

Frequently Asked Questions about Water Rental Statements 2009

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1) What is this Water Management Account Statement for?

British Columbia's [Water Act](#) assigns ownership of surface and ground water to the Crown, on behalf of the residents of the province. Authority to divert and/or use surface water (the granting of water rights) is obtained by licence or by an approval under the *Water Act*.

With a few exceptions, a water licence or an approval must be granted in order to authorize the diversion and use of surface water in British Columbia. When a water licence is issued, annual water rentals are assessed.

One of the responsibilities of a water licence holder is to pay annual rents. Your statement reflects your annual rental charge for the right under your licence to use the surface water allocated to your licence.

Depending on the amount of annual rental payable, clients are billed in the following manner:

- twice a year if the annual rental is over \$ 100,000;
- once a year if the annual rental is over \$ 60, but less than \$ 100,000; and
- once every three years if the annual rental is \$ 60 or less.

2) I sold that property. Why am I receiving a bill?

We are not automatically notified by the Land Titles Office of the sale of a property or when a Crown land tenure expires or is transferred. Our statements are sent to the client(s) we currently have registered on record as the water licence holder.

If you no longer own the property appurtenant to the licence for which you have been billed, complete the Sale of Property form on the back of your statement and forward it to the appropriate [FrontCounter BC](#) office.

3) I don't use that water. Why are you sending me a bill?

We need to be notified that you are no longer using your water rights. To do this complete the Licence Abandonment form on the back of your statement and forward it to the appropriate [regional Water Stewardship](#) office (under Contact the Water Stewardship Office for your area).

Your account will be adjusted to the date your **signed** abandonment form is received by Water Stewardship. You will continue to be sent a bill for as long as there is a balance owing on your account. (This also applies to licences that have expired or have been cancelled.) If an overdue account is not be settled within a reasonable amount of time, it runs the risk of being forwarded to a collection agency.

4) I use well water. Why should I have a water licence?

Water drawn from a drilled well below the surface of the ground may not require a water licence. If this is your situation complete the Licence Abandonment form on the back of your statement and forward it to the appropriate [regional Water Stewardship](#) office (under Contact the Water Stewardship Office for your area).

5) The water is on my neighbour's property. Why should I pay this bill?

The “point of diversion” for the water you use may originate on your neighbour's property. You are required, nevertheless, to hold a licence that reflects your right to that water source. If you feel there is an error in your licence please refer this matter to the appropriate [FrontCounter BC](#) office.

6) The debt belongs to the previous land owner. Why am I receiving this bill?

Under the *Water Act*, debt associated with a water licence is the responsibility of the current landowner. This is because the licensed rights and obligations (including payment of rentals) pass with conveyance of the appurtenant land as described in the Land Title.

A vendor is responsible for disclosing everything about the land they are selling. A purchaser is responsible for finding out everything about their intended purchase. Settlement of debt from a previous owner is strictly between the purchaser and vendor – Water Stewardship plays **no** role in this matter.

You need to ascertain whether you require your licence i.e. “where does the water come from and what do you use it for?” If you decide to keep the licence you must pay the outstanding balance owing on the licence in full or it runs the risk of being cancelled for non-payment.

Should you decide not to keep the licence you may choose to abandon it however you will remain responsible for the debt calculated up to the date your abandonment request is received by Water Stewardship.

7) The water is not usable. Why are you billing me?

The Regulation under the *Water Act* specifies that rentals are charged for the right to use the water, not the actual use. Water Stewardship does not guarantee that water will always be available; nor does it guarantee the quality of the water. You may want to consider abandoning your licence if the water rights for which it is licensed are not being used.

8) I pay my bills. Why is there an overdue amount?

An overdue amount will appear on your statement if a payment you made has not been recorded; if you did not make a full payment in the past, or if there have been additional charges added to your account. In the case of your payment for previous year(s) rentals being received in the current calendar year, your statement will show a "Balance" forward on the statement while the payment information (receipt#, date, etc) will show in the body of the statement; the "Total Due/Credit" amount will reflect the net of all charges, payments and adjustments on your account.

Your account will reflect any charges since your last payment; for example, charges incurred through an amendment to your licence. Should your payment be missing, photocopy your GA/bank receipt or both the back and front of your cancelled cheque and forward it to the Water Revenue Unit, noting your client number and advising that the payment is not showing on your account.

9) What is a three-year billing cycle?

Licence holders whose annual rentals are \$60 or less, are billed once every three years.

The benefits from three-year billing are:

- Reduced costs related to billing clients and processing payments; and
- A rental rate that is frozen for the duration of a billing cycle if there is an increase part way through the cycle (as long as the client remains within the same billing group).

Billing cycles are based on province-wide regional groups.

10) I don't want to pay my billing for three-years upfront. Can I change my billing to yearly?

If for financial reasons, you are not able to pay the three-years rentals at once, you may send us a letter stating so. Your letter will be placed on file. You will continue to be billed every three years; however, you may pay one year rentals at a time. Late payment penalties will continue to be assessed as per the rules in place at the time (currently, nothing less than \$5.00 will be assessed) but will be adjusted to zero if you request reversal of the penalties.

Penalties will not be reversed if you do not have a "dire straits" letter on file.

11) I can't understand the statement. What are all the charges for?

The most common account adjustments are done for the following reasons:

- a) A new licence has been issued from an application:
 - Additional application fees may be required e.g. Permit Over Crown Land; and
 - Pro-rated first year rentals plus additional rentals may be charged to bring your account in line with your billing group.
- b) A licence has issued as a result of an amendment:
 - An amendment fee may be required;
 - Rentals may be adjusted for the period the licence was under review; and
 - Rentals may be adjusted for a change of purpose or the quantity of water authorized
- c) A licence has been abandoned/cancelled/expired:
 - An adjustment may be required to show what is actually owed up to the point the licence ceased to exist;
- d) A client's billing group has changed

12) I paid an application fee when I applied for my licence. Why are you still charging me for it?

There are numerous situations in which a licence issued is different from what the client originally applied for. Every individual purpose and Crown land use (PCL) has a required application fee. The most common application fee not paid at the time of application is for a Permit to Occupy Crown Land. This required application fee is often assessed to the account after the licence has been issued.

13) I recently paid my statement. Why are you sending me another statement?

Your payment and your current statement may have crossed in the mail; or you may have paid the balance on a previous statement that did not include the current charges.

14) Why does my 2009 statement show Imperial units instead of metric?

Water Stewardship has undertaken a major computer development initiative under the AquaTeris (EarthWon) project. The water rental component of the project has **not** yet been completed. The current computer system which records water licence information and generates water rental billing statements is old, limited in its reporting capability, and it is increasingly difficult to find support for the system – e.g. in the case of a system crash.

Your water rental has been determined by:

- Taking the Imperial measure of your water licence (and Crown land permit), which is contained in our data base;
- Providing the metric conversion of this amount to cubic metres (or hectares if PCL); and
- Applying the new metric-based water (or PCL) rental rate which is shown on your statement.

15) Why does the water licence volume shown on my statement not match my licence?

The metric-based water rents are calculated by converting the Imperial volume or area measure, recorded in our data base, to cubic metres which is rounded to four significant figures. There may be a discrepancy between the volume or area measure shown on the water billing statement and the water licence or PCL.

There could be two reasons for this:

- There may be a data entry error in computer system (WLIS); or
- There may also be a difference in the degree of rounding between a water licence which uses a metric measure and the metric conversion which was used to produce the rental.

Although there may be a difference between the two amounts, there should be no difference in rentals if still within the minimum rent; or a relatively small difference for a licence with a larger volume

For example:

A water licence may be issued for 2,200 litres a day (which is also 2.2 cubic metres a day) for domestic use. WLIS may have recorded the volume to be 500 gallons a day. The metric conversion used to calculate the water rent will round 500 gallons a day more precisely – that is, to 2.273 cubic metres.

However, the water rental will be the same – that is, default to the minimum of \$25.00.

16) How are water rental charges calculated?

Annual, sector-based, rents for water licences are now based on an Annual Volume (expressed in cubic metres per year), which is the total amount of water authorized to be used for a year. Rental rates for Permits over Crown land, which authorize dam sites, works and flooding, are based on hectares.

The rental calculation on your water billing statement can be checked against Water Stewardship's Web-based [Rent Estimator](#).

This Rent Estimator will only provide an estimate of annual water licence rents. The actual rent which will apply may vary. This program will not provide estimates of additional charges which may apply, such as late payment charges or application fees.

17) Why did the water rates increase?

The last change in rental rates for water licences occurred in 1994. British Columbia's water rental rates required a major overhaul to bring into balance water conservation, equitable pricing and cost recovery for water management services.

The new rent structure simplifies billing by reducing the number of water-use categories from 90 to nine, shifts measurement from imperial to metric, and replaces several flat-fee rentals with volume-based fees. The consolidation of various water use purpose rents will mean that there will be some rent increases as well as decreases.

18) Contact Information

FrontCounterBC Regional Offices, call toll-free: 1-877-855-3222 or specific numbers:

<p>Cranbrook</p> <p>FrontCounter BC 1902 Theatre Road Cranbrook, BC V1C 7G1 Phone: (250) 426-1766 Fax: (250) 426-1767</p>	<p>Nanaimo</p> <p>FrontCounter BC 2080 Labieux Road Nanaimo, BC V9T 6J9 Phone: (250) 751-7220 Fax: (250) 751-7224</p>	<p>Surrey</p> <p>FrontCounter BC Suite 200, 10428 153rd St. Surrey, BC V3R 1E1 Phone: (604) 586-4400 Fax: (604) 586-4434</p>
<p>Fort St John</p> <p>FrontCounter BC Suite 100-10003 110th Ave Fort St John BC V1J 6M7 Phone: (250) 787-3415 Fax: (250) 787-3219</p>	<p>Prince George</p> <p>FrontCounter BC 200-1488 4th Avenue Prince George, BC V2L 4Y2 Phone: (250) 565-6779 Fax: (250) 565-6941</p>	<p>Victoria</p> <p>FrontCounter BC 710 Redbrick Road Victoria, BC V8T 5J3 Phone: (250) 952-4386 Fax: (250) 952-4663</p>
<p>Kamloops</p> <p>FrontCounter BC #210 - 301 Victoria St. Kamloops, BC V2C 2A3 Phone: (250) 372-2127 Fax: (250) 377-2150</p>	<p>Smithers</p> <p>FrontCounter BC 3rd Floor 3726 Alfred Avenue Smithers, BC V0J 2N0 Phone: (250) 847-7356 Fax: (250) 847-7556</p>	<p>Williams Lake</p> <p>FrontCounter BC #201 - 172 North 2nd Ave Williams Lake, BC V2G 1Z6 Phone: (250) 398-4574 Fax: (250) 398-4836</p>