

Environmental Accomplishments

The Highlands Ranch Metro District believes helping the environment means going above and beyond the traditional green initiatives by proactively seeking out business practices and community services that are environmentally smart. The Metro District's environmental achievements are two-fold: The organization offers a variety of community events and programming to support earth-friendly practices; and the Metro District implements green policies and practices that go beyond mere environmental compliance.

Community events include:

- Tree and limb recycling
- Christmas tree recycling
- Household hazardous materials collection
- Trash for Treasures open space cleanup project for volunteers
- Renew the Ranch volunteer event
- Arbor Day activities



In addition, park rangers and staff lead [environmental education classes](#) and nature camps throughout the year for kids and adults that emphasize preservation of our outdoor resources.

The Metro District shares earth-friendly tips and information through two key ongoing public relations efforts: On the organization's website is a [Green Page](#), designed to offer information to residents about environmentally-friendly practices and tips. A Green Page is also featured in the *Messenger* magazine.

The Metro District staff have implemented a variety of green practices that positively affect our community. These include:

1. Three practices that led to fuel savings and pollution prevention.
 - Two hybrid vehicles perform on average at 29 and 35 miles per gallon resulting in roughly an 83 percent increase in miles per gallon.
 - An electric utility vehicle is used for park maintenance. One gallon of fuel is saved for every three hours this vehicle is driven.
 - A no idle policy requires staff to turn off their vehicles when not being driven. An auxiliary power supply system installed in six vehicles enables staff to operate a traffic warning light system with their vehicle turned off for an extended period of time. On average, 20 more travel miles per tank of fuel was gained and an increased efficiency of two more miles per gallon per vehicle was achieved when the idle policy went into place and the auxiliary power supply system was installed.
2. Three Sybertech trash receptacles were installed in 2009 at a test site at Redstone Park. Thanks to the large volume trash receptacles, the frequency of service intervals has dropped from daily visits to once every four weeks. The large volume bags keep 80 traditional trash bags out of the landfill in lieu of one Sybertech bag used during the same timeframe.
3. Four waterless urinals are being used at two high-use parks in the community: Falcon Park and Civic Green Park. The waterless urinals save almost 50,000 gallons of water per year.
4. Solar-powered locks and lights are used at 14 park restrooms. When new facilities are built they include solar-powered locks and lights in lieu of electricity, saving a minimum of \$10,000 to \$15,000 each.

5. Sixteen recycle containers are used at high-use parks throughout the community. During the peak season, which began in March, six to eight cubic yards of recyclables are collected each week.
6. In 2009, the Metro District installed 162 new dog waste bag dispensers at dog parks and along trails in the community. The new dispensers are made of recycled materials and contain 1,000 bags compared to its predecessor that held a maximum of 200, reducing the amount of maintenance time required by 60 percent. The previous dispensers distributed bags on a roll, creating opportunity for waste. The new dispensers dispense bags one at a time.
7. Organic waste bins are placed at Highlands Ranch's three community gardens. The bins collect organic waste such as weeds without seed heads picked by the gardeners. The waste is collected and tilled into the soil at the end of the season. The process results in rich soil for the following garden season and eliminates 75 service trips and 100 hours of staff time. The organic waste bins result in a savings of 188 gallons of gas and 2,625 vehicle miles annually. Additionally, 42 cubic yards of waste is kept out of the landfill each year.
8. At the Metro District's annual Christmas tree recycling event during the 2009/2010 holiday season, 2,527 trees were dropped off by the public. Metro District forestry staff chipped these trees into 316 cubic yards of mulch valued at \$3,100. All mulch generated by the Metro District's forestry staff is used in parks and parkway landscaping or given to homeowners.
9. In 2007, the Metro District initiated a [fence replacement program](#) to replace aging wood parkway fence over a 25-year period. The new Trex fence is made of 50 percent recycled and reclaimed plastic and 50 percent reclaimed wood. Trex fence has a 65 percent maintenance savings compared to cedar wood and does not require staining or sealants that can be harmful to the environment.
10. The Metro District is transitioning holiday light displays at entrances to the community with LED lights. Additionally, staff installed LED lights in the parking lot of Paintbrush Park, the last neighborhood park to be built in Highlands Ranch. The Metro District sees approximately 89 percent in energy cost savings with LED lights.
11. Reuse water is used to irrigate 38-acres of grass at Redstone Park.
12. The Metro District has a watering strategy that helps conserve water used for outdoor irrigation. The strategy involves four different techniques:
 - a. Monitor seven water stations located throughout Highlands Ranch;
 - b. Test soil samples from cross regions of the community;
 - c. Manage a central irrigation system allowing staff to reprogram and adjust the watering schedule as needed; and
 - d. A high-low water strategy that shifts water to locations where it is needed instead of irrigating at a uniform rate throughout the community.
13. In 2010, Highlands Ranch was named a [Tree City USA](#) for the twenty-second consecutive year and was a recipient of the Tree City USA Growth Award for the nineteenth consecutive year. The Metro District received this award for demonstrating progress in our community forestry program in the following activity areas: Education and public relations, publicity, tree planting and maintenance, and recycling.
14. The Metro District oversees a community wide stormwater management program, in cooperation with the Urban Drainage & Flood Control District, Douglas County and developers. The intent of the program is to ensure stormwater systems are properly planned, built and maintained in Highlands Ranch. The Metro District and its partners work together to provide overall stormwater management to prevent flooding, protect water quality and to preserve the natural streams and gulches.

