

## Guidance Note 2.1

## Planning – Water Requirements



### IN THIS HELP SHEET

*This help sheet provides information for water licencing requirements.*

### Threshold Criteria

A Forest Water Licence is required for South Australian properties where your forest will impact water reserves. There are currently no requirements for similar licences in Victoria.

Whether your plantation will impact water reserves is determined by size. There are two thresholds set in the Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan (LLC WAP). The first is a blanket 20ha – below 20ha, your project is not expected to have a meaningful impact, and a Forest Water Licence is not required.<sup>1</sup> Above 20ha, you need a Forest Water Licence which grants right to an estimated volume of water, annually. The second is whether your plantation is greater than 10% of your property area. If so, you need a Forest Water Licence.

### Two Impacts to Water Reserves

Water reserves are impacted by both the water drawn from below-ground aquifers (groundwater) and rainfall that is intercepted from reaching the aquifer. Both avenues of impact are considered in the LLC WAP and licencing requirements.

#### Groundwater Use

Whether your plantation draws groundwater is determined by whether your plantation roots can reach groundwater. The 2004 groundwater depth is the current source-of-truth for water table depth under the LLC WAP.<sup>2</sup> If your site is located on an aquifer level less than 6m from the surface, as per the 2004 groundwater depth maps, your plantation is deemed to use groundwater. If aquifer levels are greater than 6m, your plantation is deemed to not use groundwater.



#### Interception Impact

Plantations impact the flow of rainfall from reaching aquifers. They do this both through root water draw, but also through canopy cover creating a new medium for the water to saturate and filter through to reach the ground. All plantations above the threshold size are considered to significantly intercept rainwater and are therefore required to be licenced for the volume intercepted.



<sup>1</sup> South East Natural Resources Management Board, *Water Allocation Plan for the Lower Limestone Coast Prescribed Wells Area* (Government of South Australia, amended 2019), PDF, [https://lc.landscape.sa.gov.au/files/documents/WAA-and-WAP/llic\\_wap\\_amended\\_29\\_june\\_2019\\_no\\_appendices.pdf](https://lc.landscape.sa.gov.au/files/documents/WAA-and-WAP/llic_wap_amended_29_june_2019_no_appendices.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> South East Natural Resources Management Board, *Appendix of Figures and Tables* (Government of South Australia, amended 2015), Figure 12, PDF, <https://lc.landscape.sa.gov.au/files/documents/WAA-and-WAP/LLC-WAP-Appendix-Nov-2015.pdf>

## Deemed Use Volume

How much water your Forest Water Licence permits you to use annually is determined by summing your groundwater use and interception impact. Both are determined from factors provided in the LLC WAP and are specific to whether you are planting a softwood or hardwood plantation.

For groundwater use, if your plantation does use groundwater, the volume is determined by multiplying the plantation area (ha) by the following factors:

- Softwood – 1.66 ML/ha/yr
- Hardwood – 1.82 ML/ha/yr<sup>3</sup>

If your plantation does not use groundwater, the volume is deemed to be 0ML.

For interception impact, you need to find your adopted recharge rate in your management area from Appendix 1, Table 1 of the LLC WAP. The impact volume is determined by multiplying your adopted recharge rate with the following factors:

- Softwood – 0.8222
- Hardwood – 0.6727

These factors represent percentages – for softwood plantations, 82.22% of rainfall is deemed intercepted, for example.

## Registration

Registering for your licence is done via the SA Government's *mywater* website.<sup>4</sup> There is a once-off registration fee, plus annual levies, both in the order of \$200-\$300.

## Allocation

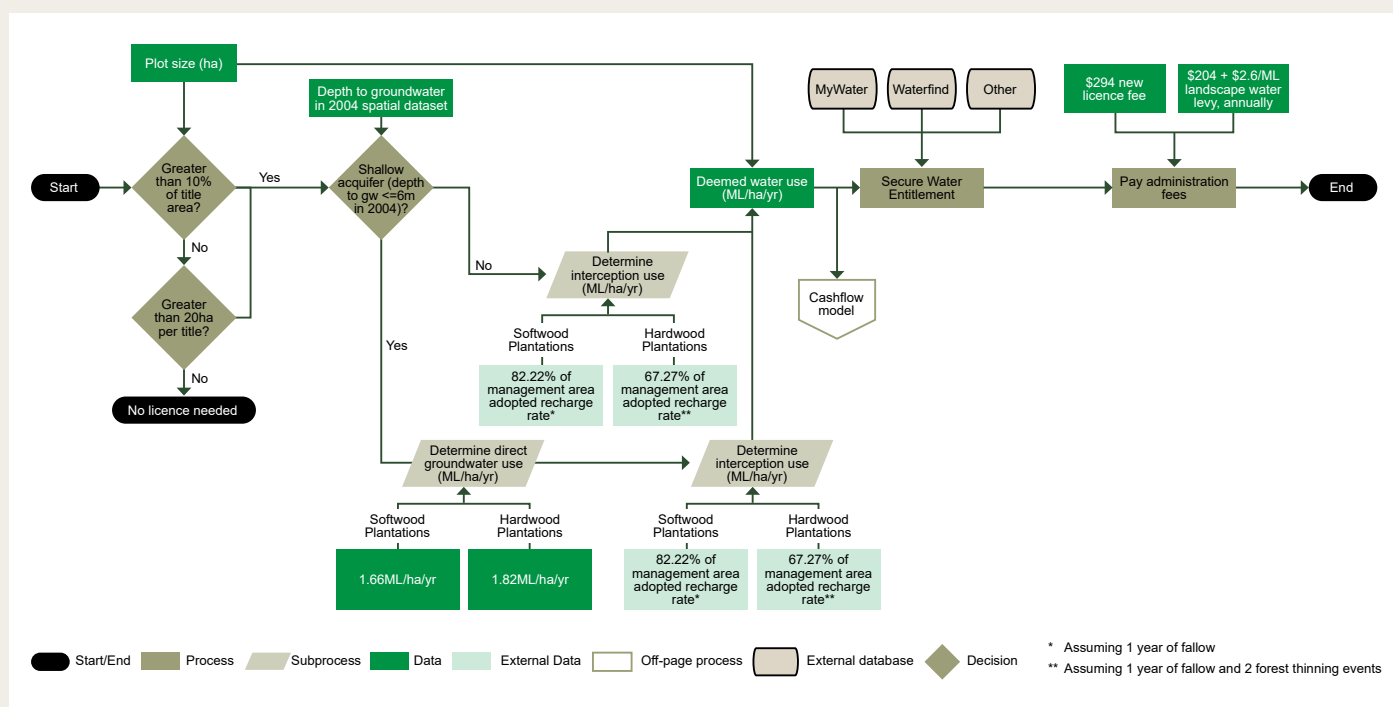
South Australian water is managed through government allocation. Most allocation areas are completely allocated, meaning procurement of water now occurs on a secondary market.

## Procurement

You must first hold a licence which grants right to the water, but then you need to purchase the volume of water you are licenced to. Online brokers such as Waterfind are useful to buy and sell water.<sup>5</sup> Forestry water licences are different to typical agricultural licences in that you aren't delivered a volume of water, but you still are required to purchase the groundwater and rainfall interception impact volume.

## Assets

The water licencing requirements are summarised in the below process flow diagram:



<sup>3</sup> 2.50 ML/ha/yr if coppiced.

<sup>4</sup> Department for Environment and Water, *South East* (Government of South Australia 2026), <https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/licences-and-permits/water-licence-and-permit-forms/south-east>

<sup>5</sup> Waterfind, *Waterfind's Online Water Market* (Waterfind 2026), <https://www.waterfind.com.au/products-services/waterfinds-online-water-market/>

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