

PRIORITY PROCESSING OF HEAT PUMP APPLICATIONS

- Contact: Policy and Planning Section Effective Date: May 14, 2007
- References: Chapters 90.03 and 90.44 RCW and Chapters 173-152, 173-200, and 173-218 WAC.
- Purpose: To guide program staff on the priority processing of applications for heat pump use under Chapter 173-152 WAC, and managing water use associated with heat pump systems.
- Application: This policy applies to all water right applications and applications for water right change or transfer related to heat pump use.

Heat Pump Water Use Is a Beneficial Use:

Using water to dissipate heat or as a source of heat is a beneficial use of water.

Water Rights for Heat Pumps:

A water right permit is required for heat pumps that use:

- Surface water.
- Groundwater in conjunction with single domestic, group domestic, or industrial uses of more than 5,000 gallons per day.

The 5,000-gallon per day threshold is not an average value. If groundwater use exceeds 5,000 gallons on any one day, a water right permit is required.

Applications for heat pump water use are assessed in the same manner as other water right requests. However, Ecology gives priority processing to applications that qualify under WAC 173-152-050(2) (b).

Classification of Water Use:**A. Single domestic, group domestic, or industrial**

The use of water in a heat pump is “*single domestic*” if associated with a single residence.

The use of water in a heat pump is “*group domestic*” if associated with either a group of residences or as part of a group domestic use.

The use of water in a heat pump is “*industrial*” if associated with an industrial or commercial interest.

B. Consumptive and Nonconsumptive

Classification of water use in a heat pump shall be in agreement with “*POL-1020, Consumptive and Nonconsumptive Water Use.*”

Permits may require system configurations that ensure nonconsumptive water use in water-short regions or where a consumptive water right might impair existing water rights.

Priority Processing of Applications for New Water Rights

If the proposed water use is nonconsumptive and if approved would substantially enhance or protect the quality of the natural environment, the application will be eligible for priority processing under Chapter 173-152-050(2)(b).

Priority Processing of Applications for a Water Right Change or Transfer

If the change or transfer, if approved, would substantially enhance the quality of the natural environment, the application will be eligible for priority processing under Chapter 173-152-050(3)(a).

Special Considerations for Groundwater ReInjection

Discharge to an aquifer other than the source aquifer is a consumptive use.

Ecology shall make any judgment as to the ability of the source aquifer to accept discharge water and not create wet areas through groundwater mounding.

An injection well shall be designed to accept discharge water in an efficient manner at the same rate of flow as produced by the source. The design will also consider the decreasing efficiency of the injection well over time.

Coordination with the Water Quality Program

When Ecology or an applicant proposes injection or infiltration of groundwater used in a heat pump, the permit writer shall contact the Water Quality Program and ensure that the owner/operator has registered the proposed injection well (see Chapter 173-218 WAC).

Ecology's Underground Injection Control Program allows re-infiltration of return flows from heat pumps or air conditioners through registered injection wells to the source aquifer. The water may contain no new chemical or product, and must not impair beneficial uses of groundwater or surface water.



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Special Note: *These policies and procedures ensure consistency by guiding Water Resources Program staff in the administration of laws and regulations. These policies and procedures are not formal regulations adopted through a rule-making process. In some cases, the policies may not reflect later changes in statutory law or judicial findings. Still, they reflect Ecology's practices and interpretations of laws and regulations at the time adopted. If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact Ecology's Water Resources Program.*