

# MEADOW LAKE COUNTY WATER & SEWER DISTRICT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## Who Are We?

The Meadow Lake County Water & Sewer District was formed February 6, 1984 as a duly authorized non-profit corporation to provide water and sewer services to users pursuant to Section 7-13-2214, Montana Code Annotated. Management of the District is the responsibility of the five members of Board of Directors, elected by members of the District every other November. The current Directors are:

Ann Stephens, President/Director  
--VACANT--, Vice President/Director  
Patrick Halter, Secretary/Director  
Dean Berkram, Treasurer/Director  
Graham Pye, Director

The Board meets on an irregular schedule, but all members are encouraged to attend and participate in meetings. Meeting notices are posted at [www.meadowlakemontana.com](http://www.meadowlakemontana.com) and at all bulletin boards throughout the community.

## How do I get in touch with the District?

### Administration Questions:

Contact: Barb Riley  
P. O. Box 2366  
Columbia Falls, MT 59912  
Acctg Office: (406) 897-3540 (texts allowed); M-F 9a-5p (Mtn Time)  
Email: [mlws@meadowlakemontana.com](mailto:mlws@meadowlakemontana.com)

### Billing Questions (effective 1/15/2023):

Contact: APU Billing Services  
P. O. Box 1139  
Kalispell, MT 59903  
TEL: (406) 393-2126  
Email: [accounting@aputilities.com](mailto:accounting@aputilities.com)

### Emergencies:

#### The District's facilities (water shut offs & emergencies):

Contact: Alpine Pacific Utilities,  
Marc Liechti, Water Operator (24/7)...(406) 261-4810  
Justin Ahmann (backup), 406-393-2127

#### Your facility:

Contact your plumber.

## Our Water Sources:

Our water sources are two deep wells: Well #1 is 743' deep; Well #2 is 750' deep. We have over 350 service connections on our system. Our drinking water is safe and meets federal and state requirements. Tests are performed on a scheduled basis as required by the Montana Department

of Environmental Quality. If you have questions concerning the water, contact Barb Riley at (406) 897-3540.

## **The City of Columbia Falls, by Contract, Processes our Sewage**

A sewer line, roughly 8,000 feet, extends from the southern boundary of Meadow Lake to the Columbia Falls processing plant. The City calculates your monthly sewage charge based on their own formulas adding a premium of 25% because Meadow Lake is not in the city. They meter our total sewage; they provide no repair or maintenance services to our District.

## **How Do I Get Water & Sewer Service?**

### **Application for Service**

An "Application for Service" is attached and must be completed prior to beginning construction. An "Application for Service" is also required on property transfers.

### **Meter and Remote Reading Requirement**

Effective July 2003 the District established the following meter and remote as its standard:

#### **For Single Family Residential:**

INVENSYS, Model SR II 5/8" x 3/4", including a remote reader pad & GPS sensus unit. The meter and remote/GPS reader, including connectors, is available from the District at a cost of \$500.00 (cost subject to change based on manufacturer's rate at time of order). The homeowner shall arrange for installation at his/her cost.

#### **For Multi-Family Residential and Commercial:**

Prices vary according to size needed. The specification is the appropriate INVENSYS, Model SR II with larger diameter(s) and remote reader. The District's purchasing program is available; the District's cost will be passed through with no mark-up.

The remote reading device must be placed in a position easily accessible to our meter reading personnel to the front of the building (facing roadway), at a height that will not be blocked by snow, landscape, or other items. Should you have any questions about the placement of the remote reading device, call Barb Riley at (406) 897-3540.

### **Ownership of Meter/Meter Replacement**

While the applicant purchases the original meter and remote reading device, the District thereafter owns it. The District will make replacements, at no charge to the homeowner, after certain time periods, usages or mechanical failure.

### **Responsibility for Repairs and Maintenance:**

The customer will assume all responsibility beyond the point of delivery (service shut off) for water supplied by the District. The District will be exempt from all liability for loss or damage caused by leakage or escape of water furnished by the District, after the same has passed the point of delivery. All service pipes and fixtures on the premises of the customer must be kept in good repair and protected from freezing by the customer. Where there are leaking or defective pipes or fixtures, the water may be turned off at the option of the District until the proper repairs are made.

### **Hook-up Fees:**

New services must:

1. Agree to notify their construction contractors to use the eastern entry of St. Andrews Drive, Meadow Lake Drive or west entrance of Mountain Watch at Turnberry Terrace.
2. Purchase the District's approved meter and remote reading device.

## **Meadow Lake County Water & Sewer District Policies and Procedures**

3. Provide their own construction, in accordance with specifications including the Uniform Building Code (UBC), Uniform Plumbing Code (UPC), and requirements of the Montana State Water Quality Bureau, from the water shut off to the home.
4. Provide their own construction, in accordance with specifications including the Uniform Building Code (UBC), Uniform Plumbing Code (UPC), and requirements of the Montana State Water Quality Bureau, to the sewer.
5. Pay a hook-up fee (which increases 8% per year.) The single-family hook up fee as of January 1, 2024, is \$6,150.00, plus cost of meter & remote. Multiple unit projects pay a hook-up fee for each dwelling unit. Effective 1/1/2025, hookup fee will be \$6,300.00.
6. Connections into all phases of Mountain Watch/Tamarack Heights are subject to the City of Columbia Falls "Plant Investment Fee" in the amount of \$655.64. This amount is in addition to the "hook-up" fee and is collected as part of the hook-up fee invoicing process.
7. Water service will not be turned on at the curb to new construction until verification of hookup fee payments, and approved meter and remote devices have been installed and are confirmed to be in proper working order.

**Note to purchasers of lots in the western Meadow Lake subdivision (Meadow Lake Estates): Connecting to the water and sewer system may be more difficult than expected. The system was built in the mid-1970's and may not have curb stops for water hook-ups. In addition, while the water and sewer services are in the street in front or back of all lots, the exact location may not be precisely known. Construction costs for hooking into both the water and sewer may be more costly than hooking into other phases of the Meadow Lake subdivision. Please consult with your engineer and/or builder. Please be aware of the notes above that require the lot owner to pay for all costs of connecting to both the water and sewer services; the District will not pay for any portion of the construction costs associated therewith.**

**Monthly Water & Sewer Rates:** Water & Sewer rates are reviewed as necessary, no less frequently than bi-annually, and adjusted to meet the needs of the District. Any increase or decreases in sewer rates imposed by the City of Columbia Falls will be passed along effective on the date those increases or decreases are received.

**Current (set in October 2023) Water:**

Base Monthly Rate, \$22.50 per VRU (Volume Ratio Unit). (Note: all single-family residences are one VRU because the size of their water service is 5/8"-3/4". The number of VRU's each larger service establishment is assigned is proportional to the area of the service. Therefore a 1.5" water service is assigned 4 VRU's. A 2" service is assigned 7.11 VRU's. A 3" service is assigned 16 VRU's.)

Plus \$1.46 per 1000 gallons used. (Note: This rate does not change based on usage. If there were no usage, there would be no usage charge. If a user used 100,000 gallons in a month, variable charge of \$146.00 would be added to their base rate.)

**Current (set in October 2023) Sewer:**

Base Monthly Rate, \$22.50

Plus Usage Charge equal to Columbia Falls' Fee:

The Columbia Falls fee is \$6.25 per thousand gallons registered on the water meter modified as follows:

- o From November 1 to April 30, the billing is the actual amount of water shown on the meter.
- o From May 1 through October 31, the city assumes excess water is used for irrigation. Consequently, they take the average usage from December to February and bill the lesser of the average versus actual usage each month from May through October.

## **Payment Requirements/Shut Offs and Terminations**

1. The property owner is responsible for payments of amounts due. Renters can be billed in accordance with an owner's written request, but the owner guarantees the debt of any renter.
2. Payment is due by month end following billing; unpaid accounts are charged a late fee equal to 1.5% per month on the outstanding balance. There is a \$35 charge for NSF checks.
3. Late fees are assessed when payment is greater than 30 days late.
4. The District has the authority to utilize Flathead County's property tax assessment mechanism to collect outstanding balances. In August each year, customer accounts are reviewed, and delinquent balances are transferred to the property tax invoice for the landowner of record for the physical service connection.
5. The District has hardship procedures available on a case-by-case review.
6. Any costs, including reasonable attorney's fees, incurred by the District in the collection of any debt from the property owner, shall be borne by the property owner.

## **Other Provisions and Agreements:**

1. Certain Discharges into the District's Sewage System are Not Permitted:
  - i. Any stormwater, surface water, groundwater, roof runoffs, subsurface drainage, uncontaminated cooling water or unpolluted industrial process waters.
  - ii. Any gasoline, benzene, naphtha, fuel oil, or other flammable or explosive liquid, solid or gas, or high concentrations of waste material such as septic or vault toilet residue.
  - iii. Any waters or wastes containing toxic or poisonous solids, liquids, or gases in sufficient quantity, either singly or by interaction with other wastes, to injure or interfere with any sewage treatment process, constitutes a hazard to humans or animals, create a public nuisance, or create any hazard in receiving waters of the sewage treatment plant.
  - iv. Any water or wastes having a pH lower than 5.5 or having any other corrosive property capable of causing damage or hazard to sewers, structures, equipment and personnel of the sewage works.
  - v. Solid or viscous substances in quantities or of such a size capable of causing obstruction to the flow in sewers, or the other interference with the proper operation of the sewage works, such as but not limited to, ashes, cinders, sand, mud, straw, shavings, metal, glass, rags, feathers, tar, plastics, wood, underground garbage, whole blood, paunch manure, hair and fleshings, entrails and paper dishes, cups, milk containers, etc., either whole or ground by garbage grinders.
2. Entry onto Property Owner's Property: The District's General Manager and other duly authorized employees or representatives of the District shall be permitted to enter upon all properties at a reasonable hour for the purpose of inspection, observation, measurement, sampling, and testing in accordance with the provisions of this document.
3. Liability to District. Any person who shall violate any provision of this document shall be liable to the District for any expense, loss, damage, cost of inspection or cost of correction incurred by the District by reason of such violation, including any expense incurred by the District in collection from such person of such loss, damage, expense, cost of inspection or cost of correction.

## **Questions?**

Call either Barb Riley at (406) 897-3540, or any of the Directors.

**MEADOW LAKE COUNTY WATER & SEWER DISTRICT  
APPLICATION FOR SERVICE**

- This is an application for a new service connection. Please complete Sections A and B.**
- This is an application because of a property transfer. Please complete Section B.**

<b>Lot #</b>	<b>Street Address (Columbia Falls)</b>	<b>Phone</b>
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Section A. (To be completed by property owners requiring a new service connection.) Please check all boxes and sign below.

- I have read and agree to the policies and procedures set forth in the District’s statement.**
- I agree to the new service requirements and agree to pay a hook-up fee in approximately the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.**

Section B. (To be completed by new residents and new property owners.) Please check all boxes and sign below.

- I have read and agree to the policies and procedures set forth in the District’s statement.**
- I agree to the District’s “Payment Requirements/Shut Offs and Terminations” provisions.**

**Signatures of Property Owners:**

<b>Print &amp; Sign Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Print &amp; Sign Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Primary Mailing Address</b>	<b>Phone (required)</b>
<b>Email Address</b>	<b><u>Mail or Email</u> (circle one) Preferred Method of Billing</b>

Please return to Meadow Lake Water & Sewer District, P.O. Box 2366, Columbia Falls, and MT 59912