



# HIGHRIDGE WATER AUTHORITY

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## **BACKGROUND**

**1906.** A subsidiary of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, the High Ridge Water Supply Company was established to construct a water supply system solely to provide water for the railroad at their New Florence, Lockport, Bolivar, Hillside and Josephine water stations and the engine houses at Blairsville, Derry, and Latrobe.

**1935 to 1982** – Due to dieselization, water use by the railroad had declined significantly by 1953, and the railroad began selling its water subsidiaries. The new owner, General Waterworks Corporation (Philadelphia), began pursuing inquiries regarding the desirability of residents in Hillside, Torrance, Brenizer, Robb, Black Lick and Armagh to obtain water for domestic use.

**1982 to 1991** – Renamed the Central Pennsylvania Water Supply Company by new owners. During this period, Mace Springs Water Company of Bolivar and Ninevah Water Company (Penelec) in Seward were purchased thereby adding approximately 1,000 new customers to the system.

**1991 to Present** – Highridge Water Authority was formed by Indiana County Commissioners to purchase and begin improvements for bringing the water system into compliance with federal Safe Drinking Water legislation and to insure southern Indiana County's best interests are served. Approximately 1250 customers were added upon the merger into Highridge of Wheatfield Water Authority (1992), Derry Township Water Authority (1993) and Southeastern Indiana County Water Authority (1997). With expansion projects into the Westmoreland County communities of Hillside, Shirey Run, and Bairdstown and the areas of Dilltown, Gas Center, Strangford, Penn View, and Climax in Indiana County, Highridge Water Authority continued to grow. By 2010, the dissolution of neighboring Lower Indiana County Municipal Authority plus a twenty-five mile extension project to Buffington, Brush Valley, and Center Townships brought the total population served by Highridge to over 12,000 people. An eight mile extension project to the Sundial area of Derry Township welcomed 150 households. New Florence area residents became customers when that system consolidated with Highridge in 2014.

The three largest customers in the Highridge service territory are two electric generating stations located near Seward and New Florence, and Westinghouse, in Derry Township.

## OPERATIONS AND FACILITIES

### 1. Authority

A seven member board made up of Indiana and Westmoreland County residents is appointed by the Indiana County Commissioners to govern Highridge Water Authority. Board members serve five year terms.

### 2. Personnel

- a) Six management employees and eight utility workers comprise the workforce.
- b) On retainer are the following professionals:
  - Engineer: Gibson-Thomas Engineers, Latrobe
  - Solicitor: Matthew T. Budash, Indiana
  - Auditor: Rennie & Associates, Latrobe
  - Labor Management: Human Resources Group, Indiana

### 3. Facilities

- a) **General Business Offices:** 17 Maple Avenue Blairsville
- b) **Maintenance Office:** 193 Eighth Street, New Florence
- c) **Reservoirs:** The water supply consists of a series of spring fed mountain reservoirs with the combined storage capacity of 400 million gallons located near Seward and New Florence in Westmoreland County.
- d) **Distribution System:** Approximately 255 miles of water lines, ranging in size from 30" cast iron to 2" plastic and galvanized pipe, pass through many municipal borders including parts of East and West Wheatfield Townships, Brush Valley Township, Buffington Township, Burrell Township, Center Township, Armagh Borough, and Blairsville Borough in Indiana County and parts of St. Clair Township, Fairfield Township, Derry Township, Bolivar Borough, Derry Borough, New Florence Borough, and Seward Borough in Westmoreland County. Water mains criss-cross the Conemaugh River eleven times between Seward and Blairsville.
- e) **Treatment and Storage Facilities:** Two water filtration plants, with combined capacity of 4.5 million gallons/day, were constructed at a cost of \$5 million to comply with state and federal mandates. A total of 10.6 million gallons of water can be stored in fourteen storage tanks throughout the system.
- f) **Hydrants:** The system contains 660 hydrants.

## STATISTICS

### 1) Financial Highlights (2019)

Operating Revenues	(annual)	\$3.7 million
Operating Expenses	(annual)	\$2.3 million
Debt Service	(annual)	\$1.5 million
Total Authority Debt		\$9.9 million

#### Water Rates (per thousand gallons):

Residential/Commercial	\$ 8.60
Average Monthly Residential Bill	\$36.28

### 2) Consumption Breakdown (2019)

		Daily gallons
a)	Customers - total (5654)	1,269,444 gpd
	Residential (5265 customers)	493,255 gpd
	Commercial (385 customers)	121,496 gpd
	Industrial (4 customer)	617,085 gpd
b)	Major Customers Usage (2019)	
	Penelec – Conemaugh Station	301,688 gpd
	Penelec – Seward Station	138,323 gpd
	Westinghouse	35,474 gpd
c)	Periodic Customers (Emergency Only) (2019)	
	Blairsville Borough	
	Torrance State Hospital	
d)	School Districts (2019)	
	United	
	Ligonier Valley	
	Blairsville-Saltsburg	
e)	Customers by County (2019)	
	Westmoreland	2,179
	Indiana	3,472
	Cambria	<u>3</u>
		5,654 total
f)	Population Served by County (2019)	
	Westmoreland	3,903
	Indiana	8,067
	Cambria	<u>7</u>
		11,977 total

## **CONCLUSION:**

Since 1994, approximately \$34.8 million has been invested by Highridge for infrastructure improvements. Of this total, \$11 million has come from grants, courtesy of state and federal government infrastructure programs. Added to the system were two filtration plants, eight pump stations, nine water tanks, and 103 miles of new line extensions. The Authority also replaced five miles of outdated water mains, renovated a 130 million gallon reservoir, and repainted two 2.5 million gallon water tanks.

Local government officials and state government agencies have worked closely with Highridge Water Authority to address the public's growing demand for safe drinking water and the reliable service that a community water system can provide.

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