Foster Creek Watershed, WRIA 50

This focus sheet provides information on the availability of water for new uses in the Foster Creek Watershed. This information provides a starting point for potential water users in determining the best strategies for securing water for a future project or proposal in this area.

Many areas of central Washington are arid, receiving less than 20 inches of rain annually. Most of this precipitation arrives during the winter months when overall water demands are the lowest. During the summer, snow pack is gone, there is little rain, and naturally low stream flows are dependent on groundwater inflow. This means that groundwater and surface water are least available when water demands are the highest.

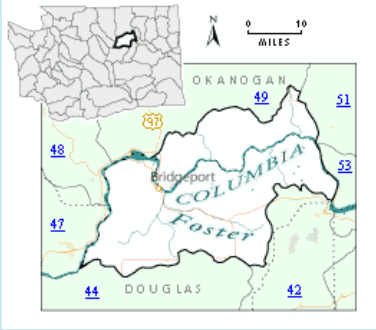
Much of the water in the Foster Creek Watershed has already been spoken for. Increased demands from population growth, declining groundwater levels, and impacts from climate change are adding to the challenge of finding new water supplies in Water Resource Inventory Area 50, especially during the summer months.

Factors affecting water availability

In 2004, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation filed notice with the Department of Ecology that the United States intends to make examinations and surveys for the utilization of the unappropriated waters of the Columbia River and its tributaries above Priest Rapids Dam, pursuant to Section 90.40.030 of the Revised Code of Washington. The withdrawal of these waters from future appropriations is currently in effect until December 23, 2014.

Ecology cannot process any applications filed after December 28, 2004 for new rights to surface water or connected groundwater unless the applicant obtains a release from the Bureau of Reclamation or until the withdrawal has expired.

Applications for surface water withdrawals from the mainstem Columbia River are subject to the Instream Resource Protection Program for the Columbia River, as are any proposed groundwater withdrawals determined to have a significant and direct impact on the Columbia River. (For more information, see http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=173-563.)



Definitions

Instream flows are flow levels adopted into rule that create a water right for the stream to protect fish, wildlife, stockwatering, recreational uses, and other instream uses and values.

Subbasins are smaller drainage basins that together make up a WRIA. Subbasins are generally named for the principle creek or other surface water that runoff flows to.

A **Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA)** is one of 62 areas in Washington State designated by the Legislature and typically containing one or more river basins.

The Moses Coulee\Foster Creek Watershed Planning Unit, led by local government and landowners, worked cooperatively with stakeholders as well as state and federal agencies to develop a watershed plan for WRIAs 44 and 50. It contains local solutions to protect senior water rights, maintain ecosystems, and meet water resource management objectives. The planning group also completed a detailed implementation plan in 2005 and is considering instream flow recommendations. For more information, see www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/wrias/Planning/44-50.html.

Water Supply that is Currently Available for Appropriation

Surface water and groundwater availability is currently very limited throughout the basin, especially in light of the Bureau of Reclamation's withdrawal.

Information on water availability and water storage options is available in the Moses Coulee and Foster Creek Watershed Plan.

The Office of Columbia River (OCR) is aggressively pursuing water supply development opportunities throughout the Columbia Basin, including the Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Release Project, which could benefit the watershed. You may find further information on these efforts on the OCR Web Page at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cwp/crwmp.html .

The groundwater permit exemption allows certain users of small quantities of ground water (most commonly, single residential well owners) to construct wells and develop their water supplies without obtaining a water right permit from Ecology. For more information about the groundwater permit exemption, refer to www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/fwr92104.pdf.

Additional options for finding a water supply, including more expedited processing of new or change applications include:

- Connecting to an established water supplier. This is the fastest and simplest option.
- Processing a change application through the Douglas County or Okanogan County water conservancy board.
- Processing your application through the Cost Reimbursement Program. Mitigation to offset the impacts to surface water will likely be required. Refer to www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0511016.pdf.

For more information on these and other options, refer to "Alternatives for Water Right Application Processing."

Pending water right applications in this watershed

Washington water law is based on the "prior appropriation" system, often called "first in time, first in right." Applications for water from the same source must be processed in the order they are received.

Ecology asks anyone who needs a water right (new, change, or transfer) to submit the pre-application consultation form and meet with us to review your water supply needs and project proposal.

- Apply for a New Water Right
  http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/newrights.html
- Apply to Change or Transfer a Water Right or Claim
  http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/change_transfer_use.html

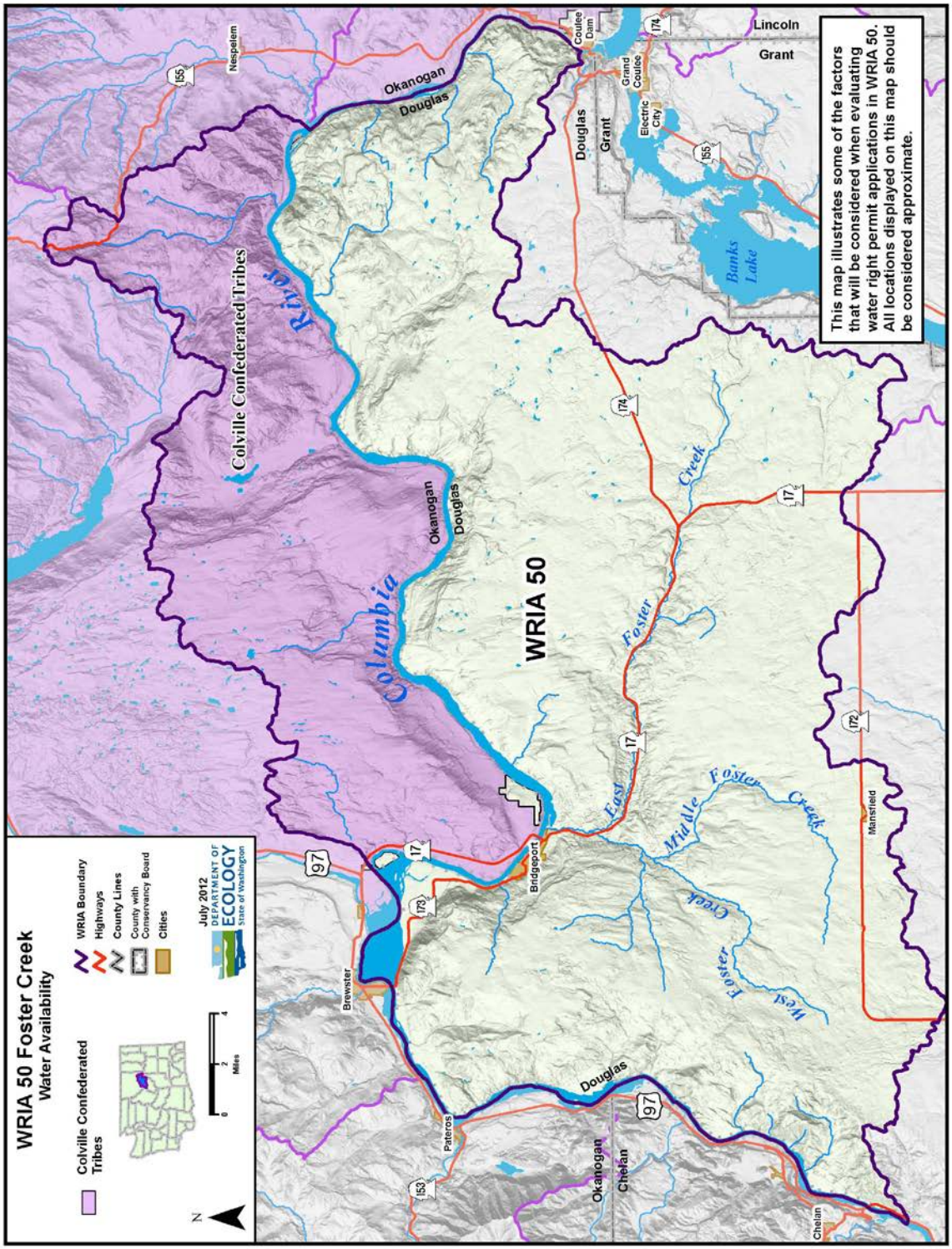
The map in this document shows some of the factors that will be considered when evaluating water right permit applications. Here are some information sources to assist you with your research:

- Locate and research water rights on land parcels anywhere in the state (Water Resource Explorer)
  http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/info/webmap.html
- Pending Water Right Applications by County
  http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/tracking-apps.html
- Subscribe to a water right application RSS feed for a county or WRIA
  http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/wr_app_rss.html
- WRIA map showing the total number of water right claims, certificates, permits and applications
  http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/Images/pdf/waterright-wria-maps.pdf
- Search and view well reports using a variety of search tools
  https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/waterresources/map/WCLSWebMap/default.aspx

For more information

Ecology Central Regional Office
15 West Yakima Ave -- Suite 200
Yakima, WA 98902-3452
509-575-2490

If you need this document in a version for the visually impaired, call the Water Resources Program at 360-407-6872.
Persons with hearing loss can call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability can call 877-833-6341.


WRIA 50 Foster Creek
Water Availability
Colville Confederated Tribes
WRIA Boundary
Highways
County Lines
County with Conservancy Board
Cities
July 2012
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY
State of Washington
Miles
N
Colville Confederated Tribes
Columbia River
Okanogan
Douglas
Nespelem
WRIA 50
Brewster
Bridgeport
Pateros
Mansfield
Chelan
Grant
Lincoln
Coulee Dam
Grand Coulee
Electric City
Banks Lake
Foster Creek
East Foster Creek
Middle Foster Creek
West Foster Creek
This map illustrates some of the factors that will be considered when evaluating water right permit applications in WRIA 50. All locations displayed on this map should be considered approximate.