REAL ESTATE EDUCATION SERIES

RE/MAX Properties

Buying Colorado Property: Verify the Water Supply

Confirm the source, permitted uses, and cost to get water

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Before buying a Colorado home or vacant lot, answer three questions: Where will the water come from? Can you use it as planned? Will it provide enough safe water at a cost you can afford? Start with the exact address and parcel number.

1 Identify what serves the property today

Ask for recent utility bills or well records and identify the source: public or district water, a private or shared well, or delivered water stored in a cistern. Check whether the source actually serves the home now. A listing that says “water available” may describe a future connection.

2 Having 35 or 40 acres does not assure you can dig a well

Ask the Colorado Division of Water Resources (DWR) if your parcel and intended use qualify for a permit, even if an aquifer is present. If a home and its well were split off with a few acres, the original permit may still count land in the remaining parcel. Even with 35 or more acres left, a new exempt well permit may be denied. Give DWR the legal descriptions and prior permit number.

3 Get utility service and tap costs in writing

Ask the utility or water district to confirm service for that parcel and your intended use. For an unconnected lot, verify whether a tap is available, paid for, and transferable. Ask about capacity, connection fees, line extensions, installation, and timing. A main in the street does not confirm the parcel can connect.

4 Pull the well permit and read the conditions

Use the Colorado Division of Water Resources (DWR) well permit search. Match the permit and location to the well that serves the property. Verify allowed uses and limits. A household-use-only permit generally covers indoor household use; check before assuming you can irrigate, water livestock, or serve another dwelling.

5 Confirm what transfers at closing

A well permit record does not establish ownership of separate water rights. If the sale includes water rights, ditch shares, or a shared well, ask for the deed or share documents and any recorded agreements or easements. Review access, maintenance, and cost sharing. Ask your title company and a Colorado water attorney about uncertain rights or transfer terms.

Vacant land: verify feasibility before assuming you can build

Ask a qualified well professional about whether a usable aquifer is reachable, likely yield, and drilling costs. Check local building and planning requirements before relying on a proposed well.

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Check quantity, quality, and the records before closing

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A permit describes what is authorized. An equipment inspection and yield test help assess how the system performs. A laboratory test checks water quality. Each answers a different question.

6 Check the well's condition and ability to supply water

Ask for the drilling log, pump records, past test results, and any history of outages or low yield. Have a qualified well professional inspect the equipment and assess flow and recovery for your expected use. Ask how seasonal changes and storage affect reliability. A brief faucet check is not a yield test.

7 Get a fresh drinking-water test

Use a certified lab and follow its sampling instructions. Ask about coliform bacteria, including follow-up for E. coli as appropriate, nitrates, and any additional tests recommended by local public health staff. Confirm any lender testing rules and allow time for results. Budget for treatment, retesting, and ongoing maintenance if needed.

8 Evaluate a cistern or delivered supply as its own system

Verify local approval for your intended use, the potable water source, delivery availability, year-round access, and recurring costs. Have the tank, pump, and related equipment inspected. Confirm lender and insurer acceptance before relying on this setup.

9 Put the water checks on your contract calendar

Ask your broker about water rights review, inspections, testing, and the deadlines that apply to your contract. Resolve missing records and arrange any permit contact update with the closing team. That update does not convey water rights.

Before you commit, confirm these in writing

- ☐ Source and service or permit confirmed for this parcel
- ☐ Intended uses, supply reliability, and water quality checked
- ☐ Connection or equipment costs, transfer terms, and deadlines understood

Resources: DWR permit search | DWR land division policy | DWR ownership updates | County water testing | Water rights overview
Educational guide. Verify the requirements for the specific parcel and proposed use.

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