

June 8, 2020 • Information for staff and industry professionals

Environmental Health
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Guidance for Use of Existing Well for Irrigation

Code reference: Environmental Health Code, Chapter 3, Section 6.G

This guidance document clarifies our requirements to use existing wells as irrigation wells (a non-potable water source) during land use permitting. This includes but not limited to septic permits, well site applications, and other site development activities. This guidance doesn't apply to land division applications or replacement wells.

Existing wells proposed for irrigation must meet all the requirements including well construction standards, water quality and quantity standards. Any well approved as an irrigation well under this policy shall be maintained in good working order.

Hand dug wells

- Hand dug wells can't meet construction standards per section 6.G.
- You must decommission all hand dug wells not in use for domestic water supply (WAC 173-160).
- We require a decommissioning application and fee.
- We assess hand dug wells with a water right case-by-case.

Drilled wells

- Must meet current siting requirements and setbacks to any sources of contamination.
- Well casing must be a minimum of 6-inches above ground surface.
- Must Irrigate less than ½ acre and meet Ecology permit-exempt requirements, or have a valid water right.
- Applicant must submit a well site inspection application and fee.
- If the well meets the above criteria and needs no alterations requiring a State permit (i.e. raising well casing), it's exempt from requirements of an 18-foot surface seal.

Applicant must demonstrate the following

- Well must be functional with a permanent pump and power.
- 1-hour stabilized flow test which shows the well produces at least 5 gallons per minute.
- A satisfactory Bacteria test (collected within 1 year) and a satisfactory Nitrate test (collected within 3 years).
- Must follow "Attachment B" if the well is in a suspected saltwater intrusion area. (Irrigation wells aren't allowed in known areas of saltwater intrusion).

Requirements to keep irrigation wells in the public water service area

- Well must meet Hand Dug and Drilled Wells requirements referenced above.
- Water system documentation to allow applicant to maintain the well.
 - Letter from water company stating they are aware and acknowledge the well will remain on the parcel for irrigation.
 - Meet the water company's cross connection requirements.

Questions? Contact us at (253) 798-6470 or ehdrinkingwater@tpchd.org.