

## Upper Lake Roosevelt Watershed, WRIA 61

This focus sheet provides information on the availability of water for new uses in the Upper Lake Roosevelt 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.

The Upper Lake Roosevelt Watershed located in northeastern Washington includes a portion of the Pend Oreille River and its numerous tributary creeks and streams, lying between the mouth of the Colville River to the Canadian Border. Lake Roosevelt is a reservoir on the Columbia River created by Grand Coulee Dam. The Columbia River originates in the mountains of Canada with many large tributaries from Idaho and Montana.

The annual precipitation in the Upper Lake Roosevelt Watershed ranges from 21 inches per year near the Town of Kettle Falls to 55 plus inches in the higher elevation mountainous area. Only a fraction of this precipitation becomes groundwater available for human and economic uses. Most of the precipitation arrives during the winter months, when water demands are the lowest. During the summer, the snowpack 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.

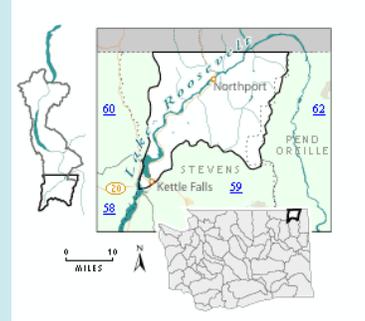
Much of the water in the Upper Lake Roosevelt Watershed has already been spoken for. Increased demands from population growth, declining groundwater levels, and impacts from climate change are adding to the challenge of finding new water supplies in WRIA 61, especially during the summer months.

### Factors affecting water availability

#### Adjudications

Pingston Creek is the only adjudication that has been completed within WRIA 61. As a result of the adjudication, specific requirements apply in this basin. In general, most of the water in this adjudicated basin has been appropriated and new appropriations are not available.

### MORE INFORMATION



#### Definitions

**Adjudication:** A legal process conducted through a superior court to determine the extent and validity of existing water rights.

**Consumptive use:** A use of water that diminishes the amount of water in the water source.

**Mitigation:** A scientifically-sound plan to offset the impacts of a proposed water use.

#### Surface water source limitation:

A recommendation from the Department of Fish and Wildlife that flows be protected to maintain fish populations. See [RCW 77.57.020](#)

**WRIA:** Water Resources Inventory Area; also known as a watershed or river basin. For environmental administration and planning purposes, Washington is divided up into 62 major watersheds, or WRIs. WRIA's were defined by [Chapter 173-500 WAC](#) in 1976.

**Groundwater**

In general, availability and yield of groundwater from bedrock in this WRIA is very limited by climate and geology.

**Surface Water**

The Roosevelt watershed has administrative restrictions known as Surface Water Source Limitations (SWSLs), which limit most water sources in the watershed. Groundwater connected to the surface sources are also subject to SWSL restrictions. Often these restrictions will require that new water uses stop during low flow periods. These restrictions indicate that most water has been appropriated within tributaries to the mainstem of the Columbia River. In addition, Deep Creek, Onion Creek, and Williams Lake are “closed” by SWSL, meaning the water body is closed to new uses.

**Water supply available for further appropriation**

The Upper Lake Roosevelt watershed is not closed to new water uses (appropriations). However, the majority of water has been appropriated and new uses are subject to restrictions.

In some situations, surface water applications for single in-house domestic use or stockwatering may be approved if no alternate source of water supply is available and the proposed use will not impair existing water rights.

The Office of Columbia River (OCR) is aggressively pursuing water supply development opportunities throughout the Columbia Basin. Sullivan Lake Water Supply Project is an impoundment / reservoir of the Pend Oreille watershed, while Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Release is an impoundment / reservoir of the Columbia River. OCR is currently pursuing development of water supplies on each of these reservoirs to benefit instream and out of stream uses through storage, conservation, and regional water management agreements. Water for new appropriations under the Lake Roosevelt project is limited to municipal and industrial supply from the Columbia River main stream. You can find additional information at the OCR Web site at: [www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cwp/crwmp.html](http://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](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/fwr92104.pdf).

The permit exemption may not be available to prospective water users in certain areas that have been closed to further appropriation because there is limited or no water available. Check with Ecology staff at the regional office for more information.

Additional options for more expedited processing of new or change applications include:

- Connecting to an established water supplier. This is the fastest and simplest option.
- Processing your change application with Stevens County Water Conservancy Board.
- Proposing mitigation to offset the impacts to surface water and groundwater.

- Processing your application through the Cost Reimbursement Program. Refer to [www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0511016.pdf](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0511016.pdf).

For more information on these and other options, refer to “Alternatives for Water Right Application Processing” [www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/1111067.pdf](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/1111067.pdf).

## 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](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](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\\_opt.pdf](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/Images/pdf/waterright_wria_opt.pdf)
- Search and view well reports using a variety of search tools  
<http://apps.ecy.wa.gov/welllog/>

## For more information

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Water Resources Program  
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Spokane, WA 99205-1295  
509-329-3400

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