



RWB
Rwanda Water
Resources Board



WATER USE PERMITTING GUIDELINES

July 2024

1. Background

Water resources in Rwanda are under increasing pressure. People need to use water resources efficiently, effectively and wisely if we want to build a sustainable bright future for upcoming generations and ourselves. In order to do this, it is needed to know how much water is used, by whom, and where. Once this is known, it will be possible to do measurements against how much water is actually available for use. In some areas, it will then be found that there is still extra water that can be made available for use. In other areas, it will be found that there is already more water being used than the water resources can provide without considerable damage to the aquatic ecosystems.

The water Law n°49/2018 of 13/08/2018 Determining the Use and Management of Water Resources in Rwanda, stipulates that *"the use of water resources in different activities and installations susceptible to modify the flow or the level of water or to degrade their quality, or to threaten water related ecosystems, wetlands and the environment are subjected to water use permit"*.

The Ministerial Order N° 001/MoE/24 of 02/04/2024 relating to water resources use permit further reinforces this by providing detailed regulations for water use permitting.

The water permitting is one of the tools to gather the information that we need for the optimal management of our water resources and contributes to the mission of Rwanda Water Resources Board which is to ensure the availability of enough and well managed water resources for sustainable development.

2. Why Water Permit?

- **To manage water resources:** Managing the water resources effectively and efficiently for optimal beneficial use of water for economic development of the country.
- **To ensure equitable allocation:** To be able to allocate water, the water resources managers must know both how much water is available, and how much is on demand/required by different users sharing the same source.
- **To protect the environment:** water resources managers must ensure that water use is efficient, is well planned, and that pollution is reduced to a minimum. When allocating water resources for different uses, water resources managers have to make sure that water for environmental flow remains available.
- **To enable cost recovery of water resources investment:** Water Users registration, and monitoring of their activity serve as basis of establishing fees and levys that in return improve the availability, accessibility and sustainability of the resources in space and time.

d



3. What are the benefits of having a water permit?

- Holders of water use permit are lawful users of the resource and their claims will be duly considered in case of water use conflicts. Permit holders will not have to face sanctions and prosecution for non-compliance.
- Water allocation plans privilege known and registered water users: unknown/unregistered water users run the risk of losing their share / abstraction point/ concession area.
- In case of water shortage or hazards, permit holders will be eligible to public support or advocacy where applicable.

4. What are the general requirements for water use permit application?

- An application letter addressed to the Director General of RWB through the Mayor of the District in which the activities will be carried out;
- A filled application form prescribed by the RWB;
- A proof of payment of Proof of payment of application fees (35,000 Rwf), paid through IREMBO, via the following link: <https://www.waterpermit.rwb.rw/payment>;
- A copy of the applicant's identification document or a certificate of registration, if the applicant is a company, cooperative, association or foundation;
- Any other relevant document as required.

5. What are the activities and works subject to water use permit and what are the specific requirements for each activity?

Activities/Water use	Documents required
Irrigation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Small scale (1-10 ha): General requirements.2. Large scale (> 10 ha): General requirements + Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) certificate and feasibility study/design.
Construction of Ports or Infrastructures in rivers / lakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General requirements• Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) certificate• Feasibility study/design
Construction of dam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General requirements• Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) certificate• Feasibility study/design

Fish farming in lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General requirements • Recommendation from MINAGRI/RAB • Polygon area map
Fish farming in artificial ponds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General requirements • Recommendation from MINAGRI/RAB • Hydrological report
Domestic water supply, water supply for livestock and to community settlements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General requirements • Feasibility study/design
Coffee washing station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General requirements • Hydrological report
Industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General requirements • Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) certificate • Hydrological report
Hydropower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General requirements • Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) certificate • Feasibility study/design
Mining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General requirements • Mining license • Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) certificate • Hydrological report
Gas extraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General requirements • Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) certificate • Feasibility study/design
Recreation activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General requirements • Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) certificate • Polygon area map
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depend on the nature of water use

Note: For groundwater abstraction by drilling borehole, the applicant must also submit the pumping test report as part of the water use permit application.

6. Compliance with the Lakes Water Use Master Plan

There is a water use master plan for Lakes Kivu, Muhazi, Burera, Ruhondo, and Mugesera. When applying for water use permit (concession area) for fish farming, recreational activities or construction of infrastructure in those Lakes, it is a prerequisite to comply with the zoning defined in the Lakes Water Use Master Plan.



7. What is the specific information on key water use? (to be filled on the Application Form)

a) Irrigation

- Type of crop;
- Type of Production System;
- Type of irrigation technology;
- Total irrigation area;
- Total expected water demand and water to be abstracted.

b) Construction of infrastructures on banks, in rivers or lakes

- Brief description of the construction project;
- Expected period of time required for construction;
- Plans or maps showing proposed alterations and/or constructions at the end of construction works.

c) Aquaculture (in ponds and dams)

- Pond Surface;
- Pond Capacity;
- Frequency of refilling water in ponds;
- Amount of water to be used.

d) Aquaculture (in natural lakes)

- Name of the lake;
- Number of cages;
- Capacity of each cage;
- Concession area;
- Coordinates of the concession area.

e) Domestic Water Supply

- Population to be served;
- Water demand per capita per day;
- How much water will be abstracted per day?
- Total storage capacity.

f) Coffee Washing Stations

- Quantity of abstracted water;
- Washing capacity.

g) Industries

- Type of industry (Food processing; Horticultural packaging; Chemical Manufacturing; Mineral Water; Brewing or Beverage manufacturing; Fruit and vegetable canning or pickling, etc);
- Quantity of abstracted water.

h) Hydropower

- Quantity of abstracted water;
- Is there any water user along this distance?
- Capacity of Power Plant (Megawatt).

i) Mining

- Quantity of abstracted water;
- Type of minerals;
- Production capacity (tons/year).

j) Navigation

- Brief description of the project;
- Coordinates of the navigation route.

k) Recreation activities

- Brief description of the project;
- Coordinates of the recreation area.

8. What is the difference between domestic water supply and Domestic use of water resources?

Domestic / Community settlements water supply means potable and non-potable water provided to households, schools, hospitals, hotels, etc... by a public water supplier (Service provider) and serves to supply to individual or collective residential houses or farms with water sourced from a surface or ground water body. Domestic (and community settlements) water supply is subject to water use permit.

Domestic use of water resources refers to the use of water directly from a water body without the intervention of a service provider, for drinking, cooking, bathing, washing, cleaning or maintenance of houses and surroundings and other domestic equipment in a quantity limited to the amount needed for the satisfaction of individual or family needs. The use of water resources for domestic purposes is not subject to water use permit.

9. How to apply for water use permit?

- Write an application letter addressed to the Director General of Rwanda Water Resources Board, through the Mayor of the District in which the activities will be carried out;
- Fill the application form (the form can be downloaded at www.waterpermit.rw);
- Attach all the necessary supporting documents as mentioned in the form;
- Payment of application fee (35,000 Rwf), paid through IREMBO, via the following link: <https://www.waterpermit.rwb.rw/payment>;
- Send your application to info@rwb.rw

Full information regarding water use permit application process can be found at www.waterpermit.rwb.rw

10. What are the criteria for issuing a water resources use permit?

RWB takes the decision to issue or not to issue a water resources use permit based on the following criteria:

- The submission of all required documents as provided for in Point 4 and 5 of these guidelines;
- The availability of water resources and water volume;
- The quality of the water resources;
- Volume of water resources demanded;
- The impact of planned activities on the rights of other water users and third parties;
- The impact of planned activities on water resources, environment and public security;
- The provisions of catchment management plan;
- The provisions of plans of cities, districts and land use;
- Priority for water allocation as provided by Water Law.

11. How long does a water use permit remain valid?

A water resources use permit is valid for an initial period not exceeding 15 years or the estimated lifetime of proposed activity, if it is less longer. The water resources use permit may be extended.

12. How to extend the duration of a water use permit?

The holder of a water use permit who wish to extend the duration of the water use permit, in at least three (3) months before expiry of the initial duration do the following:

- Write an application letter addressed to the Director General of Rwanda Water Resources Board, through the Mayor of the District in which the activities have been carried out;
- Submit an overall report of activities done during the elapsed period;
- Attach a proof of payment of Proof of payment of application fees (35,000 Rwf), paid through IREMBO, via the following link: <https://www.waterpermit.rwb.rw/payment>;
- Any other relevant document, as may be decided by the Authority;
- Send your application to info@rwb.rw

The extended water use permit must be subject to the same conditions as the initial water use permit.

RWB may grant or reject an extension after assessing whether the applicant complied with the terms of the initial water resources use permit contract.

13. How to transfer or modify of a water use permit?

Transfer: A water resources use permit holder may apply for the transfer of a water resources use permit, stating the reasons for the transfer and the names of the new holder. The application for permit transfer is accompanied by a proof of payment of the non-refundable transfer application fee (35,000 Rwf), paid through IREMBO, via the following link: <https://www.waterpermit.rwb.rw/payment>.

The new water resources use permit holder has the same rights and obligations of the previous water resources use permit holder and complies with the same terms and conditions as those to which the previous holder was subject.

Modification: A water resources use permit holder may request for modification of a water resources use permit, stating the reasons for the change. Rwanda Water Resources Board may or may not modify the permit, after an assessment of the reasons for the request.

14. How is the water use permit issued?

Upon reception of an application for water use permit, Rwanda Water Resources Board organizes a field visit to assess and verify the provided information. Thereafter, a technical report indicates whether the requested permit can be issued.

RWB notifies the applicant about the decision on his or her application for water resources use permit in a period not exceeding 90 days from the date of receipt of application.

In case of unsuccessful application, RWB notifies the applicant of the reasons for rejection or requests the applicant to complete the application by providing missing information.

15. Who has the priority for permit among water users?

All persons are entitled to an equitable and reasonable share on the water resources available. However, in allocating water resources the priority is given to: 1° domestic needs; 2° environmental protection; 3° economic activities.

In case a water source has been historically occupied by a user, the priority is given to the same existing user provided that they comply with the rules and regulations relating to these guidelines.

16. What are the water use fees?

The holder of a Water Use Permit shall pay annual fees for the use of water according to tariffs described in the Ministerial Order.

17. What are the offences and penalties?

Any person who uses water or carries out a water-related activity without a water use permit as required commits an offense. Upon conviction, he or she is liable to imprisonment for a term of not less than two (2) months and not more than three (3) months and a fine of five hundred thousand Rwandan francs (FRW 500,000) or only one of these penalties.

Done at Kigali, on23/07/2024

Dr. Emmanuel RUKUNDO
Director General



Annex 1: Law N°49/2018 of 13/08/2018 determining the use and management of Water Resources in Rwanda.

Annex 2: Ministerial Order N° 001/MoE/24 of 02/04/2024 relating to water resources use permit.

