

Get Your Feet Wet: The CMA Water System

by Joe Van Meter (K-16)

The Real Value of Your Home

Surprisingly, the number of rooms, architecture, or ambiance of your home – or even the assessed value of your unimproved lot are not the only determinants in the value of your investment. While these factors influence the market value, your home or lot would be worth significantly less without reliable, safe, and sanitary water and sewer services. We're fortunate that CMA's services are reliable and high quality. Otherwise, you might be unable to use, rent, or sell your property among the trees, animals, and fresh air.

From the Well to Your Home

CMA's water system is divided into two water systems – The North System and the South System. Each system has a well, drilled many years ago by the developer. Both are over 200 feet deep and tap into large underground aquifers. Water is pumped to the surface by large pumps that deliver it to a settling tank where it is chlorinated and treated to remove impurities, making it safe for human consumption. From there, the water is pumped to reservoirs for storage and delivery. The systems use gravity to deliver water to your home, so the reservoirs are located “up the hill” from the homes they service.

Maintaining the Systems

Our water and sewer systems are wholly owned by CMA and are independent of any other systems. The wells, pumps, reservoirs, treatment systems, and the network of underground pipes, meters, regulators, and valves that deliver your water all require ongoing monitoring and maintenance. Our aging infrastructure requires frequent updates and repairs to continue to deliver fresh, clean drinking water and reliable sewer services.

Prior to 2019, all management and operation was performed by your CMA neighbors, all volunteers. For years they donated many hours and days, providing professional-level services at no charge to CMA owners. Their work protected your investment in your property at CMA. Even today, CMA volunteers still help maintain these systems, managing and working with contractors that conduct most daily operations.

In 2019, the Board contracted with the Warm Springs Public Service District (WSPSD) to provide operational and maintenance support to fulfill CMA's obligations to owners and to meet regulatory requirements. WSPSD is well-placed to provide support as it is staffed with certified water and sewer system managers – the same personnel that operate many systems for Morgan County. The contract and oversight of the system are the responsibility of volunteers on the CMA Board and Chair of Water and Sewer, Cathy Levey (A-6).

Meeting the Standard

CMA's utility systems are a Public Utility under the regulatory control of the West Virginia Public Service Commission (WVPSC). While CMA fully owns and operates the systems, the WVPSC regulates the rates, processes, and most operational procedures. WV Code of State Rules 150, Section 7 provides guidance to operators and customers of water utilities. Although it does not address all operational matters, it does cover billing, metering, and how a utility interacts with its customers. Additionally, the utility is issued a license to operate by the WV Department of Health (WVDOH), who can revoke the license if the utility's operations do not adhere to strict DOH guidance.

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Clockwise from top left: North Reservoir, R Reservoir, South Pump House, South Reservoir. Center: North Well.

Get Your Feet Wet

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Take a Drink

New owners often ask if CMA's water is safe to drink. Yes, you can drink the water that comes out of your tap. WVDOH requires DAILY tests of CMA water by utility operations personnel to verify required chlorine levels are sustained – both at the chlorination station as well as from a random location within the distribution system. In addition, a water sample must be submitted quarterly for analysis by a state-approved independent water testing laboratory to verify the quality of the sample against WVDOH quality metrics. If the sample fails the laboratory test, the WVDOH is authorized to take action that can include shutting down the utility.

How You Can Help

While our system is maintained by volunteers and contractors, our owners have a significant role in the success of the water and sewer systems. You can make a big difference in the cost and efficiency of these systems through a few simple actions:

- ◆ Check your home for water leaks: running toilets, dripping faucets, leaking hose bibs
- ◆ Repair leaks promptly: call a plumber if needed
- ◆ Turn off the water if you plan to be away: flush out pipes when you return
- ◆ Pay your utility bill on time: avoid the 10% late fee
- ◆ Practice water conservation

It's important to note that Cathy Levey diligently monitors section and resident meters to detect leaks. If you hear from her concerning a possible leak on your side of the water meter, take heed – leaks can grow larger over time. Even a very small leak can lead to the loss of thousands of gallons of water – and a hefty water bill.

You Didn't Cover Sewer

That delicate subject will be addressed in copious detail in the next edition of the CMA Newsletter.

If you have questions or comments about CMA's water system, please contact Cathy Levey at mccm2012@hotmail.com.