



## STATE OF WASHINGTON

July 31, 2012

TO: Marty Brown, Director, Office of Financial Management  
Dan Mason, Budget and Fiscal Director, Office of the State Treasurer

FROM: Maia Bellon, Water Resources Program, Department of Ecology

SUBJECT: Updated Report on 500 Water Right Decisions in Fiscal Year 2012

In 2011, the Washington State Legislature passed the Operating Budget, 2ESHB 1087, with the following proviso:

*(b) \$500,000 of the general fund--state appropriation for fiscal year 2013 is provided solely for processing water right permit applications only if the department of ecology issues at least five hundred water right decisions in fiscal year 2012, and if the department of ecology does not issue at least five hundred water right decisions in fiscal year 2012 the amount provided in this subsection shall lapse and remain unexpended. The department of ecology shall submit a report to the office of financial management and the state treasurer by June 30, 2012, that documents whether five hundred water right decisions were issued in fiscal year 2012.*

During the 2012 Legislative Session, the following text was added to the budget proviso:

*For the purposes of this subsection, applications that are voluntarily withdrawn by an applicant do not count towards the five hundred water right decision requirement. For the purposes of water budget-neutral requests under chapter 173-539A WAC, multiple domestic connections authorized within a single water budget-neutral decision are considered one decision for the purposes of this subsection.*

As of June 30, 2012, Water Resources Program staff has made 689 water rights decisions based on the amended proviso language above.

The Water Resources Program also worked on 171 applications that were voluntarily withdrawn by the applicant, resulting in a total of 860 water right applications being taken out of the pending application line this fiscal year. During that same time period Ecology received 400 applications. However, consistent with the revisions to the budget proviso during the 2012 legislative session, the water right decision totals below do not include withdrawn applications, and count multiple domestic connections authorized within a single water budget-neutral decision under WAC 173-539A as one decision.

For ease of reference, and consistent with another 2011 Operating Budget provision, Ecology posts information to the department’s internet site that provides an [ongoing accounting of water right applications received and acted on](#). The following two tables from that accounting show our tracking of the number of applications received, and the number of water right decisions made during fiscal year 2012.

Water Right Applications Received				Water Right Decisions Made *			
Month Year	Change Applications	New Applications	Total	Month Year	Change Applications	New Applications	Total
July 2011	25	6	31	July 2011	21	61	82
August 2011	31	15	46	August 2011	42	84	126
September 2011	20	17	36	September 2011	16	22	38
October 2011	16	12	28	October 2011	28	21	49
November 2011	12	10	22	November 2011	24	16	39
December 2011	20	11	31	December 2011	18	18	36
January 2012	13	21	34	January 2012	34	75	111
February 2012	30	8	38	February 2012	22	22	44
March 2012	17	15	32	March 2012	17	22	39
April 2012	22	12	34	April 2012	21	9	30
May 2012	27	22	49	May 2012	44	23	67
June 2012	10	8	18	June 2012	9	18	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>689</b>

The 2011 Operating Budget proviso also directed Ecology to “review its water rights application review procedures to simplify the procedures, eliminate unnecessary steps, and decrease the time required to issue decisions.” In response to this legislative directive, Ecology utilized a process called “Lean.” The purpose of Lean is to systematically eliminate waste by eliminating activities that do not create value. The Lean process directly supported the Program’s success in surpassing the legislature’s 500 water right decision standard by helping us better understand the bottlenecks in processing water right applications. For more information on how Water Resources Program reforms are creating a streamlined water right decision process that is more efficient, takes less time and adds value for the applicant, please refer to our [Report to the Legislature: Water Resources Program Reforms and Efficiencies](#).

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Maia Bellon at (360) 407-6602.

- cc: Keith Phillips, Governor’s Executive Policy Office  
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