



YCWRS - Yakima County Water Resource System

FAQ - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Ordinance No. 13-2017

Revised: 3/14/18

Yakima County Public Services
128 N 2ND Street, 4th Floor, Yakima, WA 98901
Office (509) 574-2300 ~ Fax (509) 574-2301

1. What changed on January 1, 2018?

Starting on January 1, 2018 an applicant for a building permit or other development permit that requires potable water is required to provide evidence that their proposed use will be served by an **adequate water supply** when they submit their application to the county for approval.

2. What does “Adequate Water Supply” mean?

A supply of water that is adequate to serve a land use in terms of (a) water quality, water quantity, and (b) legal availability.

a. What evidence is required in terms of water quality and water quantity?

Water purveyor – An applicant who will obtain water from an approved water purveyor must submit a letter from the purveyor stating the purveyor's ability to provide potable water.

Well - An applicant who will obtain water from a permit exempt well must provide a notification/approval from the Yakima Health District that the water is potable, and that the volume of water is adequate to meet the intended use. (AWD – Adequate Water Determination)

b. What evidence is required in terms of the legal availability of water?

Water purveyor – An applicant who will obtain water from an approved water purveyor must submit a letter from the purveyor stating the purveyor's ability to provide potable water.

OR,

Well - An applicant who will obtain water from a permit exempt well must provide evidence in the form of:

1. A water right permit from the Department of Ecology, or
2. A letter from an approved water purveyor stating the ability to provide water, or
3. A YCWRS domestic well permit (Yakima County), or
4. Other adequate evidence of interest in a suitable water right held for mitigation purposes by an existing water bank, or
5. A Yakama Nation Water Code permit for properties located within the exterior boundaries of the Yakama Nation, or
6. Documentation that the well site is located outside of the Yakima River watershed.

3. What is a “Permit Exempt Well” OR “Exempt Well”?

Means a well (existing well, or proposed well) withdrawing water under the groundwater permit exemption contained in **RCW90.44.050**.

RCW 90.44.050 - Permit to withdraw.

After June 6, 1945, no withdrawal of public groundwaters of the state shall be begun, nor shall any well or other works for such withdrawal be constructed, unless an application to appropriate such waters has been made to the department and a permit has been granted by it as herein provided: EXCEPT, HOWEVER, That any withdrawal of public groundwaters for stock-watering purposes, or for the watering of a lawn or of a noncommercial garden not exceeding one-half acre in area, or for single or group domestic uses in an amount not exceeding five thousand gallons a day, or as provided in RCW 90.44.052, or for an industrial purpose in an amount not exceeding five thousand gallons a day, is and shall be exempt from the provisions of this section, but, to the extent that it is regularly used beneficially, shall be entitled to a right equal to that established by a

permit issued under the provisions of this chapter: PROVIDED, HOWEVER, That the department from time to time may require the person or agency making any such small withdrawal to furnish information as to the means for and the quantity of that withdrawal: PROVIDED, FURTHER, That at the option of the party making withdrawals of groundwaters of the state not exceeding five thousand gallons per day, applications under this section or declarations under RCW 90.44.090 may be filed and permits and certificates obtained in the same manner and under the same requirements as is in this chapter provided in the case of withdrawals in excess of five thousand gallons a day.

4. **What does an “approved water purveyor” mean?**

An approved water purveyor is an entity that owns a public water system approved by either:

Washington State Department of Health (WSDOH) – “Group A system” (a system that serves more than 15 water connections), OR

Yakima Health District (YHD) – “Group B system” (a system that serves from 3 to 15 connections).

Provide a letter from the owner (purveyor) of a Group A or Group B water system that was approved prior to January 1, 2018 that states the water system’s ability to provide water to an applicant’s project is sufficient evidence of an adequate water supply for an applicant’s project.

An applicant proposing to use a Group A or Group B water system approved after January 1, 2018 must go through an “Adequate Water Supply review and determination.”

5. **What is a “shared well”?**

A shared well is a term that describes a well that is used to serve up to two (2) water connections. A shared well requires approval from the YHD. (i.e.: Single family residence and an ADU (Accessory Dwelling Unit) on the same parcel; or a Single family residences on 2 separate parcels.)

Shared wells typically have a 100’ well control zone and require additional approval for structures that are, or proposed to be located within the 100’ control zone.

6. **What is a “water supply”?**

Surface water in the Yakima River Basin has been fully adjudicated and it is recognized that existing water rights exceed the amount of water available. It is also recognized that the withdrawal of water from a permit exempt well reduces the amount of water available in the Yakima River and that this reduction impairs senior water right holders from obtaining their full water allocation. This impairment of a more senior right is a violation of the state’s prior appropriation doctrine (“first in time, first in right”). The YCWRS water supply is a “mitigated water supply” that mitigates for this impairment by offsetting the reduction in surface water caused by each well with senior surface water rights owned by the YCWRS.

7. **What is the YCWRS?**

The Yakima County Water Resource System (YCWRS) is a county owned and operated water system that provides “mitigated” water supplies for the withdrawal of water from a groundwater permit exempt well. The YCWRS holds senior water rights and allows the use of such rights by the public when wells are constructed and metered according to YCWRS procedures.

Using an YCWRS permitted well is one way an applicant for a building permit or land use permit requiring potable water can obtain evidence of the legal availability of water. (see 2.b.3 above)

8. **How can I obtain an YCWRS domestic well permit?**

An YCWRS domestic well permit may be obtained when an applicant applies to the Yakima County Public Services Department for a building permit or land use permit that requires potable water.

There are several steps required to obtain an YCWRS well permit. Further instructions are noted on the last page as well as department staff can guide you through the process.

9. **How much does an YCWRS domestic well permit cost?**

The initial cost of an YCWRS domestic well permit is \$650.00 payable at the time of application. In addition, a new YCWRS customer is responsible for the cost to install a water meter on their well at an estimated cost of \$500.00 for the meter. (Labor is not included in this estimate).

10. **What are the ongoing costs for an YCWRS domestic well permit once I have obtained the permit and installed the meter?**

The annual cost for an YCWRS domestic well permit is the total of the ready to serve charge and the water consumption charge. The ready to serve charge is \$35.00 per quarter or \$140.00 per year. The water consumption charge is based on the amount of water used and is calculated based on meter readings using the fee schedule contained in the water system ordinance.

11. **Are there any exemptions to the requirement for submitting evidence of an adequate water supply?**

Yes. An application for a building permit to improve, repair, or replace a residential structure that was permitted prior to January 1, 2018 that is served by an existing permit exempt well is exempt from the requirement. In addition, applications for building permits for the buildings that do not require potable water such as a shed, barn, or garage are also exempt from the requirement.

12. **If I have an existing single family residence served by a permit exempt well do I have to stop using my water, or meter my water use?**

No. The new county ordinance only affects new development permitted after January 1, 2018 that is proposing to use a permit-exempt well as its potable water source.

13. **I applied for and received a building permit before January 1, 2018, but I haven't finished building the house. Do I have to meter my well?**

No, only new building permits issued after January 1, 2018 are subject to the new regulations.

14. **Can I expand a single family residence served by a permit exempt well?**

Yes. An application for a building permit to improve, construct an addition, repair, or replace a residential structure that was permitted prior to January 1, 2018 that is served by an existing permit exempt well is exempt from the requirement to provide evidence of an adequate water supply.

Note: Adding an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) would typically require a metered/well permit.

15. **Can I drill a new replacement well for my residence?**

Yes. If an existing well is decommissioned for quality or quantity purposes then a new permit-exempt well may be drilled without approval from Yakima County.

16. **Do I need to obtain evidence of the legal availability of water before I can drill my well?**

No. However, you will need evidence of the legal availability of water when you apply for a building permit. In addition, if you plan on applying for a YCWRS domestic well permit in the future, then you need to make sure that your well is deep enough to meet the YCWRS well depth requirements prior to drilling your well. The Yakima County Water Resources Division will determine the appropriate depth for new wells and existing wells.

17. **What happens if I drill a well (or have already drilled a well) but have not applied for a building permit to construct my residence?**

An applicant who submits a building permit or other development permit after January 1, 2018 that requires potable water is required to provide evidence that their proposed use will be served by an adequate water supply when they submit their application to the county for approval.

18. **Will I be able to water my lawn and / or have a garden and trees?**
If you do not have irrigation water available, or have not used your well for prior irrigation, then an YCWRS domestic well permit allows the legal use of your well for any purpose up to a maximum daily withdraw of 5,000 gallons per day.

19. **I have a shared well, but have only built on the one parcel. Do I need to mitigate for the second connection (or ADU - Accessory Dwelling Unit) when the new house is built?**
Yes, when you submit the building permit application for the new house (or an accessory dwelling unit), you will be required to provide evidence that the new home or ADU will be served by an adequate water supply. (The pre-existing house is exempt from the requirement.)

20. **I have an existing stock water well, is that going to be limited by the new regulations?**
No. Stock watering is primarily regulated by the State through the Department of Ecology, not the County. As long as you continue using the well for just stock watering, you do not need a permit from the county.

21. **I am planning on subdividing my property. How do the new requirements apply?**

- a. *The subdividing of land requires an applicant to provide evidence that the lots created by the subdivision will be served by an adequate water supply when they submit their application to the county for approval. The following procedures apply for applicants choosing to utilize an YCWRS domestic well or wells as evidence for an adequate water supply:*
Applications for a subdivision relying on a new shared well or New Group A or new Group B water system are required to install the well and connect each lot prior to the finalization of the plat. Each lot will be required to obtain a YCWRS domestic well permit and install a water meter on their property at the time they submit an application for a building permit for a building that requires potable water.
- b. *Application for a subdivision relying on individual wells to serve each lot are required to include a plat note on the final plat that commits future owners of the vacant lots to provide evidence of an adequate water supply prior to the issuance of building permits. Additionally, the applicant will also be required to sign and record a restrictive covenant that also commits future owners of the vacant lots to provide evidence of an adequate water supply prior to the issuance of building permits. Each lot will be required to obtain a YCWRS domestic well permit and install a water meter on their property at the time they submit an application for a building permit for a building that requires potable water.*



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WHERE DO I START?

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Several documents are required for the processing of your YCWRS well permit or proof of Adequate Water Supply, and Legal Availability of Water. There are several steps in the process and reviewed by various departments in order to obtain your permits.

WATER RIGHTS: You will need to determine your legal evidence of water rights by providing one of the following:

1. A water right permit from the Department of Ecology, or
2. A letter from an approved water purveyor stating the ability to provide water, or
3. A YCWRS domestic well permit (Yakima County), or
4. Other adequate evidence of interest in a suitable water right held for mitigation purposes by an existing water bank, or
5. A Yakama Nation Water Code permit for properties located within the exterior boundaries of the Yakama Nation, or
6. Documentation that the well site is located outside of the Yakima River watershed.

WATER AVAILABILITY

Throughout the process at each step, always maintain a current copy of the documents as they are updated.

Water availability application form will need to be reviewed by several departments signed and re-submitted.

Start at step 1 for a well that has not yet been constructed or Step 2 for an existing well.

Step 1: (New well not yet drilled) Complete the Water Availability form and submit to Yakima County Public Services to determine Property Eligibility for well depth/and or water bearing unit standard.

When depth is determined by Yakima County as indicated on the last page of the form (maintain a current copy after each step), see Step 2.

Step 2: Re-submit the Water Availability form with your Water Well Report to Yakima County following construction of the well to verify the well meets the Well Depth Standard. (Maintain a copy of the updated form) see Step 3.

Step 3: Yakima Health District will confirm water quality and water availability. The following documentation is required to apply:

Adequate Water Determination (AWD) and copies of your

Water Availability form and

Water Well Report <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/waterresources/map/WCLSWebMap/default.aspx>
OR a 4 hour draw down.

Water test for Bacteria (collected within 6 month) AND **Nitrate test** (collected within 12 months.)

For wells that have no power, you would need to hire a pump service to draw a sample for bacteria and nitrate test. If there is no well log, this would be the time to have the pumper also conduct a 4 hour draw down.

Retain copies of your documents for future permit applications and permits.

An YCWRS Domestic well permit can be applied for simultaneously with your Building permit.

An YCWRS well permit and associated Building permit would be issued simultaneously when all approvals are met.