



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Winter 2024

NEXT PUBLIC MEETING:

Wednesday January 8, 2025
Starting at 10:00 am
Highlands conference room
181 NW Highland Drive

UTILITY RATE INCREASE IN 2025

Each Fall, Highlands Utility District conducts an annual review of finances and develops a budget for the upcoming year. During the December 11 public meeting, our Board of Commissioners approved the 2025 budget along with a proposed adjustment in rates and fees—our first increase in sewer and stormwater rates since 2018.

A significant reason for this increase is the impact of inflation on the cost of equipment and services to operate your utility systems, along with the cost of replacing a portion of our water meters every year, and adding cross-connection control devices as described in our May 2024 News and Announcements.

Your utility costs are comprised of a base fee for service, plus a water usage fee based on your water consumption. The water usage fee currently mirrors The Highlands’ water usage fee system, which charges a lower winter rate from September 15 to May 14, and a three-tiered peak usage higher rate from May 15 to September 14. As of January 2025, the District expects to adjust the usage tier levels and to transition to the three-tiered rate structure year-round, while continuing to use SPU’s published peak usage rates.

Base Service Fees:

Service Type	Meter Size	Current Fee per Month	Proposed Fee per Month
Sewer:	N.A.	\$200/month	\$225/month
Stormwater*	N.A.	\$350/month	\$375/month
Water Meter	1" or less	\$75/month	\$100/month
"	>1" to 2"	\$100/month	\$125/month
"	> 2"	\$200/month	TBD

**includes repayment for a bond offering*

Water Usage Rates:

Schedule	Current Rates	Proposed Rates
Sept. 15–May 14	SPU Off-Peak Usage Rates	SPU Peak Usage Rates
May 15–Sept. 14	SPU Peak Usage Rates	SPU Peak Usage Rates

	Current Tier Levels	Proposed Tier Levels
Tier 1	First 15 ccf	First 10 ccf
Tier 2	Next 24 ccf	Next 15 ccf
Tier 3	>39 ccf	>25 ccf

These increases are expected to generate about \$140,000 in annual revenue, some of which will offset inflationary costs, and allow the District to continue replacing a portion of our water meters each year, and to add cross-connection control devices as necessary in order to protect the quality of the water in the system (see our May 2024 newsletter for a more complete description of the cross-connection policy). The District’s Board of Commissioners is expected to adopt these new Fees and Charges at its January 8, 2025 public meeting.

HOW TO AVOID FROZEN PIPES

1. Disconnect and drain all garden hoses and drip irrigation lines.
2. Insulate exterior pipes and faucets with electric heat tape; or wrap with insulation, cover with plastic, and secure with string or wire.
3. Insulate interior pipes and faucets located in cold areas of your home (including unheated attics, basements, garages and sheds) the same way as Step 2.
4. Locate your home’s water shut-off valve and test it prior to an emergency, so you can stop excessive water loss and flooding if a pipe breaks.

Additional Measures

5. If you have a yard sprinkler system, drain and blow out the system completely.
6. On extra cold nights, open the doors of closets or cabinets that are located near water pipes on your home’s exterior walls.
7. If you don’t mind a slightly higher utility bill, let one indoor faucet slowly drip warm water overnight during below-freezing temperatures. Just don’t do this in a house that will be vacant for an extended time.
8. For maximum protection, apply caulk around incoming pipes, and close or block your home’s foundation vents during the coldest months (just remember to reopen them once the threat of freezing has passed in order to prevent dry rot).