



WATER CURRENTS NEWSLETTER

Fall 2025 • Volume 25, Issue 3

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

When Colorado decides to do Fall, it really does it well! The different beautiful views in the area are unsurpassed, in my opinion. I hope you will get out and enjoy this season before the white stuff starts to fly!

One item constantly on my mind has to do with our water system. In 2010, the Board of Directors began a study of the water system so the board could develop a Comprehensive Master Plan. The design group sampled groundwater from multiple wells. The samples were evaluated for nitrate concentration and confirmed that we were over the MCL (Maximum Contaminant Level) in nitrates. Those of you that were living here at the time remember that this study was the beginning of our work towards building a treatment and storage facility in the subdivision so that we could treat the water according to EPA standards and further ensure that we could deliver the safest, cleanest drinking water to our customers. When we initially read the sampling study, we learned that there was also caffeine in the water. You are all quite knowledgeable folks, and you know that caffeine is not a naturally occurring element of groundwater so where did it come from? The presence of caffeine in the water sample showed the nitrate contamination was likely from human waste. My point in bringing this rather disgusting information to you is to show that maintenance of our individual septic disposal systems is crucial to our drinking water. Your neighbors depend on you to do regular maintenance on your septic to keep your system in the best working condition possible. We have had two septic systems in the subdivision fail just this summer from inadequate maintenance - the tank gets overfilled and spills that waste out on the ground which, in turn, percolates down through decomposed granite and into our drinking water. Yes, the District treats nitrates before the water is distributed to your homes, but it is a costly removal process for us. To further emphasize my point, the cost of rebuilding a septic system can run a homeowner anywhere from \$30,000-\$50,000 (even more if the failure occurs when the ground is frozen). Please, for the sake of your drinking water, if you don't have your septic on a regular maintenance schedule, have a provider check out your system to make sure it's in good working condition and make sure it will be regularly maintained.

Another thought I have is about the upcoming frosty winter season. If there are problems with delivery of water during the winter months, it is most likely to do with poorly insulated water lines and meters in our homes which are the responsibility of the homeowner. A break in a water line at a residence can easily cause the entire water system to be completely drained which affects all of us and we're back to the extremely expensive practice of hauling water in to fill our storage tank. Primarily, if you leave us for the winter months, please take advantage of the District's "turn off/turn on" policy. Contact us to have your water turned off at the shut off valve, then drain your water lines. Make sure you know where your water meter is found and that it is well insulated. Make sure to keep your heat set no lower than 55 degrees, open the cabinet doors under sinks and keep inside doors open to allow the heat to circulate in your home. For your information, there are low-cost home water leak sensor systems available - a 5-pack of battery powered water leak detectors for under sinks, refrigerators, washing machines, dishwashers, or hot water heaters run under \$100.00. The sensor will trigger an audible alarm plus it sends a signal to its hub which instantly pushes notifications to your phone via WiFi. An unbelievably valuable tool that we personally use! The system has saved us from having the extreme inconvenience and prohibitive cost of repairs for water damage inside our home.

The Highland Lakes Water District Board of Directors cares about our customers and always works to deliver the safest, cleanest water available to you. Thank you for your continuing support.

Sue Morford, President
Highland Lakes Water District Board of Directors

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

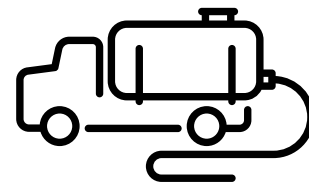
Mary Schnierle	Office Manager	719-687-7937
Neal Yowell	System Operator	

Emergency Number 719-247-1191

SEPTIC TANK PUMPING & WATER PROTECTION

Many homeowners don't think about their septic system until there's a problem. But regular septic maintenance is one of the most important steps you can take to protect your property and our shared drinking water.

As we noted in last quarter's article, *Is Our Water Safe to Drink?*, contaminants like PFAS are a growing concern. Septic systems add another layer of risk when not maintained, since excess nitrates can seep into groundwater. Didn't catch the last article? Read it online: grco.de/Q2news.



Why Septic Pumping Matters

When septic tanks aren't pumped on schedule, solids build up and reduce the system's capacity. Eventually, these solids and untreated wastewater can leak into the soil. From there, contaminants—including nitrates—may travel into groundwater, which is the source of drinking water for our community.

High nitrate levels are especially concerning because:

- They can be harmful to infants, children, and vulnerable adults.
- They contribute to water quality problems throughout the watershed.
- Once groundwater is contaminated, cleanup is difficult and costly.

Signs of Trouble

Watch for these indicators that your system may need attention:

- Slow drains or gurgling sounds in plumbing
- Sewage odors indoors or outside near the drain field
- Pooled water or unusually green patches of grass over the drain field

Catching issues early helps avoid costly repairs and protects your neighbors' water supply.

Best Practices for Homeowners

- **Pump regularly:** Most households need septic tanks pumped every 3-5 years. Larger families or homes with heavy water use may require more frequent service.
- **Be mindful of what goes down the drain:** Avoid flushing wipes, grease, chemicals, or other materials that don't break down naturally.
- **Schedule inspections:** A licensed professional can check for cracks, leaks, or other problems that may not be visible.
- **Protect the drain field:** Don't park vehicles or build structures on top of it, and divert roof runoff or surface water away from the area.

A Community Responsibility

Every septic system is connected through the groundwater beneath us. Properly maintaining your system protects not only your home but also your neighbors and the entire District.

Protecting your septic system protects everyone's water.

WINTER-PROOFING YOUR HOME

Frozen pipes and water line breaks are costly and disruptive. To protect your home:

- ✓ Keep indoor temperatures at or above 55°F, even if you're away.
- ✓ Open cabinet doors under sinks to circulate warm air.
- ✓ Drain and shut off outdoor spigots.
- ✓ Know where your inside shut-off valve is located.

Learn more in our full winterizing guide at:
grco.de/winterizing

FINDING YOUR INSIDE SHUT-OFF VALVE

In an emergency, minutes matter. Every homeowner should know where their inside shut-off valve is located. Typically, it's:

- ✓ Near the foundation where water enters the home.
- ✓ In basements, crawl spaces, or utility closets.

Mark it clearly and make sure all household members know how to operate it.

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.
- There are several punch list items that are prohibiting us from getting the new GWUDI Treatment process completely online. We have filed for a second 3-month extension of the project. We are continuing to treat the water to stay in compliance. We fervently hope that the vendors will comply with our instructions and the problems with the new processes allow us to have this issue resolved by 11/1/2025.

The District anticipates resolving this problem by November 1, 2025. For more information, please contact Sue E Morford at smorford1453@gmail.com, 719-660-5148 or 3136 Blue Mesa Drive, Divide, CO 80814.

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

This notice is being sent to you by: Highland Lakes Water District - C00160200 Date distributed: 9/30/2025

5 FALL TIPS TO PROTECT YOUR DRINKING WATER

1. **Disconnect and drain hoses** - Prevent trapped water from freezing and backing up into your plumbing.
2. **Insulate exposed pipes** - Use foam pipe insulation or heat tape for crawl spaces, basements, or outdoor lines.
3. **Know your inside shut-off valve** - If a pipe bursts, shutting off water quickly minimizes damage.
4. **Check septic tank maintenance** - Pumping on schedule helps protect groundwater from contamination.
5. **Rake responsibly** - Keep leaves, grass clippings, and yard waste out of ditches and drainage areas to reduce pollutants in runoff.

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

- **Monthly Board Meetings** - Third Tuesday of each month, 6:00 PM, Community Building

QUOTE OF THE QUARTER

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure—especially when it comes to protecting clean water." - Benjamin Franklin (adapted)



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STAY IN THE KNOW WITH HLWD!

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

Website

highlandlakeswaterdistrict.colorado.gov

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Newsletter Editor

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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.