

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Neighbors,

Highland Lakes Water District has seen significant operational changes over the past year. Our Operations team has worked diligently to implement long-overdue upgrades, helping us avoid the costly and unsustainable need to haul in outside water. These improvements were essential and, in many cases, overdue due to a lack of regular and preventative maintenance in prior years—especially to the treatment plant equipment and wells.

As many of you may know, our system was originally developed in the early 1970s, and much of its infrastructure—such as well pumps, casings, and transmission lines—had not been updated since. While we are fortunate to have an abundant water supply, the challenge has been getting it efficiently to the treatment plant. Unfortunately, in late 2024 and early 2025, we were still forced to spend over \$50,000 hauling water during critical times.

Water outages in our community typically arise from two main scenarios: (1) service line failure on a homeowner's property due to outdated materials, and (2) homes left unprepared for winter by seasonal residents. This winter, two such failures rapidly depleted our storage tank and slowed well recovery. In both cases, water hauling was necessary to ensure uninterrupted service to all residents.

We're happy to report that our Operations team has successfully brought several offline wells back to full capacity. An upgrade to our SCADA system now allows us to rotate well groups—letting some rest and regenerate while others are in use. Additionally, having our water operator on site daily has made a major difference in identifying and addressing issues before they result in outages.

These improvements, while essential, have significantly depleted the funds set aside for infrastructure repair and maintenance.

### Looking Ahead: The Financial Reality

Now comes the difficult part of my message to you. As we all know, the cost of everything continues to rise—and water operations are no exception. Here's a quick look back at some of the rate adjustments made over the years:

- In 2012, a drought surcharge of \$2.25 was added to address the cost of water hauling due to a drought and weaker well production.
- In 2013, the drought surcharge increased to \$6 and the base rate increased from \$30 to \$32.50, and no longer included gallons usage.
- In 2014, the District restructured tiered rates, removed the drought surcharge and the base rate returned to \$25.
- In 2018, upper tier rates (8,000 gallons and above) were adjusted to encourage conservation.
- In 2021, a \$10 infrastructure upgrade fee was added to the base rate, bringing it to the current \$35.

As we face further necessary upgrades to aging infrastructure, the Board has carefully reviewed our financial outlook and explored several options. Rather than impose an across-the-board rate hike, we're proposing a \$10.00 increase to the base rate—raising it from \$35 to \$45 per household. This approach minimizes the impact on most customers while allowing us to continue critical upgrades.

We invite you to join us at a public meeting on April 15, 2025, at 6:00 PM in the Community Building. This meeting will be held in conjunction with our regular board meeting and is your opportunity to ask questions, share feedback, and be part of the discussion. The Board will vote on the proposal at the meeting. If approved, the new base rate would take effect with the June 1 billing cycle.

The infrastructure upgrade fee will continue to be reviewed annually during our budget planning process.

### A Brighter Note: New Filtration System Near Completion

On a more exciting front, construction on our new GWUDI filtration system is nearly complete and expected to be fully operational by June 1. We're including a picture to give you a sneak peek at the progress.



Additionally, the Board is planning an Open House at the treatment plant this summer, so you can see these improvements firsthand. Check the website for the official date to be scheduled soon. For safety reasons, we kindly ask that children not attend—there are many buttons to push, knobs to turn, and open areas that could pose risks.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement. We know this past year hasn't been easy, but we're committed to creating a more reliable and resilient water system for our community.

Sue Morford  
HLWD President

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

### Board Members

Sue Morford	President
Melinda Moyn	Secretary
Brian Dillon	Treasurer
Ken Morford	Operations Director
Shelly Dolbeer	Public Relations

### HLWD District Office

Mary Schnierle	Office Manager	719-687-7937
Neal Yowell	System Operator	

**Emergency Number 719-247-1191**

# WATER WISDOM: YOUR MOST-ASKED QUESTIONS, ANSWERED

## Get to know your system—and your responsibilities

At Highland Lakes Water District, we get a lot of great questions from residents—and over the years, we’ve noticed that many people are asking the same things. Whether it’s about what to do in an emergency, what you’re responsible for as a homeowner, or how the billing works, it’s clear that our community wants to stay informed and prepared. And that’s exactly what we want, too.



To help, we’ve created a comprehensive Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section on our website that covers everything from water quality and septic systems to winter prep and water rights. In this article, we’re sharing a few of the most common and important questions, with the full list available online at [highlandlakeswaterdistrict.colorado.gov](http://highlandlakeswaterdistrict.colorado.gov).

**What should I do in a water emergency?**

The first and most important step is knowing where your shut-off valves are. Inside your home, there is a shut-off valve that allows you to stop water from flowing if you have a leak or frozen pipe. Outside your home, you should know where the Property Shut-Off Valve (PSOV) is located—usually near the road, marked with a blue and white utility marker. Please remember: the MXU unit mounted to your exterior wall is not the water meter—it only sends meter readings to the District.

**If you experience a water emergency:**

- During business hours (Mon-Fri, 8:00 AM-5:00 PM): Call the office at (719) 687-7937.
- After hours or on weekends: Call our emergency line at (719) 247-1191. Leave your name, address, and a callback number in the message so we can respond as quickly as possible.

**What parts of the water system am I responsible for?**

There’s often confusion about what belongs to the homeowner and what belongs to the District. Here’s a quick breakdown:

**District Responsibility:**

- The water meter inside your home
- The MXU unit on your home’s exterior
- The PSOV (Property Shut-Off Valve)

**Homeowner Responsibility:**

- The service line that runs from the main, to your home
- Any damage to the District’s equipment caused by freezing, plows, or other impact
- All water loss caused by a leak or break on your property
- Costs associated with leak detection or repairs on your service line

A current fee schedule is available on the website, so you can better understand potential charges for operator time or water loss.

**What steps should I take if I’m a Snowbird or planning to be away for a while?**

Every winter, we deal with at least one preventable water emergency that results in major property damage—not only to the homeowner, but sometimes to the community system as a whole. These incidents can be expensive for the homeowner—and sometimes affect the entire system’s water pressure.

Here’s what you should do before leaving:

- Shut off water at your indoor valve or call the District for a free PSOV shut-off (one free shut-off/turn on per year).
- Set your thermostat to 55° F or higher.
- Open cabinets and closets so warm air can circulate to pipes.
- If your meter is in a garage, crawl space, or closet, ensure the area is heated.
- Ask a neighbor to check in on your home during extended absences.

We’ve seen what can happen when these steps are skipped—and the cleanup can be extremely expensive and stressful. Take precautions now to avoid problems later. Additional winterizing tips are available on the District website.

**Where can I find more answers?**

We’re glad you asked! Our website now features a detailed FAQ page covering all of the topics above—and many more. Curious about how billing works? Want to understand why boil orders are issued? Need to learn about your septic system’s impact on water quality? It’s all there.

We also encourage you to:

- Read the quarterly newsletters for seasonal updates and reminders
- Make sure we have your current email address so you don’t miss any alerts
- Attend our monthly Board meetings (Third Tuesday of each month at 6:00 PM in the Community Building)

And just a friendly reminder: the Highland Lakes Residents Facebook group is a great way to connect with neighbors—but it is NOT an official channel for District updates or information.

**Still have questions?** We’re here to support you, and we hope this information helps you feel more confident and informed about the water system we all rely on. Visit our website to explore more frequently asked questions and helpful resources—and thank you, as always, for being an engaged part of the Highland Lakes community.

Your water system is a shared resource—and together, we can protect it for generations to come.

# HLWD PUBLIC NOTICE

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER Highland Lakes Water District

### Failed to Provide Adequate Treatment

Este informe contiene información muy importante sobre su agua potable. Tradúzcalo o hable con alguien que lo entienda bien.

Our water system recently violated a drinking water requirement. As our customers you have a right to know what happened, what you should do, and what we are doing to correct this situation.

The state drinking water program required us to filter the water in addition to disinfecting by 3/15/2023. We are required to install this filtration because our source water contains surface water (lake or stream). Alternatively, we can choose to use another water source that does not contain surface water. We have not yet met this requirement. We do not know of any cases of contamination. However, until improvements are made, there is an increased chance that disease-causing organisms could contaminate the water supply. Filtration with disinfection is the best method for removing these organisms.

#### What does this mean? What should I do?

- **You do not need to boil your water or take other actions. However, if you have specific health concerns, consult your doctor.** A home filter will not necessarily solve the problem, because not all home filters protect against parasites. Call NSF International at 1(800) NSF-8010 or the Water Quality Association at 1(800) 749-0234 for information on appropriate filters.
- Inadequately treated water may contain disease-causing organisms. These organisms include bacteria, viruses, and parasites which can cause symptoms such as nausea, cramps, diarrhea, and associated headaches. These symptoms are not only caused only by organisms in drinking water, but also by other factors. If you experience any of these symptoms and they persist, you may want to consult your doctor.
- If you have an infant, severely compromised immune system, are pregnant, or are elderly, you may be at increased risk and should seek advice from your doctor about drinking this water. General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by bacteria and other disease-causing organisms are available from EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.

#### What is being done?

- This situation is not an emergency. If it had been, you would have been notified immediately.
- Highland Lakes Water District has completed approximately 85% of the new GWUDI treatment addition and anticipates resolving this problem by June of 2025.

The District anticipates resolving this problem by June of 2025. For more information, please contact Mary Schnierle at [highlandwater@msn.com](mailto:highlandwater@msn.com), 719-687-7937 or 3136 Blue Mesa Drive, Divide, CO 80814.

This notice is being sent to you by: Highland Lakes Water District - CO0160200 Date distributed: 3/31/2025

### 5 QUICK TIPS TO PROTECT YOUR WATER SYSTEM THIS SPRING

1. Inspect your service line - Look for soft, wet spots in your yard that may indicate a hidden leak.
2. Test your shut-off valves - Make sure they're working properly in case you need to shut off water quickly.
3. Check hose connections - After the last freeze, reconnect and inspect outdoor spigots and hoses.
4. Watch your usage - Be mindful of water use as irrigation season begins—remember outside watering is not allowed in Highland Lakes.
5. Report suspicious activity - If you notice unusual water flow or hear water running in a normally dry area, let us know!



### DID YOU KNOW?

- Highland Lakes Water District oversees 23 wells and over 13 miles of pipeline.
- In 2024-2025, we hauled more than \$50,000 worth of water to prevent outages.
- The average household in our district uses about 2,400 gallons per month.

### UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

- **April 15, 2025 @ 6:00 PM** - Public Rate Discussion + Regular Board Meeting
- **June 1, 2025** - Estimated completion of GWUDI Filtration System
- **Summer 2025** - Open House at the Treatment Plant! Date to be announced
- **Monthly Board Meetings** - Third Tuesday of each month, 6:00 PM, Community Building

### QUOTE OF THE QUARTER

*"A community that values its water system protects its future."*  
- Unknown



# WATER CURRENTS NEWSLETTER

Spring 2025 • Volume 25, Issue 1

## STAY IN THE KNOW WITH HLWD!

Our website makes it easy to find alerts, updates, and essential information.

### Website

[highlandlakeswaterdistrict.colorado.gov](http://highlandlakeswaterdistrict.colorado.gov)

## IN THIS ISSUE...

President's Message (Pg. 1)

Water Wisdom (Pg. 2)

GWUDI Public Notice (Pg. 3)

Quick Tips, Fun Facts, and More (Pg. 3)

### Newsletter Editor

Shelly Dolbeer, Divide, CO 80814

E-Mail: [shellyhlwd@gmail.com](mailto:shellyhlwd@gmail.com)

### Meetings

The HLWD Board of Directors meets at 6:00 p.m. on the third Tuesday of every month in the HLPOA Community Building. Highland Lakes owners and residents are welcome.