

#SWUA

Sage Water Users Association Handbook

Introduction

This handbook is designed for all Sage Water Users Association (SWUA) members to use as a quick reference guide and to answer the majority of frequently asked questions regarding the water system. Its purpose is to give residents a better understanding of: policies and procedures; the water system; how water is obtained; the operation; repairs and maintenance; and how residents are charged for the water usage. This handbook is subordinate to the SWUA Articles of Incorporation and by-laws. Copies of the SWUA Articles of Incorporation and by-laws are located on the website at sagewater.org.

Important Information

- In case of water outage or service issue, call or text 719-660-3076. SWUA has a system update line at 719-222-2955. However this number is being phased out in 2024.
- To get the fastest information on a water outage or other important information, subscribe to the Association email group by texting your email address to 719-660-3076.
- Outage information is also available at 719-660-3076 or 719-222-2955.
- For billing information or questions, email contact@sagewater.org.
- Bill payments are due by the 25th of each month. After the 25th, a late fee will be charged.
- **The only personnel authorized to access shut off valves or meter pits are those acting on behalf of SWUA or the SWUA maintenance contractor.**

Policies and Procedures

Only the actual homeowner will have an account and one (1) vote in the SWUA. Renters do not have accounts or have voting rights in the SWUA. In disputes between homeowners and renters regarding water service, **the homeowner is required to submit a written request for the water to be shut off to the SWUA board before any action will be taken.**

SWUA holds an annual meeting for members in the fall in October or November. The time and location of this meeting will always be announced no more than 60 and no less than 30 days in advance. All SWUA members are invited to attend this meeting. Officers and Board members are elected at this meeting so a quorum is required. This meeting also provides an opportunity for members to express their concerns; meet the board and officers; and have input into your Sage Water Users Association. Your attendance at this meeting is vitally important to the smooth and continued operation of SWUA.

Regular board meetings are held on the third Tuesday of odd numbered months (Jan, Mar, May, etc). Meetings begin at 7 PM. Meetings are held at the Sage Creek Church on Murr Road. All SWUA members are welcome and encouraged to attend board meetings. Representatives of other interests will be allowed to attend SWUA board meetings by invitation only.

SWUA does not operate an office. The SWUA manager can be reached by phone at 719-660-3076. The SWUA bookkeeper can be reached at contact@sagewater.org. The Association also has an email group through mailchimp. Residents are encouraged to join this group as it is the first line of communication for water outages and other important information. To join the email group, please text your email address to 719-660-3076. In addition, messages are also placed on the phone line and the website – sagewater.org,

There are four ways to pay bills:

1. Mail to SWUA, 7661 McLaughlin Rd, #291, Falcon, CO 80831 (This is not recommended as mail can be very slow)
2. Place in drop box on Max Road on south side of church -Box has SWUA on the side
3. Pay online at Payclix. Link is located on website at www.sagewater.org
4. Engage automatic payments through Payclix

History and Background

SWUA was incorporated in July 1986 as a nonprofit corporation. It's primary purpose is to maintain the water distribution system and deliver water to the Sage Creek North, Sage Creek South, and Blue Sage subdivisions.

SWUA does not own or operate any water wells or water storage capabilities. The Association purchases water from Mid-Colorado Investments (MCI) which owns and operates two (2) deep wells, a 30,000 gallon storage reservoir, and a booster pump station. Water is delivered to the SWUA system through a main water meter. The MCI well pumps operate on 3 phase electric power supplied by Mountain View Electric Association (MVEA) and are backed up with a 3-phase diesel generator. The booster station operates on single-phase electric power from MVEA and is partially backed up by a generator.

SWUA does not treat or alter the water delivered to your residence. MCI chlorinates the water and together MCI and SWUA are responsible for performing water quality and safety tests mandated by Federal and State laws. The quality of our water is "as delivered" by MCI. All water systems in the United States are required, by federal law, to generate and deliver an Annual Drinking Water Quality Report to every customer served by the system. This report lists several of the possible contaminants known to exist in water systems and the results of the analytical tests that SWUA and MCI have performed to detect these contaminants. This report is mailed to all residents in June. In addition, copies of the current report are available online at www.sagewater.org. SWUA's contractor also randomly tests water each month at various locations. These reports are available upon request.

The SWUA distribution system consists of 6 inch diameter main lines (mains) which reduce to 2-3 inch branch lines which are then tapped to provide water to homes. Isolation (shut-off) valves are placed in strategic locations throughout the system to enable repairs with disruption to a minimum number of users. All piping is PVC and is buried below the frost line. SWUA maintains maps of the subdivisions showing the location and size of the lines and isolation valves. Each lot that SWUA provides with water has a water meter and a shut-off valve.

Operation

Homeowners own the Sage Water Users Association. Each residence is allotted one (1) vote in the SWUA. A board consisting of five (5) directors conducts business operations. The board determines the direction of the SWUA, within the guidelines of the SWUA Articles of Incorporation and by-laws, by means of a majority vote of the directors. Board directors make the final decisions regarding all issues before the Association. Board directors are elected at the annual SWUA meeting held in the fall. A director's term is 3 years. Generally two (2) directors are elected or reelected each year.

SWUA officers consist of a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and one at large position. The president (vice president in the president's absence) conducts the SWUA board meetings and acts as a point of contact to outside agencies (i.e. developers, water suppliers, and government agencies). The secretary prepares minutes of the board meetings, correspondence, and documentation. The treasurer is responsible for tracking SWUA finances. SWUA officers are current board members and elected by the directors. All director and officer posts are unpaid, uncompensated, volunteer positions.

Currently SWUA has contracts for: account management; billing and accounting; meter reading; the monthly and periodic water quality tests for which the Association is responsible; and maintenance and repair of the distribution system.

Maintenance and Repair

SWUA is responsible for maintaining and repairing all of the distribution system lines (mains and branches) and isolation valves up to and including the first piping joint past the meter and meter loop on each lot. The Association has a contract with a local excavation firm to perform system maintenance.

SWUA requires each homeowner to keep the area around the meter pit free of weeds, debris, fencing, and animals. Please inspect this area frequently and verify the meter reader has full access to the meter pit. Most meter pits are located in utility easements to ensure access by both the meter reader and repair/maintenance crews.

There is a "T Post" (fence post) installed by each meter pit/shut off valve. This post allows the maintenance crews to locate the meter and shut off valve in the event of snow, soil infiltration, etc. This post also allows the Fire Department to quickly locate the valves in the event of an emergency. Please do not move or remove this post.

The only personnel authorized to access shut off valves or meter pits are those acting on behalf of SWUA or the SWUA maintenance contractor. SWUA reserves the right to file criminal trespassing charges against any individual who accesses any part of the SWUA water distribution system, including shut off valves and meters, without authorization. Each account (household) is allowed one free courtesy shut off every 90 days for emergencies (for example, leaks). All other shut offs will pay a \$50 fee to the maintenance company at the time of shutoff.

Sand, and other particulates, are naturally occurring in well supplied waters systems like the SWUA water system. While the well owners treat the water, and both the well owners and SWUA test the water to ensure compliance with state and federal drinking water regulations, neither the well owners nor SWUA filter the water for sand or other particulates. Sand can also get into the system through breaks or during repairs. If sand is a concern, SWUA recommends contacting a plumbing professional to install a house filter in your home. SWUA will not reimburse for damage due to sand, or other particulates, or for the cost of filtering systems or filtering system components.

Article 12 of the Colorado Primary Drinking Water Regulations states a public water system shall have no uncontrolled cross-connections to a pipe, fixture, or supply, any of which contain water not meeting provisions of the Colorado Primary Drinking Water Regulations. A cross-connection is any point in a water distribution system where chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants may come into contact with potable water. During a backflow event, these contaminants can be drawn or pushed back into the potable water system.

Billing

The SWUA billing structure is based on the city of Colorado Springs suburban rates and consists of a monthly commodity charge, a maintenance fee, and a charge per cubic foot of water used.

SWUA water bills consist of three parts: a commodity charge, a customer charge, and a maintenance fee. The commodity charge is for actual water used and as of July, 2023 is billed at a rate of either \$7.09 per ccf for usage under 1400 ccf and \$8.09 per ccf for usage

over 1400 ccf. The second part is a customer charge. Currently this charge is \$24.68. The commodity charge and the customer charge are added together and show up on the bill as ‘Water.’ The third part of the bill is a maintenance fee of \$20.

Residents are billed each month for the total amount (to the nearest cubic foot) of water used since the meter was last read. Bills will be mailed on or before the 10th of each month. Bills can also be accessed on Payclix. Payments are due no later than the 25th of the month in which they are mailed.

A \$100.00 fee is charged to establish an account. If a home is sold, the account is closed. The new homeowner will be required to pay a \$100.00 fee before water service can begin.

Past Due Accounts

PAST DUE POLICY: Payments are due no later than the **25th of the month** in which customers receive them. Any payment not **received** by 3 PM the 25th of the month (in which the payment is due) will be assessed a \$5 late charge the first month. Any account that is 30 or more days delinquent will be assessed an additional late fee of \$30. Any account that is 60 or more days delinquent will be assessed an additional \$30 late fee and this fee will continue to accrue each month until paid. Properties with more than one residential structure or unit will be charged per residential structure or unit as of July 1, 2023.

Any account receiving a Final Notice prior to being shut off will be charged a \$15 Collection Fee, and any account not paid by the 25th day of the second month after the bill is due will result in the water to the property being turned off. To reestablish water service in the event of the water being turned off, SWUA will require a nonrefundable \$50 reconnect fee per residential structure or unit, and a \$50 deposit which will be refunded after a one (1) year history of acceptable payments. SWUA will charge \$26.25 to process returned checks.

This handbook was prepared, edited, and approved by the SWUA board and officers.

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