



Rural Water Authority

of Douglas County

March 9, 2016

P.O. Box 4610
Parker, CO 80134

Individual Well Permits **Well Owner Information #1**

The Colorado Division of Water Resources (DWR), also known as the State Engineer's Office, administers water rights and issues all well permits. Colorado has a vast, complex system of water allocation, known as the *prior appropriation doctrine*, which mostly applies to the use of surface water, e.g., rivers and streams. Most groundwater wells in Douglas County, however, are exempt from surface water regulations in that system, and are often referred to as "exempt" wells. This does **not** mean that exempt wells are exempt from all restrictions, only those applying to surface water under the prior appropriation doctrine. Restrictions on exempt wells are included in your well permit.

Exempt well permits are issued for small, individual groundwater wells that typically produce less than 15 gallons per minute, are on small acreage lots, and outside of a water utility service area. Do you know the allowed uses under your well permit? Today, most individual wells are permitted for either "household" (in-house use only) or "domestic" (household, lawns/gardens of less than one acre, and domestic animals and livestock). No commercial use is allowed under either permit. Even the use of rainwater harvested from the rooftop of your residence is dictated by your well permit! Your well permit may include special allowances or limits. For example, a household permit may note that watering up to two horses is allowed. You can find your well permit and the uses allowed [here](#).

Also, if you bought your property with an existing well, the well ownership should have been transferred into your name at the time of purchase. If not, you can [download](#) a Change of Ownership form.

In Douglas County, most rural wells are drilled into the Denver Basin, an underground aquifer system that extends from Colorado Springs to Greeley, and from the foothills to near Limon. Roughly 7% of this basin's 6,700-square-mile extent underlies Douglas County. For an overview of the Denver Basin's geology, click [here](#). For an excellent, non-technical resource on the basin, and its limitations and sustainability, check out the very informative "[Citizen's Guide to Denver Basin Groundwater](#)." The DWR [website](#) has a wealth of information on pertinent water topics.