

Hydrologist

Measure where water goes, how much there is, and what happens when there is too much or too little.

TYPICAL PAY

\$96,600

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$64k to \$153k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 6 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Rivers and wells, government offices, consulting firms, field truc...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Physics, chemistry, calculus and any computing class. Earth science if your school has it.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
Hydrology, watershed science, geology, environmental science or civil engineering. Look for a program that makes you do real field work, not just lectures.
- 3 Summer field work** Summers
A technician job with a state water agency, a national forest or a consulting firm. Measuring flows in waders is how you learn this field.
- 4 First job or graduate school** 2 more years for a master's
The federal profile lists a bachelor's or master's degree as the usual requirement. Research and university jobs generally need a doctorate.
- 5 Certification and specialization** After several years of experience
Voluntary certification as a hydrologist, or a professional engineer license if you drift into design work.

Pros and cons

- + Strong pay for a science career you can enter with a bachelor's degree
- + A real mix of outdoor field work and technical desk work
- + Government employers with pensions and loan forgiveness
- The federal profile rates growth as below average with few new openings
- It is a small field, so jobs are scattered and you may have to move
- Senior and research roles usually need a master's or a doctorate

Optional boosts

Groundwater modeling. GIS (geographic information systems). Programming. Water rights and regulation.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Hydrologists (19-2043.00)
United States Geological Survey: Water Resources
American Institute of Hydrology
USAJOBS, the federal government's official hiring site

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/hydrologist>

Good to know

There is water data from 1.9 million sites

The United States Geological Survey publishes water information collected at roughly 1.9 million sites across all 50 states, covering streamflow, groundwater levels, water quality and water use. Most of...

The agency has been at this since 1879

The United States Geological Survey was created in 1879 and now employs hydrologists alongside geologists, seismologists and mapping specialists to monitor and predict how the country's water and land...



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