

# WATER POLICY

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The County of Northern Lights prioritizes the supply of potable water to its residents, and businesses.

The Water Policy aims to set clear principles for the ongoing growth and distribution of municipal water services in areas deemed economically viable.

These guidelines are designed to regulate the expansion in a controlled manner, aligning with the overall well-being of the entire County.

  
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Chief Elected Official

  
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Chief Administrative Officer

# Water Policy Goals

## 1. Fair Access (Availability) to Potable Water

The extensive size of the County of Northern Lights presents various challenges in supplying potable water to its residents, and businesses. Due to the geographical limitations and varying population density throughout the County, achieving economically viable uniform service levels is not feasible. The Council and Administration are committed to gradually equalizing service levels over time. While there may be variations in the level of service and water availability, the County aims to maintain uniform pricing as outlined in the "Schedule of Fees Bylaw".

## 2. Cost of Water

Water serves as a vital utility, and residents as well as businesses rely on a predictable cost for water. The County, acting both as a producer and purchaser of potable water, has limited control over setting water prices. The price of County water is dependant on the price the County is charged by the Town of Peace River and the Town of Manning. The water supply is subsidized with tax dollars, resulting in rates that fall short of covering the service delivery costs. Achieving full cost recovery for potable water proves challenging in the County due to its geographical constraints and small populations.

The Council and Administration are striving to reach full cost recovery by adjusting water rates, connection fees, and minimizing operational costs. During the annual operating budget preparation, the actual cost of water production and supply will be calculated and compared to the current water prices with the aim of reducing the disparity each year.

## **Rural Water System**

The County owns and operates 3 rural water systems, in Dixonville, Manning and Peace River which deliver water through direct connection to resident's homes, and businesses. The system is supplied water from the Town of Manning and Town of Peace River. Some of the County truck fills are used as reservoirs and pumping stations for rural water. All water is metered at the resident's homes, and businesses then billed monthly.

## **System Expansion**

1. Annually, as part of budget deliberations, Council decides whether to fund and construct an expansion of the Rural Water System. Factors influencing the decision include the number of requests, competing priorities, budget constraints and available grant funding.
2. Residents and business may apply any time to express their interest in being connected to the Rural Water System. The Public Works Administration will maintain an updated list of interested applicants. Residents and businesses may add or remove their names from the list at anytime. There is no cost for application. There is no commitment from the County that a connection will be made.
3. When a project is included in an annual capital budget, administration and the County's consulting engineers hired for the project will prepare potential project alternatives for Council review and acceptance. The project alternatives will be based on connecting the most number of residents, and businesses with the available budget for the project. Council may also direct the project to target certain locations at their discretion.
4. Council will review the costs of each potential project, but projects which exceed an average cost of \$58,000 per connection will not be approved. Where the overall cost of a phase is increased by the cost of portions of the system (lines, valves, booster station, etc.) being upsized to service future phases, those incremental costs will not be included in determining the average per hookup costs.
5. The connection fee is the resident's or businesses contribution to the project and includes both costs for labour and materials on their land, and off- site costs. If the connection is to an existing dwelling it includes all the costs of the install into the house.

Additional plumbing costs at the request of the resident or business will be at their own cost.

6. Requests from residents or businesses who wish to pay for the full cost of connection and not wait to be part of an expansion project will be reviewed and approved by the Director of Public Works. The full construction cost of connection will be borne by the business or homeowner/resident. If the direct costs to connect is less than the current connection fee, the difference will be paid to the County. The minimum cost to connect to the system is the connection fee in all circumstances. The Director of Public Works must also approve the contractor and all materials planned for the connection.

### **Rural Water System Connection**

1. The cost of connecting to the Rural Water System will be reviewed yearly and updated in the "Schedule of Fees Bylaw"
2. Residents or businesses that are located within 200m of an existing distribution line may apply at anytime to be connected, however only applications received before July 1 of that construction year will be considered for that year's installations.
3. Where a landowner requires the waterline across his/her property to access water for their own home quarter, the County will not provide crop damage on that portion of the waterline. This is in recognition that the provision of water is a subsidy to the landowner and they should therefore not benefit twice by also being paid for the crop loss. Where the same landowner has easements on other properties, they will receive payment for crop damage on those lands as per the County's policy "Land Acquisition for Municipal Projects Policy" as set in the Schedule of Fees Bylaw.
4. Any addition to the system that requires an upsized line, will be required to have engineering design to which the cost will be incurred by the applicant.

### **Idle Services**

1. When a resident or business pays for a connection to a vacant property as part of an expansion project for a future development the line will be installed to the property and a curb stop will be installed. This is defined to as an Idle Service.

2. Idle Services will be charged an Idle Service Fee as outlined in the “Schedule of Fee’s Bylaw.”
3. The connection fee for an Idle Service includes the installation of the water line to the curb stop. Only, the meter and required pressure regulator will be supplied at the time of development by the County. The pipe materials and installation costs at the time of development will not be paid by the County.
4. The County must inspect the full install before the service will be turned on. Developers, Homeowners, or Contractors must request an inspection of all lines and plumbing connected to the system. A minimum of two business days notice is required for an inspection. Lines buried or bored without an inspection or County personnel present will have to be re-excavated or replaced if an inspection is not requested.

Owners wishing to terminate the “Line Fee” charge for the idle services, forfeit the property’s consideration as a serviced property, and will have to repay the full connection fee, when they wish to be connected.

### **System Design and Maintenance**

1. County of Northern Lights Water Bylaw is referenced for operation and maintenance of the rural waterline system. Rural water connections past the curb stop maintenance falls upon the resident or business not the County.
2. Once the warranty period has ended, the County will repair/ replace the components of the water meter assembly, this includes the meter, pressure release valve, gauges, check valve and screen at the resident’s expense, as per the Schedule of Fees.
3. When utilities staff are called out after 4:30 p.m. Monday to Thursday, or 3:00 p.m. Fridays, or anytime on the weekend or Stat holidays, there will be a call out fee as well as an hourly fee charged to the resident as per the Schedule of Fees.
4. New phases and/or expansions will be designed by a qualified engineering firm as approved by the Director of Public Works.
5. During the project design phase Council may choose a trickle system or a pressure system. The decision of a pressure or trickle system will be based on cost and water pressures. Where a minimum of 40 psi cannot be achieved the service will be a trickle

system.

## **Subdivisions and Developments**

1. New subdivisions or area structure plans that have greater than 5 lots proposed and are within 1.6 kilometers of an existing water distribution line will be required to install water lines meeting County specifications as a condition of the subdivision.
2. All costs will be the responsibility of the property developer. Each lot within the subdivision will still be required to pay the connection fee to access the County water service.
3. New multiple tenant buildings will be charged one connection fee plus all the costs of upsizing the line to accommodate the increased volume, as well as any costs associated with installing multiple meters, booster stations, or other required offsite infrastructure.

## **Truck Fills**

The County owns and maintains truck-fills located in the Southern portion of the County in Weberville, Warrensville, Dixonville, Deadwood and in the Northern Portion at North Star, East Manning, Notikewin, Hotchkiss, and Keg River (A stand alone Water Treatment Plant).

1. The rural water system capacity is designed and constructed based on supplying potable drinking water to County residents for residential and business use.
2. As the system is designed for a large growth factor of residential and business usage over many years, there is currently excess capacity in the system. This excess capacity can be utilized for Commercial, Farming, and Industrial usage. Businesses, Commercial, Farming Operations, and Industrial Operators are encouraged to apply for an account and purchase water. Large volume users shall talk to the County Administration about the availability of large volumes of water. County administration will immediately suspend any account which is having any negative impacts or potential impacts on the system, or that have not reported large volume to inquire about availability.
3. As some of the truck-fill capacity is dependant upon the reservoir capacity of the raw water reservoirs (West of Manning). The availability of selling water for Commercial, Farm, and Industrial usage may vary, and large volume users may be restricted or suspended at anytime.

## **Hamlet Water System**

All residences and businesses within a Hamlet are required to be connected to the distribution water system. In Hamlets, the distribution system:

1. Water rates will be set through the Schedule of Fees bylaw.
2. The installation of water services will be through either pre-payment or local improvement.
3. If there are multiple locations for water servicing and they are not adjacent to each other, separate local improvement plans may be required.

## **Community Water Systems (CWS)**

Community water supplies were constructed in rural areas as a source of water for farms and acreages prior to development of federal and provincial potable water standards. These water supplies are located in Hawk Hills, Bear Creek, Warrensville, Weberville North, Weberville South, Reinwood, Sunny Valley, Hotchkiss, and Carcajou.

1. These sites will be marked with “Non-potable Water” signs.
2. The decision to conduct major repairs or replacement to non-potable water infrastructure will be at the discretion of Council.
3. Community water supplies that are deemed to be beyond their useful life will be taken out of service at the sole discretion of the Council.
4. Wherever possible, a six month notice of closure will be given for any CWS that will be closing with the notice posted at the CWS as well as through local newspaper, website, social media, etc.
5. The disposal of a CWS site is permitted and will follow the following process:
  - a. The County may retain surface water CWS’s (dugouts) as a source of water for dust control and firefighting purposes.

- b. Offered to the owner of the balance of the quarter at a price established by Council or the County may sell the land and well in accordance with the asset disposal policy.

### **Private Water and Co-op Systems**

Private waterlines and Private water co-ops are not affiliated with the County of Northern Lights. Governance of these private systems are Provincially regulated and inquiries should be directed to the Province of Alberta or to the owners of the waterline.

Financial assistance requests should be directed towards Council Grants.

The Weberville Water Co-op is not the responsibility of the County of Northern Lights.

### **Administration**

1. Refer to the County Water and Wastewater bylaw for other conditions of service.
2. Refer to the County Schedule of Fees Bylaw for current prices.