

Service Area News

Capital Regional District | 18 November, 2025

Water Quality

The Highland Fernwood water system is sourced from St. Mary Lake and the Fernwood water treatment plant (WTP). First in July and again in November 2025, the CRD was alerted to discoloration in the water. The water was sampled and results indicated elevated manganese concentrations. The source of the manganese was the raw water supply in the lake. The WTP is not normally set up to treat manganese although a process can be incorporated to assist which has shown recent short-term success.

The manganese issue in July was recognized and a temporary shallow intake was installed. The shallow intake provided raw water below the manganese limits from August to early fall. On November 4th, when water discoloration reappeared, the operations team immediately sampled the raw water and the distribution system sampling points. The Highland Fernwood Water Commission was notified of a possible issue while lab analysis was pending. The seasonal turnover of the lake had started resulting in higher manganese at the shallow intake. Operations sampled and switched to the deep intake, restarted the WTP along with initiating a chemical supported manganese treatment process. The extra treatment will continue until the lake stabilizes for winter.

Manganese concentration did not reach Health Canada maximum acceptable concentration (MAC is 120 ug/L) in November, so no advisory was issued. There are no immediate health effects, but the MAC is set to guard against potential risks from long-term exposure, especially in vulnerable populations like infants. A factsheet on manganese is available here. [Water Talk - Manganese in drinking water - Canada.ca](#)

Operations

The operations team collects water samples for lab analysis monthly as mandated by Island Health. The CRD employs certified water treatment and distribution operators that are experienced in water treatment plant operations and distribution system maintenance. The quick response according to the emergency response procedures and supported by the CRD water quality team resulted in no loss of supply and no water advisory required for the November manganese issue.

Flushing of the Highland Fernwood System

Strategic flushing of the Highland Fernwood system will commence as early as Nov 18 and extend through the week. The flushing will remove residual manganese from the distribution mains. Customers may experience low pressure and temporary discoloured water as a result.

If you notice any discolouration in your water, run your cold water taps until water runs clear, this should only be done after crews have finished flushing in your area. Please take caution and ensure that water is clear before drinking, showering, doing laundry or dishes.

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Capital Projects

The deep intake, commissioned in January 2025 is back in service after a temporary, shallow intake was used for the summer. The deep intake was expected to be utilized year-round. A capital project has been initiated for 2026 to modify the deep intake for seasonal use. This is in combination with a sampling program to determine optimal intake depth.

Compliance

Our water quality team communicates with Island Health on a regular basis and when there is an issue. When elevated manganese concentrations were first suspected, an operational and sampling plan was developed and provided to Island Health for comment. The exceedance of manganese in July also prompted Island Health communications and approval. As per Island Health, a Water Quality Advisory was issued for manganese greater than 120ug/L on 7 July and rescinded with approval from Island Health on 11 August 2025.

Commission

The Highland Fernwood Water Commission met on 7 November 2025 for the annual Budget Meeting. The budget was approved by the commission. The meeting agenda including staff report and budget can be found here: [Fernwood and Highland Water Service Commission- November 7, 2025 | Capital Regional District](#)

Contact Information

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