

If you use water from a well, stream, or lake, adjudication affects you



Adjudication is a legal process in Whatcom County Superior Court between the Washington Department of Ecology and all local water users. This process requires water users to self-report their water use in a form online or on paper. The court will make a decision that lists water uses in priority (old to new), including where and how much water is legal on each parcel of land. It does not involve criminal proceedings or penalties. It does not change the current law on water use.

Certified mail is coming your way

Ecology is sending a large 9"x12" envelope by certified mail via the U.S. Postal Service to all land owners in Water Resources Inventory Area 1 who are within the area of a recorded water right or outside a public water system service area. If you receive this mailing, our records show you may be a water right holder or claimant.

Here are things to know:

- Certified mail can't be left in a mailbox or on a doorstep; an adult must sign for it upon delivery.
- You and your neighbors may receive the mailing at different times, typically within one to five days.
- Ecology will publish a list of people who didn't sign for their certified mail in a local newspaper.

Ecology will have extra claim forms and instructions available.

Assistance available

Leave a message at (360) 255-4406 and we'll call you back.

Email us at WRadjudications@ecy.wa.gov

March 2025 Publication Number 25-11-003

Tell us about your water use

Get ready to receive over 30 pages of essential documents. Inside the envelope, you'll find a summons, court claim form, and detailed instructions. The summons officially notifies you that a legal process is underway.

Fill out the claim form describing your past and current water use. The instructions will guide you through the claim form explaining the required information and how to provide it.

File your completed form online or hand-deliver or mail it to the Whatcom County Superior Court.

Not filing can result in losing your right to legally use water in the future.

Resources

Ecology's website:

ecology.wa.gov/nooksack-adjudication

Ecology's monthly e-newsletter:

ecology.wa.gov/nooksack-adjudication-list

Whatcom County's informational

sessions and water use calculators:

whatcomcounty.us/adjudication

Public meetings for homes with wells

(late Spring 2025), in-person clinics, and instructional videos.