

Groundwater withdrawal permits in Mississippi

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Mississippi DEQ has released an announcement for the public meeting on reissuance of groundwater withdrawal permits for agriculture and enhancement of wildlife habitat. The permits previously issued will be renewed either for the same or lesser volumes previously permitted. The permits are valid for five (5) years. The permits for withdrawals are as follows:

<i>Type of water use</i>	<i>Water withdrawals permitted (acre-feet/acre/year)</i>
Row crop irrigation	1.5
Rice irrigation	3.0
All aquaculture (except fingerlings)	5.0
Fingerlings	7.0
Enhancement of wildlife	1.0

In case wildlife habitat has other beneficial uses, total water use shall not exceed the cumulative water withdrawals. See example below

<i>Wildlife habitat</i>	<i>Row crop production</i>	<i>Rice production</i>	<i>Aquaculture</i>	<i>Fingerlings</i>	<i>Total water withdrawal permit should not exceed (acre-feet/acre/year)</i>
✓		✓	✓		9.0
✓		✓		✓	11.0
✓	✓		✓		7.5
✓	✓			✓	9.5

The only change, as far as I can understand, is the requirement that the permit holder should meet the water efficiency requirements within two (2) years of permit issuance, which previously was three (3) years. However, the MDEQ groundwater withdrawals permit application provides two options, one, adopt one of the four alternatives (apply water through sprinkler systems, capture tail water runoff, apply surface water to at least 75 percent of the area, and 100 percent precision levelled acreage), two, install an approved flow meter and report water use. It is slightly unclear how the withdrawal permits will be implemented without knowing water use, i.e., if the permit holder selects option one. Nevertheless, the process should provide some guidance to states that are still in the process of developing such permits.