

## **Requiring Water Users that need Additional Ground Water above the Volumetric Cap in the Exemption to Obtain a Permit**

**The Proposal:** Require water users that need additional ground water above the volumetric cap for stock water purposes in the permit exemption to obtain a water right permit.

**Elements of the Proposal:** A water user that needs additional ground water above the volumetric cap established in the permit exemption for stock water purposes is required to obtain a permitted water right pursuant to the groundwater code.

**Why it is needed:** In order to protect groundwater in Washington, it is necessary to require that users of large amounts of water above the volumetric cap obtain a permit to use groundwater for stock water purposes.

Groundwater plays a critical role in Washington's economic and environmental future. It is the source of drinking water for more than 60 percent of Washington residents. Groundwater irrigates more than 385,000 acres in our state, supporting thousands of agricultural jobs and a large part of the state's economy. It is the primary source of water for hundreds of commercial and industrial needs that use more than 138 million gallons of water each day. It is also expected to provide the majority of drinking water for the millions of new residents predicted for Washington in the next several decades. Washington State's population is now more than 6.3 million, and is expected to be between 8 to 9 million by 2030. Groundwater is a finite resource and the best available science suggests at current population growth rates, the proliferation of permit exempt wells under current law is not sustainable.

Water users that need water for stock water purposes above the volumetric cap would be required to obtain a water right either by applying for a new water right or submitting a change application. It may make sense to establish a streamlined permitting process for users that need ground water for stock water purposes. Additionally, there may need to be some mechanism that allows water users who use ground water for stock water purposes to be able to grow into their water right.

**Related Elements:** The requirement that a water user obtain a permit to use ground water above the volumetric cap for stock water purposes within the permit exemption is considered in the context of establishing a volumetric cap for stock water purposes within the permit exemption. This proposal is also considered in the context of establishing staff and financial resources to assist new livestock operation in finding available water.