



**UP THE CREEK**  
**May 1, 2017**

**A**s distasteful as it is, there are times when we behave like politicians, although we may claim that we would rather eat glass. Here's a hypothetical example of a politician explaining away a hypothetical mess or two: "Were mistakes made in our foreign policy? Very possibly, as we are all human. Was launching a nuclear strike against Lichtenstein the best possible option? No choice, given the available intelligence. Was my wife upset? Certainly, but there is no basis for the allegation that I have stopped beating her."

You see the technique – rather than risk an inconvenient inquiry, the savvy politician asks and answers his own questions, thereby maintaining control of the “dialogue.” If you watch the TV news (and I envy you if you don't), you see daily examples of this trick. Therefore you should not be shocked to see it employed in the following info-babble about water meters, wherein we invent questions that are easy to answer:

Q: What months do you read meters?

A: March through October. Sometimes the weather, or interfering workload makes that impossible, and the first reading could be April, last reading could be September.

Q: What does “interfering workload” mean? Don't you have enough meter readers? Why not transition to electronic meter reading like all the really modern systems do?

A: Our meter readers are the same people who fix leaks, install meters, operate the treatment plant, answer trouble calls, and give advice to the lovelorn. Hire more people? Install electronic meter reading? Most of us feel our water bill is high enough already.

Q: So, you don't read water meters in the winter. But that means you bill in March for all the accumulated water used since October?

A: Sounds like a nifty idea, but nope. Winter months are all billed at the minimum base rate.

Q: My water meter registers more water than what actually runs through it.

A: That's not a question, sorry.

Q: Okay then, WHY does my water meter register more water than actually runs through it?

A: Either you are mistaken or you got one of those special meters we occasionally install that has a little motor inside making the numbers go round and round. More likely, your meter registers less water than actual flow, and shows less and less as it ages. Like all meters do.

Q: You don't read my meter at the same time each month. Sometimes the period is 27 days long, sometimes it is 35 days. Don't I get unfairly charged in these longer “months?”

A: That is a perfectly reasonable assumption. But no, our billing software takes this into account. On short months, you catch a break, and we bill for actual gallons used. On long months, you are charged for your average daily gallons multiplied by 30.5, which is deemed the average month length.

Q: What does “deemed” mean?

A: Not sure, but it sounds like a political or lawyerly type of word, so I threw it in.