Frequently Asked Questions

Source updated October 22, 2026 | Questions: cmahoaws@gmail.com

This document organizes questions the CMA Water & Sewer Committee has received recently and provides answers to those questions. It is organized into two sections. The first section addresses common questions about the system itself. The second section addresses current issues and specific customer questions. Also included below is a question index which allows you to navigate the document to specific questions quickly.

Table of Contents

PART I | CMA WATER & SEWER SYSTEM EDUCATION

- Understanding CMA's Utility
- Water Quality & Wastewater Treatment
- Bills, Meters & Customer Responsibilities
- Conserving Water & Preventing Leaks
- Repairs, Interruptions & Emergency Notices

PART II | CURRENT ISSUES & CUSTOMER-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- Current Policies & Regulatory Updates
- Infrastructure Planning & Funding
- Historical Incidents & Reported Figures
- Requests for Records & Individual Matters

Question Index | Click on a question to jump to its answer

Questions are listed in their original numerical order. New questions will be added at the end of the list. Click any question to navigate to its answer in Part I or Part II.

Q1. How can I learn more about how our water and sewer systems work?

Q2. Who owns CMA's water and sewer systems?

Q3. What is the relationship between the Town of Bath Water Service and CMA?

Q4. What is the relationship between Warm Springs Public Service District (WSPSD) and CMA?

Q5. Which government agencies does CMA Water & Sewer interact with?

Q6. Why do I need to arrange for the pumping of my septic tanks?

Q7. Can I dig a well just for my property?

Q8. Why can't I install a leach field on my property?

Q9. Can I turn off my own meter?

Q10. Is the water from my tap safe to drink?

Q11. Is the pond I can see from my property safe for fishing or swimming?

Q12. I hardly use any water when I come to my cabin once or twice a month. How come my bill is so high?

Q13. Why can't I receive a monthly bill for W&S?

Q14. Is there a payment plan I can have for monthly payments?

Q15. What can I do to lower my property's water consumption?

Q16. What is the name of that device I can install in my toilets to keep from having a stuck flapper?

Q17. Why are there so many water line breaks?

Q18. What right does CMA have to shut off the water to my property just because there is a leak?

Q19. Why can't CMA use contractors who perform leak identification methods that municipal utilities use (such as advanced acoustic, tracer gas, or thermal technology)?

Q20. Why can't Miss Utility come up on demand to mark areas as soon as we know there is a leak?

Q21. While I wait for a repair on a CMA water line to be completed, can my water be turned on intermittently so that there is water at certain times of the day for my guests? It's an idea that I feel like could possibly be a

Q22. Why was there a Boil Water notice sent to my email?

Q23. Why did I receive a text message to boil water?

Q24. Can I opt out of text messaging for water emergencies?

Q25. How can I file a complaint about the water system or sewer system?

Q26. Can I obtain the quarterly reports that the WV Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) receives from CMA's contractor for the quarterly measurements of the outflow (the point at which the CMA sewage discharge enters the environment, at Sir John's Run)?

Q27. Are there daily measures of the lagoon influent (the flow from owners' septic systems into the lagoon) and effluent (the outflow)?

Q28. What happened on July 4, 2025, and why are some people still talking about it?

Q29. Does CMA need to have an engineering study to analyze peak versus average flows, the frequency and duration of elevated conditions, seasonal and holiday impacts, historical trends, and remaining operational and regulatory capacity?

Q30. How can CMA fund improvements and replacements of its aging pipes?

Q31. Did CMA submit its Cross-Connection Backflow Prevention policy to State regulators?

Q32. Leak adjustments: How many gallons and dollars have been credited through leak adjustments?

Q33. What is the per-customer financial burden for these leak adjustments?

Q34. What has been the nature of the leaks for the few properties that account for the higher rates, and what effective and lasting repairs or replacements are needed?

Q35. At the Annual Meeting, it was stated that the leak adjustment policy and associated fees that were to take effect September 1 are not going into effect.

Q36. I would like to review the records and supporting information CMA has relied upon when discussing wastewater flows and capacity

Q37. What does an "interim" rate increase in our water rate mean?

Q38. Does the interim rate increase affect the minimum payment for low-water use owners?

Q39. I heard about a boil water notice for the Berkeley Springs area (Town of Bath) last week. Does this affect me?

PART I | CMA WATER & SEWER SYSTEM EDUCATION

Understanding CMA's Utility

Q1. How can I learn more about how our water and sewer systems work?
Please click on: Get Your Feet Wet and A Trip Down the Drain, which are links to these documents on the CMA Water & Sewer webpage.

Q2. Who owns CMA's water and sewer systems?
We all do. CMA's property owners, members of the Association, own the water and sewer systems. This includes owners of undeveloped lots, even though they are not customers of the utility.

Q3. What is the relationship between the Town of Bath Water Service and CMA?
The Town of Bath has nothing to do with CMA's water and sewer utility. Please do not contact them with an issue; instead, contact cmahoaws@gmail.com.

Q4. What is the relationship between Warm Springs Public Service District (WSPSD) and CMA?
For the past 9 years, CMA has contracted with WSPSD to chlorinate the water, take water and sewage system samples, submit reports to appropriate government agencies on behalf of CMA, and make some minor repairs (not excavating for line replacement). WSPSD does not own our utility or manage it; WSPSD is a contractor for CMA. Please do not contact them with an issue; instead, please contact cmahoaws@gmail.com.

Q5. Which government agencies does CMA Water & Sewer interact with?
CMAWS interacts with and is regulated by the WV Department of Health, the WV Department of Environmental Protection, and the WV Public Service Commission.

Q7. Can I dig a well just for my property?
No, as we are a utility, we need to maintain the integrity of our water system.

Q8. Why can't I install a leach field on my property?
Several properties in CMA have leach fields because the soil is compatible. Most properties, however, cannot accommodate leach fields because of the hard, rocky, shale-type soil, and the WV PSC is requiring hook-ups to existing utilities if there is one.

Water Quality & Wastewater Treatment

Q10. Is the water from my tap safe to drink?

Yes. CMA's contractor, Warm Springs Public Service District, chlorinates the water daily and takes samples that an independent lab analyzes in order to ensure the water is safe.

Q11. Is the pond I can see from my property safe for fishing or swimming?

No, that is not a pond. It is the lagoon into which flows the liquid that comes from septic tanks (for example, from your toilets). Once in the lagoon, exposure to the sunlight and aeration treat the liquid, and then it flows to a wetland and then on to an ultraviolet light bulb chamber for additional treatment before it is released into Sir John's Run.

Q26. Can I obtain the quarterly reports that the WV Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) receives from CMA's contractor for the quarterly measurements of the outflow (the point at which the CMA sewage discharge enters the environment, at Sir John's Run)?

Yes, you can obtain Discharge Monitoring Reports (DMR) from the DEP website as they are public records.

Q27. Are there daily measures of the lagoon influent (the flow from owners' septic systems into the lagoon) and effluent (the outflow)?

No, influent into the lagoon is not measured daily and never has been. WV DEP does not require daily measurements of either influent or effluent as a condition of CMA's permit.

Bills, Meters & Customer Responsibilities

Q6. Why do I need to arrange for the pumping of my septic tanks?

You own the septic tanks on your property. Therefore, it is your responsibility to arrange for pumping and maintenance of the tanks. When you purchased your property, the existing tanks (and their contents) conveyed. CMA requires you to have the tanks pumped every 3 years if your quarterly water usage is equal to or more than 10,000 gallons or every 5 years if your quarterly water usage is less than 10,000 gallons. The importance of timely pumping ensures our sewage treatment system (primarily the lagoon and wetlands) operates efficiently and correctly so that we do not harm the environment. For more information, click on CMA's Septic Maintenance Policy. CMAWS tracks the scheduled fulfillment of the pumping, maintains records for State inspectors, and will alert you at least one month in advance that your tanks need to be pumped. For a list of septic service providers in our area, click here: Local Resources and Contractors, and scroll down to Septic Services.

Q9. Can I turn off my own meter?

No. The meter is owned by the utility, and tampering with it is a violation with penalties according to the WV Public Service Commission. If you do not already have a shut-off valve inside your home, we recommend you get one.

Q12. I hardly use any water when I come to my cabin once or twice a month. How come my bill is so high?

It is expensive to bring water up from the ground, treat it, and deliver it to your property. The WV Public Service Commission has set our rates according to our expenses. The rate includes a minimum use charge so that all customers, regardless of volume used, pay for the system. CMA has no economies of scale (no additional customers to spread costs across). Frequent replacement of equipment due to the aging system (pumps, aerators, etc.) is expensive, and the increased demand for water during peak weekends and holidays puts additional stress on the fragile systems, causing breakage and resulting in expensive repairs.

Q13. Why can't I receive a monthly bill for W&S?

The CMA house meters do not allow for remote reading. Each meter must be read manually. It is expensive to read the house meters and requires significant manpower each quarter.

Q14. Is there a payment plan I can have for monthly payments?

Owners may request a payment plan by contacting the Board of Directors in writing.

Conserving Water and Preventing Leaks

Q15. What can I do to lower my property's water consumption?

You can install low-volume toilets, use low-flow shower heads, run dishwashers instead of washing dishes by hand, and use high-efficiency washing machines. You can also install a flow shut-off valve with WiFi, which can let you know if water is flowing even though you know the property is not occupied. The WiFi feature allows you to turn the water off remotely (for example, at your inside valve). That device can save not only your own property from damage, but also keep our water reservoirs from draining. For gardening water needs, consider installing rain barrels.

Q16. What is the name of that device I can install in my toilets to keep from having a leaking flapper?

A toilet flush valve kit with a leak prevention feature can be installed in most toilets with flappers, which wear out and jeopardize our reservoirs' water supplies when the flapper develops a slow leak or doesn't properly seal. The kits are available from local hardware stores and online, usually for under $30. CMAWS is not endorsing any brands or models, but a few examples of leak prevention fill

valves are: Korkey WaterWise, Korkey Smart Toilet, Fluidmaster Leak Sentry Pro. ** Note these devices do not resolve a flapper that is stuck fully open - hung up on the chain. Refer to instructions on how to shorten or reroute the chain to prevent this scenario. The tank needs to fully fill once in order for the device to activate.

Q17. Why are there so many water line breaks?

CMA's water and sewer lines are old, of a size that is no longer customary, and in terrain that does not protect the pipes and fittings from the vibrations that occur during high demand for water use. The system was not designed for the periods of heavy water use during peak weekends and holidays that we are experiencing today.

Q34. What has been the nature of the leaks for the few properties that account for the higher rates, and what effective and lasting repairs or replacements are needed?

Leaking toilets and old appliances (like hot water heaters), hose bibs not winterized, leaking pipes that burst inside and outside the dwelling, dripping faucets and negligence due to unattended faucets left on, hoses running, and the like. Replacing old appliances, using leak-prevention toilet fill valves and installing new flappers, and installing a WiFi-enabled smart water monitor with emergency cut-off capabilities for the entire property would help prevent very expensive leaks that jeopardize all customers' access to the water system.

Repairs, Interruptions & Emergency notices

Q18. What right does CMA have to shut off the water to my property just because there is a leak?

W. Va. Code R. § 150-7-6 6.8.1.b. Where (1) conditions hazardous to life or property are found to exist on the customer's premises, (2) the utility's regulating, measuring or distribution equipment or facilities have been tampered with, or (3) the customer's premises have been condemned through a condemnation proceeding under the laws of this state, the water may be shut off without notice in advance."

The rules governing this process depend on who is responsible for the leaking pipe:

1. Leaks inside your home or on your property (Customer-Side) - If the leak is past the water meter, it is your responsibility to maintain and repair the service line. If the leak is severe enough to cause property damage, a safety hazard, or waste a critical amount of water, the utility may shut it off. Under West Virginia Public Service Commission rules, we can do this without advance notice if an emergency exists.

2. Leaks on the utility's side (Main Lines) - If the leak is on the utility's side of the meter or on the main water line, the utility will shut off the water to perform repairs. In these non-emergency situations, they generally must provide advance warning (typically at least an hour for repairs or 10 days for maintenance), except in sudden emergencies like a burst main.

Q19. Why can't CMA use contractors who perform leak identification methods that municipal utilities use (such as advanced acoustic, tracer gas, or thermal technology)?

CMA's fragile water system uses smaller pipes than larger municipal water systems, and therefore, those other advanced methods cannot be used on our system without damaging the pipes. In addition, the terrain of our area makes it more difficult to locate leaks using methods that work in less rocky, dense ground.

Q20. Why can't Miss Utility come up on demand to mark areas as soon as we know there is a leak?

Under West Virginia's underground damage prevention laws (managed by West Virginia 811, often referred to as Miss Utility), an emergency is legally defined as:

1. A condition constituting a clear and present danger to life, health, or property because of escaping toxic, corrosive, or explosive products, oil, oil-gas, natural gas hydrocarbon products, exposed wires, or other breaks and defects in an underground facility; or
2. A condition that requires immediate correction to assure the safety of the general public and operator personnel (or to assure the continuity of service provided by/through an underground facility).

Q21. While I wait for a repair on a CMA water line to be completed, can my water be turned on intermittently so there is water at certain times of the day for my guests? It's an idea that I feel like could possibly be a workable compromise if the repair can't be made.

Unfortunately, we cannot turn water on and off in the presence of a leak. While that might appear to be a short-term solution for guests in the affected cabins, there are several reasons why we cannot implement such a strategy: first, the water would need to be tested each time, with results taking at least 24-48 hours for the lab under contract; second, it would require an undue burden on our staff to make multiple trips to the valve site during the very time that we need to meet contractors at the sites we are exploring for the source of the leak; and third, it is not an advisable action, according to industry standards. From our experience with our system, turning water on and off can cause a break-out situation for the CMA water lines, which further jeopardizes the entire water system and all of its customers. When the reservoir is low (due to overuse during peak times), CMA

must pay to truck in water for the reservoir and then treat it. It is strongly recommended that part-time owners NOT visit during times of known water shortage, and owners who rent their properties NOT do so until normal water levels return. It is required that ALL who occupy dwellings on the water system after we have trucked in water BOIL WATER until informed that it is no longer needed. Guests would certainly not feel welcome if they had to do this, as well as abide by water conservation efforts, and possible pool closure.

Q22. Why was there a Boil Water notice sent to my email?

CMA sends text and email messages about Boil Water notices, as required by the Public Service Commission, whenever there has been untreated water added to the reservoirs or repairs on water lines and other fixtures that might have introduced contaminants into the water. It is a precaution to keep you, your family, and guests from getting sick. We cannot lift the Boil Water notice until we receive lab results assuring us that the water is free from contaminants.

Boil water for the following uses:

- Drinking water
- Brushing teeth
- Washing fruits and vegetables
- Preparing food, baby formula or drinks
- Giving water to pets

You can use the water as is for:

- Taking showers (if you do not swallow the water)
- Flushing toilets
- Washing clothes
- Washing dishes
- Watering plants

Q23. Why did I receive a text message to boil water?

During water emergencies, CMA has begun texting owners of affected properties, per CMA's March 2026 policy. The policy was required by the WV Public Service Commission, and its revised rule requires email and texting customers for water emergencies.

Q25. How can I file a complaint about the water system or sewer system?

The Public Service Commission provides you with a means to file a complaint, using this link: https://www.psc.state.wv.us/complaints/

PART II | CURRENT ISSUES & CUSTOMER-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

These entries are dated, subject to policy change, or tied to a particular event or request.

Current Policies & Regulatory Updates

Q24. Can I opt out of text messaging for water emergencies?

CMAWS will inform customers of the new method of text messaging before the end of October 2026. Owners will need to identify at least one cell phone number per property for emergency, public health-related messages.

Q31. Did CMA submit its 2026 Cross-Connection Backflow Prevention policy to State regulators?

Yes, CMA faxed its policy on April 30, 2026, to the West Virginia Department of Health's Office of Environmental Services, which had cited CMA for lack of such a policy during a late 2025 Sanitary Survey (conducted every 5 years). That office approved the policy on May 1, 2026.

Q35. At the 2026 Annual Meeting, it was stated that the leak adjustment policy and associated fees that were to take effect September 1 are not going into effect.

CMA submitted a request to the PSC for an exemption to specific rules regarding leak adjustments. In the meantime, the CMAWS Committee continues to process any leak adjustment request received under the 2024 policy.

Infrastructure Planning & Funding

Q29. Does CMA need to have an engineering study to analyze peak versus average flows, the frequency and duration of elevated conditions, seasonal and holiday impacts, historical trends, and remaining operational and regulatory capacity?

The Water & Sewer Committee is in the process of discussing a plan for acquisition of CMA's water and sewer systems so that needed capital improvements and conveniences can be funded through economies of scale, low-interest loans and grants that are not available to CMA as a private utility. While negotiations are underway to develop an agreement to put before the membership for a vote for acquisition, the Board is not in favor of devoting funds now to any broad engineering study. Several years ago, the then-CMA Board spent more than $20,000 on an engineering study, Coolfont Mountainside Association Wastewater Treatment Feasibility Study, but the costs associated with the recommendations included in the study's report were far beyond what CMA members could afford. For example, the lagoon liner replacement cost was estimated at $1,978,800, with other sewer system solutions as high as $8,250,000. As an alternative, CMA was able to secure a low-interest loan from National Rural Water Association (NRWA) to complete the liner replacement project and a fence surrounding the lagoon for under $150,000.

Q30. How can CMA fund improvements and replacements of its aging pipes?

The WV Public Service Commission has informed CMA that it cannot charge water and sewer customers a fee (like a special assessment) outside of the current tariff (rates). This restriction limits the options for CMA to replace its aging water lines. As a result, CMA is pursuing acquisition of its water and sewer systems.

A.) Can CMA use a Front Foot Benefit (FFB), like many local governments, to recover the cost of installing infrastructure, basically everyone pays a certain amount (usually a flat fee or based on the amount of linear feet of frontage). You are basically paying for the benefit of connecting to the line, and the rest is made up with usage rates. For example: every owner pays $20,000 in FFB. It is set up as a low- or no-interest loan with one payment a year. The loan can be transferred to new owners.

CMA is not a local government; it is a Home Owners Association (HOA) with one class of owners. At this time, the Board is exploring acquisition, which would mean CMA owners would not need to fund improvements directly.

B.) Aren't there grants and low-interest loans that CMA can get for this?

CMA has pursued grants and low-interest loans from 20 different agencies. The majority of these agencies do not support privately owned utilities such as ours. CMA has been able to obtain two low-interest loans from the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) for both the lagoon liner and reservoir rehab project. We are not eligible to receive any additional loans from NRWA. At this time, we could not take on additional debt because it would need to be paid off through our water and sewer rates, according to the West Virginia Public Service Commission. Larger municipal utilities can qualify for grants and low-interest loans, but we cannot.

C.) Can owners self-fund replacements of CMA water lines just for their properties or sections?

No, as the system is all interconnected.

Historical Incidents & Reported Figures

Q28. What happened on July 4, 2025, and why are some people still talking about it?

A unique situation occurred that day when a water line burst open on one customer's property, emptying the reservoir and requiring water to be trucked in and treated. Due to the high occupancy, a high level of risk existed that the entire South System would be without water. In addition, occupancy was so high, there was a possibility of CMA exceeding a regulatory permit limit of 19,500 gallons per day of discharge into the lagoon. When recently challenged about the calculation performed a year ago, the Operations Manager, acknowledging the complex and

challenging circumstances, allowed for the possibility of error, which led to some confusion. However, upon further review by two other Water and Sewer Committee members, the original estimate proved to be correct, and we did come very close to exceeding our permit.

Q32. Leak adjustments: How many gallons and dollars have been credited through leak adjustments?
Within the past 3.5 years, our customers have filed for 42 adjustments, for a total of $40,715. The total gallons credited were 1,014,292.

Q33. What is the per-customer financial burden for these leak adjustments? That is, how much am I, for example, paying extra?
Rather than calculate such a figure, the CMAWS is more interested in helping its customers recognize that our water systems can be more secure if owners commit to repair or upgrade leaking appliances (such as toilets, hot water heaters, dishwashers and washing machines), weatherize outdoor faucets and hose bibs, and turn water off at the primary valve inside the home when the property is unoccupied.

Requests for Records & Individual Matters

Q36. I would like to review the records and supporting information CMA has relied upon when discussing wastewater flows and capacity, including:

a. The data and information supporting the statements regarding July 2025 flows, including the statement that we came within approximately 100 gallons of the 19,500-gpd daily limit.

b. The underlying data, calculations, estimates, or other information used to develop those flow figures.

c. The data and methodology CMA relies upon when calculating and reporting average wastewater flows to the State.
This information is being consolidated and may be shared in the context of the discovery process for ongoing litigation.

Q37. What does an "interim" rate increase in our water rate mean?
The rate is called an "interim" rate because CMA's formal rate case is still before the West Virginia Public Service Commission, and its final rate decision will be issued after a lengthy examination of the debt, usage, operating costs, and income of the utility. That decision could be as late as May 2027.

Q38. Does the interim rate increase affect the minimum payment for low-water use owners?
The minimum billed amount is still 3,000 gallons, but the cost of those gallons will increase with the rate increase. The West Virginia Public Service Commission

does not allow CMA to charge different rates to high -water users and low-water users.

Q39. I heard about a boil water notice for the Berkeley Springs area (Town of Bath) last week. Does this affect me?

No, the Town of Bath runs its own water system; it is separate from the water system that CMA runs. Due to a very large leak (900 gallons per minute) on their water line, and the days-long process to locate the leak and fix it, Town of Bath customers were without water (a formal outage) and then were under a boil water notification when the leak was fixed. The boil water requirement has been lifted as of Oct. 20, 2026. The process the Town of Bath followed is the exact process CMA follows when a leak is suspected, identified, and fixed, and then the water is tested for contaminants.