

Glacier Ice Harvesting in Alaska

Can glacier ice be harvested?

Yes, because glacier ice is water occurring in a natural state, glacier ice harvesters can apply for either a water right or a temporary water use permit to get authorization to harvest glacier ice. Glacier ice is currently harvested from tidewater-calving glaciers in Alaska.

When is permission required?

When you harvest a significant amount of glacier ice, a permit is needed from the Department of Natural Resources. If you harvest a significant amount of glacier ice without a permit, you are guilty of a misdemeanor (AS 46.15.180).

A significant amount of glacier ice is defined by regulation (11 AAC 93.970(14)) as:

- The use of more than 20 tons of glacier ice in a single day from a single source, or;
- The regular daily or recurring seasonal use of more than two tons of glacier ice per day for 10 days or more per year from a single source, or;
- Any glacier ice harvesting that might adversely affect the water rights of other appropriators or the public interest.

The department issues temporary water use permits for short-term ice harvesting (less than 5 years), or a water right for long-term ice harvesting.

When a water right is granted for harvesting glacier ice, it becomes appurtenant to the property in Alaska where the ice is processed, for as long as the water right holder continues to harvest the ice.

How do I get a water right to harvest glacier ice?

By submitting an application for water rights to the Department of Natural Resources. After public review, you may be issued a permit to begin harvesting ice. However, ice from some glaciers cannot be harvested in quantity, and a permit would not be issued. Once you establish your harvest of the ice for beneficial use, and have met any permit conditions, a Certificate of Appropriation may be issued. Harvesting ice without a permit or certificate does not give the user legal rights to harvest ice, no matter how long the ice harvest has occurred – and it may be against the law.

How do I get a temporary water use permit to harvest glacier ice?

A temporary water use permit is required for significant short-term water uses, including glacier ice harvesting, which last less than 5 years. This permit does not establish a water right but may help avoid conflicts with fish, wildlife, other resource users, or existing water right holders.

Applications must be accompanied by the required filing fee, and should include a map and legal description of the place where the ice will be harvested, the quantity of ice to be harvested, the time it will be harvested, and the type of equipment to be used to harvest the ice.

Should I apply for a water right or a temporary water use permit?

If you foresee a long-term use, or there is a lot of competition for the source, you will want to apply for a water right. If you have an established water right, you have legal standing to assert that right against conflicting uses of water or ice with people who do not have water rights. In addition, a person with an established water right has priority to use water or harvest ice over persons who later file for

water rights from the same source. A temporary water use permit does not grant any right or priority to the water user or harvester.

What costs are involved?

There is an application filing fee for both water rights and temporary water use permits. The application fee is \$500 to harvest any quantity of glacier ice. You are also required to pay the cost of a legal advertisement in at least one issue of a local newspaper in the area near the proposed ice harvest. In addition, permit and certificate (including temporary water use permit) holders are subject to an annual \$50 water right administrative service fee.

Where can I get more information?

More information is available in the Department of Natural Resources' fact sheets on Water Rights in Alaska, Administrative Service Fee, Dam Safety in Alaska, Reserving Water for Intstream Use, Federal Reserved Water Rights, Alaska Water Resources Board, and Alaska Hydrologic Survey. Further information and applications forms may be obtained from the following offices, or visit our website www.dnr.state.ak.us.

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Water Resources Section**

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Anchorage, AK 99501-3577
Phone: 907-269-8600
Fax: 907-269-8947

Water Resources Section

400 Willoughby Avenue, 4th Floor
Juneau, AK 99801
Phone: 907-465-3400
Fax: 907-586-2954

Alaskan glacier facts

- Glaciers cover approximately 28,800 square miles, or three percent of Alaska. This is 128 times the area covered by glaciers in the rest of the United States.
- There are an estimated 100,000 glaciers in Alaska.
- About three-fourths of all fresh water in Alaska is stored in glacier ice.
- The greatest concentration of tidewater glaciers is in Prince William Sound, where there are 20 active tidewater glaciers. Icebergs in Prince William Sound are expected to increase fourfold in the next 20 years as the Columbia Glacier retreats.
- The largest Alaskan glacier is the Malaspina, which is 850 square miles.