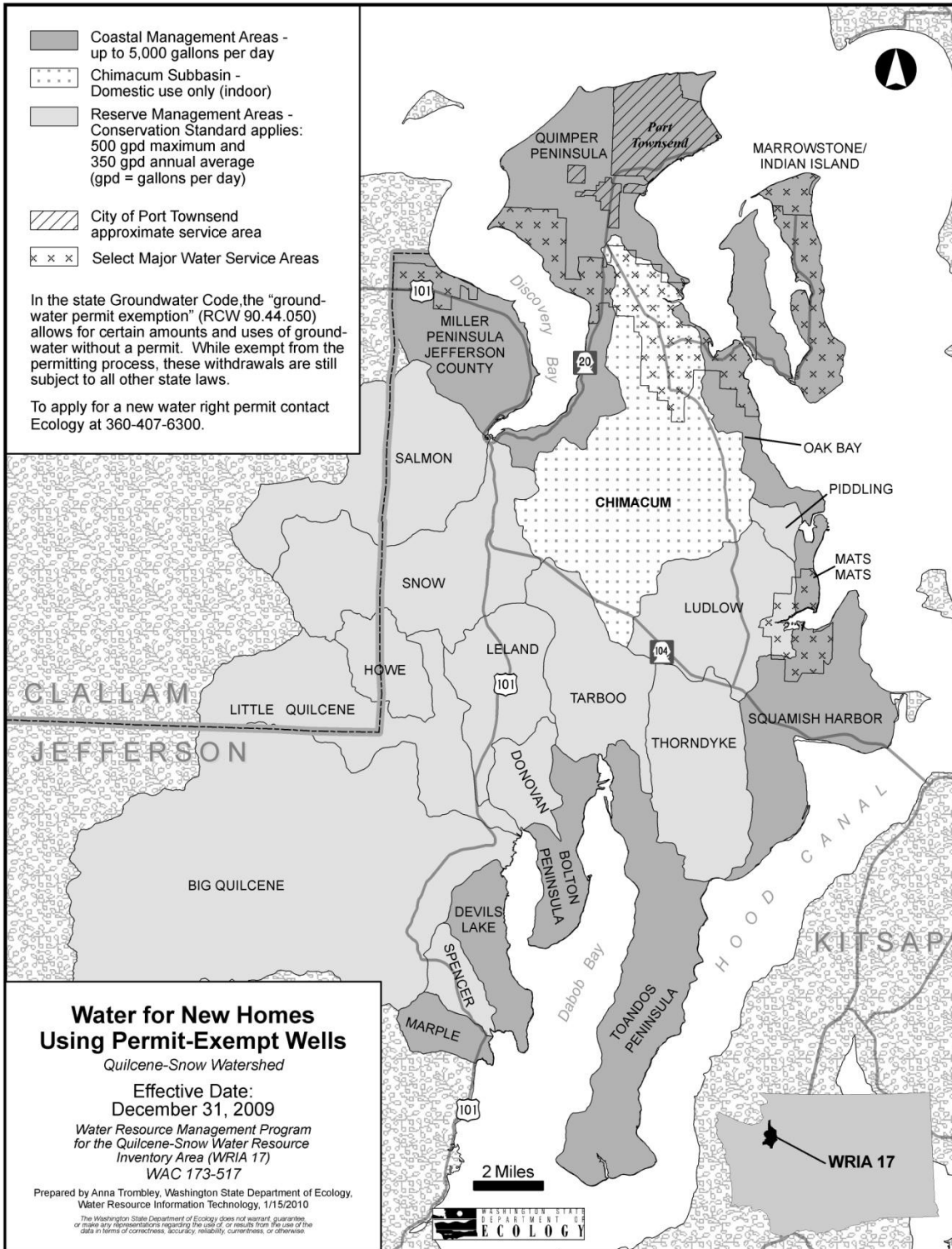
A: All new water uses throughout the watershed must be measured. You must install and maintain a water meter. The average cost is around \$250.00.

Information on meter specifications, where to get a meter and how meters will be read is available in a separate brochure ([Ecology publication #10-11-011](#)).

Q: Can I use rainwater for some of my water needs?

A: Yes. A new state policy allows for the use of rooftop rainwater, with certain conditions of use.

The rainwater must be collected from the roof of a building constructed for another primary purpose (such as a house or barn). If it is going to be used for potable water, you must also comply with health department requirements. Provided these conditions are met, you do not need a water right to use rainwater.



Use of permit-exempt wells by new home builders

