

So, You Want to Drill a Water Well...

The process of drilling a well can be an extremely complicated and frustrating endeavor. Between water law, land use regulations, and Mother Nature herself there are many things that can result in delay or even failure of the project. The check-list below is intended to forewarn the novice groundwater user of the various requirements and pitfalls involved in getting from "I think I'll drill me a well!" to "Wow, this water is good!"

- Define your actual production requirements. You need to define your instantaneous production rate (gallons per minute) and estimate how much water you will use per day
- Research the land use restrictions and the setback requirements of the local land use authority pertinent to the property on which you intend to drill
- Determine the best place to drill based on your intended use of the property, the regulatory requirements, and the "lay of the land" (topography & geology).
- If you require more than 5,000 gallons per day, you will need a water right to use the water. You must have at least an application and a preliminary permit to drill and test before you can legally move a drilling rig onto the site. The driller will need to have the water right number before legally drilling a well intended to use more than 5,000 gpd.
- Water right notwithstanding, you will need to get the county health department to inspect and approve the intended drilling site
- Establish the contract requirements for the drilling contractor (for major production wells a formal set of specifications is advised). If drilling under the authorization of a water right permit or a preliminary permit, make sure the conditions of those permits will be met by the selected site, as well as the drilling and testing of the well. Further, Ecology has established standards for well drilling that must be met (18.104 RCW and WAC 173-160)
- Either the driller or you must file a "Start Card" with Ecology and pay the appropriate fee prior to initiating the drilling
- Commence drilling the well
- Perform the required testing of the production capacity and water quality to satisfy your needs and to meet the regulatory requirements of your intended use. If the well will serve two or more homes, it is usually considered a public water system and as such will need to meet state and local health department regulations.
- Upon completion of the drilling and testing, the drilling contractor is obliged to submit a Water Well Report form (also known as a "well log." You should receive a copy from the contractor. Keep this handy as it is what many agencies use to show proof of regulatory compliance.

