



Planning and Building Department Permit Requirements for New Domestic Wells and for the Conversion of Agricultural Wells to Domestic Wells in the Rural Areas of Unincorporated San Mateo County

For new domestic or mixed use wells in the rural areas of unincorporated San Mateo County, a well drilling permit from the Environmental Health Department is always required. Conversion of an existing well to a domestic well also requires review by the Environmental Health Department to ensure that the quantity and quality of well water provides a safe and sustainable domestic source. This handout identifies the permit requirements for the Planning and Building Department.

What permits do I need?

Planning Permit

If you are converting an agricultural well to a domestic well, you should first contact the Environmental Health Department and conduct the tests required to determine if the well produces an adequate quantity and quality of water before seeking any permits from the Planning and Building Department. However, if grading, road construction, or the removal of significant vegetation is required to perform the tests, you should contact the Planning and Building Department regarding any permits that must be obtained prior to conducting such activities.

To determine if Planning permits are required, you will need to know if your property is within the coastal zone.

1. In rural areas outside of the coastal zone (i.e., zoned Resource Management or Timber Preserve Zone) the construction of a domestic well, or the conversion of an existing agricultural well to a domestic well, does not require a Planning permit. However, if grading, road construction, or the removal of significant vegetation is required to install a new well or perform tests on an existing well, you should contact the Planning and Building Department regarding the potential need for grading, tree removal, and/or land clearing permits.
2. In rural areas within the Coastal Zone (i.e., zoned Planned Agricultural District/Coastal Development, Resource Management-Coastal Zone, or Timber Preserve Zone-Coastal Zone) the construction of a new domestic well and the use of an existing agricultural well for domestic purposes, requires a Coastal Development Permit. If your property is located within the Planned Agriculture District (PAD), a PAD permit will also be required. In most cases, Planning permits for new domestic wells or the conversion of an existing agricultural well will not be granted unless it is for an existing residential use or is submitted concurrently with a new development proposal.
 - In instances where an existing domestic well fails, as documented by a qualified professional and confirmed by the Department of Environmental Health, you can apply for an Emergency Coastal Development Permit (CDP) in order to install a new domestic well or to convert an existing agricultural well.

What you'll need to submit:

If you have any questions about the Planning permit process or the zoning of your property, please contact the Planning Department or the Agricultural Ombudsman.

- Planning permit application
- Coastal Development Permit and Planned Agricultural District (if applicable) companion pages
- Proof that you own the property, or evidence that owner agrees with project
- Environmental Disclosure Form
- 5 sets of a location map and site plans that show proposed well site, location of existing water source, and any new infrastructure, vegetation removal, or landform alterations required to construct and operate the well.
- If the well is located within 100 feet of a stream or wetland, a technical analysis of the well's potential impact on riparian and wetland resources, prepared by a qualified professional. In instances of emergencies, this analysis can be submitted with the after-the-fact CDP permit application required to retain the emergency well.
- Other documents as needed (e.g., survey)

Building Permit

After obtaining any necessary Planning permits, and securing the approvals required by the Environmental Health Department, you will then need to obtain a building permit from the Planning and Building Department for the electrical and mechanical components of the well.