

Drinking Water Jurisdiction and Governance in BC

In British Columbia, the governance of groundwater and surface water involves multiple ministries, each playing a critical role in managing, protecting, and regulating water resources. Here's how the responsibilities are divided and how you can contact each ministry:

1. Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

- **Responsibilities:**
 - **Environmental Protection:** This Ministry is responsible for protecting water quality in both surface and groundwater. It regulates pollution and enforces environmental standards under the Environmental Management Act.
 - **Water Quality Monitoring:** Oversees water quality monitoring programs to track the health of water bodies and aquifers.
 - **Environmental Assessments:** Conducts assessments for projects that could impact water resources to ensure compliance with environmental regulations.
- **Contact:**
 - **Environmental Emergencies and Complaints:**
 - Phone: 1-877-952-7277 (1-877-952-RAPP)
 - Email: env.minister@gov.bc.ca (for general inquiries)
 - **Regional Offices:** Contact the regional office closest to your location for specific water quality concerns.
 - **Website:** BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

2. Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- **Responsibilities:**
 - **Water Allocation and Licensing:** This Ministry administers the Water Sustainability Act, managing water rights, licenses, and ensuring sustainable water use.
 - **Watershed Management:** Focuses on the stewardship of watersheds to maintain the health and sustainability of water resources.
 - **Groundwater Management:** Implements and enforces regulations related to groundwater use, including licensing and monitoring.
 - **Water Sustainability Plans:** Develops collaborative strategies to manage water resources within specific regions or watersheds.
- **Contact:**
 - **Water Sustainability Branch:**
 - Phone: 250-387-5305
 - Email: WSD.Minister@gov.bc.ca (for ministerial inquiries)
 - **Regional Water Management Offices:** For specific concerns about water allocation or groundwater impacts, contact your local water management office.
 - **Website:** BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

3. Ministry of Forests

- **Responsibilities:**
 - **Watershed Health:** Manages the impact of forestry activities on watersheds, ensuring forestry practices do not negatively impact water quality or availability.
 - **Riparian Protection:** Enforces regulations that protect riparian zones (areas adjacent to water bodies) to maintain healthy ecosystems and water quality.
 - **Water Resources Inventory:** Maintains an inventory of water resources, including streamflows and groundwater levels.
- **Contact:**
 - **Forest Stewardship and Protection:**
 - Phone: 1-800-663-7867 (Service BC)
 - Email: Forests.Minister@gov.bc.ca (for ministerial inquiries)
 - **Regional District Offices:** Contact the nearest district office for issues related to logging activities and their impact on water resources.
 - **Website:** BC Ministry of Forests

4. Ministry of Health

- **Responsibilities:**
 - **Drinking Water Safety:** Oversees the safety and quality of drinking water, ensuring that public water systems meet health standards under the Drinking Water Protection Act.
 - **Public Health:** Works with regional health authorities to monitor and respond to water quality issues that could affect public health.
 - **Guidelines and Standards:** Develops and enforces guidelines and standards for drinking water quality, particularly in rural and Indigenous communities.
- **Contact:**
 - **Drinking Water Protection:**
 - Phone: 250-952-1469
 - Email: hlth.health@gov.bc.ca (for general health inquiries)
 - **Website:** BC Ministry of Health

5. Regional Health Authorities

- **Responsibilities:**
 - **Health Protection Offices:** In British Columbia, each regional health authority has Health Protection Offices that oversee the safety and quality of drinking water.
 - **Drinking Water Officers (DWOs):** are responsible for ensuring compliance with the Drinking Water Protection Act and Regulations, managing public water systems, and addressing any issues related to water quality.
- **Drinking Water Officer Contact:**
 - **Powell River:** (604) 485-3310
 - **Website:** [Vancouver Coastal Health Drinking Water](#)

6. Additional Resources:

- **BC Ombudsperson:** If your concerns are not being adequately addressed, you can contact the BC Ombudsperson at 1-800-567-3247.

This comprehensive approach allows BC to address water management challenges effectively. If you're concerned about your well water, it may be helpful to have specific details ready when contacting these ministries including dates, locations, setback distances, well ID etc.