



Licensing

What you need to be aware of before you apply for a groundwater licence in the South West

Considerations for licensing	
Groundwater resources	
1	Recognise the level of uncertainty in aquifer knowledge in your area and approach your proposal appropriately. You may need to conduct additional investigations.
2	The taking of water from one aquifer may have consequences on other aquifers and the people who use them. Use of hydrogeological advice and the available models is recommended and important for making decisions about your proposal.
3	Variability within aquifers means that the impact of taking water from one part of an aquifer may not be the same as in another part of the same aquifer. The compounding effect of multiple abstractions on an aquifer will be considered in decisions regarding your proposal.
4	Water yields and water quality vary between and within aquifers. It is important to consider whether the likely yields and water quality of the proposed source are appropriate for use. Understanding the source of your water is critical and discussions with the department will aid in your business planning.
Climate	
5	Where the department determines that an application for a groundwater licence requires computer modelling to assess the impacts of a proposal the proponent will be asked to include predicted declines in rainfall in the modelling scenarios.
6	Drought contingency plans may be requested for large applications, (including from water service providers) where a variety of water sources are required to meet demand.
7	New proposals or reviews of existing licences should include options to improve water use efficiency to maximise economic outcomes with limited water. Inefficient use of water will not be supported.
Water quality	
8	Water application rates (kL/ha) may need to be limited in areas at risk of increasing salinity due to salt recycling.
9	A water balance for any irrigation proposal should be undertaken to help predict any chance of salt recycling as it may result in damage to soil quality and cause a reduction in crop yields.
10	Concentration of water abstraction near the coast may result in localised movement of the sea water interface inland. This issue particularly applies to assessment or review of large licences close to the coast.

Considerations for licensing

Acid sulphate soils

11	In areas of potential acid sulfate soils (PASS) it is essential to liaise with the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) regarding your licence proposal and its potential for exposure of PASS soils.
12	DEC manages acid sulfate soils (ASS) and where impacts are identified the site is classified as contaminated under the <i>Contaminated Sites Act 2003</i> . Contact the DEC if your proposal is within a contaminated sites area for more information.
13	Groundwater abstraction will be carefully assessed in areas of high risk of PASS and identified sites of ASS exposure. Monitoring may be required by licensees in these areas.
14	Dewatering for any period of time can cause exposure of PASS material. Any proposal requiring dewatering will need to investigate whether the area contains PASS materials and demonstrate how mobilisation of acid sulfate soils will be avoided or potential impacts mitigated.

Surface water interactions

15	The department will consider the Whicher surface water management plan in its assessment of groundwater licences that may impact on surface water systems
16	Where groundwater is not available due to the allocation limits being reached there may be surface water resources that can be accessed as an alternative.
17	An excavation dug as part of a dam construction is likely to intersect the water table. This will fill part of the dam and may require a groundwater licence.

Groundwater-dependent ecosystems

18	While the figures in the plan for groundwater-dependent ecosystems (GDEs) indicate the priority areas, there are many other groundwater-dependent ecosystems that have ecological values and these must be considered in relation to any licence proposal. Where the water table occurs within 10m of the surface it is likely that native vegetation relies on groundwater to some degree. In general, the shallower the water table, the greater the level of dependence.
19	Other impacts on potential GDEs will be considered such as the effects of pumping, rainfall reduction and drainage.
20	While one licence may not individually affect GDEs at a site, cumulative abstraction may lead to impacts and the use of the regional South West aquifer modelling system (SWAMS) model may be required to predict or account for these impacts.
21	Although there may be impacts associated with the connectivity between aquifers, abstraction from one aquifer may affect another with potential flow on effects to GDEs.
22	Recognise the location of potential GDEs in relation to any proposed abstraction points. These will be considered carefully as well as the position and depth of bores and the rate of abstraction required to minimise impact on environmental features.
23	A proposal that may impact on a GDE is likely to have monitoring conditions (or an operating strategy) associated with the licence that will include triggers and responses, as defined in the framework developed in Appendix C of the South West groundwater areas water management plan.

Considerations for licensing

Groundwater-dependent social and cultural values

24	Recognised social and cultural values that are dependent on groundwater and any associated impacts resulting from abstraction will be considered in assessment of licence proposals.
25	Native Title rights will be considered as part of the assessment of licence proposals.
26	Identification and assessment of impacts on Aboriginal Heritage sites is the responsibility of the proponent and the Department of Indigenous Affairs. Proponents must follow the appropriate processes under the <i>Aboriginal Heritage (WA) Act 1972</i> and the <i>Native Title (State Provisions) Act 1999</i> .

Water availability

27	Availability of water will be restricted by the allocation limits and policies set in this plan.
28	Availability of water is restricted by aquifer location and characteristics. It is important to understand the aquifer characteristics before submitting a licence proposal. The water may appear to be available for allocation; it may not be accessible from a specific property.
29	Where an applicant believes more water can be taken sustainably than the allocation limits allow, the applicant may choose to investigate the groundwater resource in order to prove that the additional water can be abstracted with no unacceptable impacts to existing users or environmental values.
30	Any planned investigations must be reviewed by the department before they commence and the results will be reviewed before the information will be considered in the assessment of the licence proposal. No licence will be issued unless the department is satisfied that the investigation work has scientifically proven that additional water can be sustainably taken for the duration of the proposed abstraction period.
31	Any unused water will be reviewed and opportunities for improved water efficiency considered when reviewing and/or renewing licenses.
32	Allocation of groundwater for drinking water and domestic purposes has a higher priority than for other consumptive purposes.
33	Where water is unavailable from the desired aquifer to meet future applications, licensing officers will identify other aquifers, surface water and trading as potential options for applicants to consider.
34	Water trading may commence as areas become fully allocated. Any water historically used and identified as available due to water use efficiency measures may be traded.
35	Under current legislation proponents who apply to take water over 100 000kL/a are required to submit a public notice regarding their proposal for trading applications or requests for water greater than 100 000 kL/a. The department may request further information from an applicant to address community concerns regarding a proposal.
36	A change in, or development of a new water use activity, must consider the relevant departmental and other government agency legislation and policies. The department will not issue licences for activities that are not in line with existing government legislation and policies.
37	Water access and use must be consistent with all of the relevant policies and plans for your area. Using these other plans together with early contact with departmental licensing officers may ensure a timely assessment of a licence application or trade.