

still feeding water to most of our Members from just one direction, during repair activities. The second reason for "looping" the piping system is to avoid "dead legs." "Dead legs" occur at the end of one-way pipelines, like for instance on cul-de-sacs. The problem with "dead legs" is that water can become stagnant in them, especially during periods of low flow, like during the summer, when many of our Members are in residence at their northern homes.

The solution to the "dead leg" stagnant water problem is to flush them periodically, which just means to release some water from the end of the pipe onto the ground. In some cases, we can utilize fire hydrants for this flushing operation. In other cases, we have installed what we call "blow-offs," which are valved connections from the main, discharging to the ground. The problem is that we sometimes cause temporary minor flooding during these operations, due to the fact that our flat islands don't drain all that well. We have tried to locate the "blow-offs" to minimize flooding, but that isn't always possible.

We will do our best to notify Members in advance in the areas where we plan to operate the "blow-offs." If you haven't been so notified, and you notice a flood in your neighborhood, please call us as soon as possible, since it may be due to a water main break, and we obviously want to repair that as soon as possible.

If you have any questions on this matter, or if you just wonder whether there is a "blow-off" located near your property, give our Distribution Manager, Joe Scofield, a call at (239)-472-2113 (extension 115). If you do have a blow-off near your property, just look on the bright side of things. During droughts, you may occasionally get your lawn watered for free! Thanks!

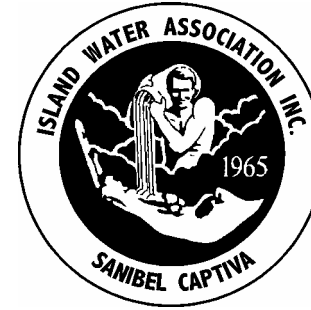
SAVING ENERGY AND MONEY

IWA Reverse Osmosis (RO) Plant employees recently completed installation of a new \$43,000 high pressure pump on RO Train A. This high efficiency pump has been operating for a few weeks now, and we anticipate that it will save us around \$8,500 per year in electric power, which means that we will get our money back in around 5 years. That is a lot better return on our money than the 1% interest we are earning in the bank! In addition, the new pump has also improved the reliability of the RO Plant and reduced maintenance costs.

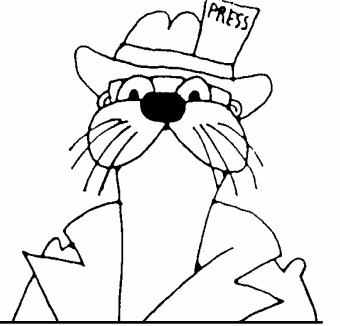
At the time this newsletter was being written, we were also installing a new \$115,000 combination high pressure pump/energy recovery turbine unit which will replace our old spare pump. Installation of this pump/turbine unit is much more complicated than the Train A pump, which is why we installed that one first ... for practice. While it is hard to be certain, due to many variables, we believe that this unit will consume about half as much power as the new Train A pump, thereby saving us even more money and yielding an estimated payback period of around 7 years.

There are 5 more high pressure pumps in the RO Plant. The existing ones on Trains E and F are relatively new, and well matched to the older membranes in those trains. However, the existing pumps on Trains B, C and D are duplicates of the old one we replaced on Train A. Based on estimated payback periods only slightly longer than that for Train A (5.4 years), the IWA Board, at its October meeting, approved replacing these three additional pumps during the first half of next year.

These pump replacements are an excellent example of spending money to save (more) money, which we try to do as often as possible at IWA.



IWA PIPELINE



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IWA NEEDS YOU!!



It's election time at IWA again, and next year two seats on our Board of Directors will be up for election. The seats are currently held by Andrew J. Schroder and Robert J. Wigley. Andy, the Board Vice President/Treasurer, is completing his second term and is eligible for re-election to his third and final term. Bob, Board Vice President, is eligible for re-election to his first full term of service. He has served on the Board since October 2002, when he replaced Richard Calabrese, who resigned his Board position to become IWA's Engineering Manager. Bob also served on the Board from 1992 to 1998.

IWA is governed by a five member Board of Directors who serve without pay. Directors must be year-round residents of Sanibel or Captiva, so that they can attend all Board meetings, and must be IWA Members or an official representative of a condominium or other IWA corporate Member. Meetings are normally held on the third Tuesday of every month. Directors are elected by the Membership at IWA's Annual Meeting to be held in April. Anyone who would like to run for one of the open seats should contact our Board Secretary, Patty Herrick, at (239) 472-2113 (extension 132) or by e-mail at patty@islandwater.com by **no later than December 31, 2003.**

WATER CONSERVATION UPDATE

In the previous edition of this newsletter, we described a new water conservation initiative at IWA. The program officially began on October 1st. We contacted our 338 highest-use Members, who use an average of 30,000 gallons or more per month. The program, which is funded on a 50/50 cost basis by IWA and the South Florida Water Management District, offers free irrigation audits, rain sensors, plant information and T-shirts to participating Members.

As of late October, we had received more than 80 responses to our offer to help conserve water, and we expect more, as word of our project spreads. Our findings to date have been very interesting. Over 50% of the already-installed rain sensors were found to be inoperable, for a variety of reasons. As a result, the associated irrigation systems were still operating during and immediately after rainstorms. We found in the majority of systems, that the frequency of watering (days per week) was higher than is necessary for a healthy landscape. We also found that many of the systems had significant underground leaks. Finally, we frequently found that established native plants, like sea grapes, buttonwoods, coffee, palms and **cactus(!)** were being over-watered. Plants such as these require no water what-so-ever, after an initial watering-in period after being transplanted.

We are very encouraged by the response to our new water conservation program and the genuine concern of Members who are participating. If you received a letter from our Engineering Manager, Rich Calabrese, and haven't yet contacted him, or if you would just like to discuss your personal water conservation goals, please give Rich a call at (239) 472-2113 (extension 129). Also, we have received a new order of "Save Water. Wear Something Dirty" T-shirts. Stop in and check out the selection at only \$5.00 each.

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WELCOME BRIAN!



Brian Taylor joined IWA in mid-August as our Maintenance Technician. Prior to joining IWA, Brian had worked in the juvenile justice field. He isn't going to have much of an opportunity to apply his past work experience at IWA, given the fact that the average IWA employee is nearly 45 years old, which hardly qualifies us as "juveniles." Brian lives in Alva, where he enjoys working on computers, riding dirt bikes and carving.

At IWA, Brian is involved in all aspects of maintaining our facilities. He takes care of our landscaping, keeps our offices clean and assists on a variety of other tasks involved with keeping our facilities in top shape. We keep him busy!! Brian says he likes working at IWA because of our benefits package, and his great co-workers.

Welcome Brian!! Everyone at IWA wishes you a long and satisfying career with us.

HIGH WATER BILLS

Almost every month, we deal with 10 to 20 Member accounts with significantly higher than normal water usage and resulting bills. Our handheld meter reading computer alerts us when usage looks high relative to the last couple of months and the same period the previous year. We attempt to contact the involved Members by phone, or by letter if the phone option doesn't work.

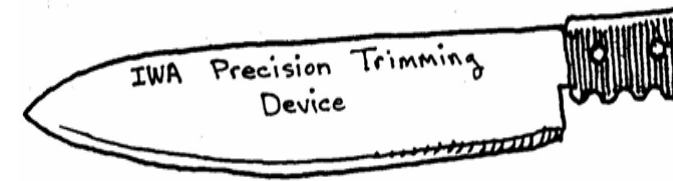
In cases of very high **accidental** usage, we do have a policy to provide some billing relief, which reduces the amount the Member has to pay. The policy only applies to water bills which are in excess of \$200.00 in any one month. The details of

the policy, are too complex to explain here, but basically it reduces the cost of all water used in excess of four times the Member's average monthly consumption rate over the previous 12 months. Although the cost reduction can be quite large, the remaining bill can still be quite large as well, since water in excess of the limit is less expensive, but still not free.

Most of our Members who experience accidental high water usage are grateful for what billing relief we are able to give them. They get the problem repaired and take steps to ensure that it doesn't happen again. Installing an automatic cut off valve, as described in a previous issue of this newsletter is one good step that can be taken. Frequently, Members with high water bills will ask us to help them determine what happened and where the water went. Sometimes we can narrow down the possibilities, but most often the services of a licensed plumber are required to determine the cause of the excessive usage and **always** to repair it. While we are glad to help when we can, it is important to remember that we have no control over water once it passes through our water meter into our Member's private water system. That is the Member's responsibility. In the vast majority of cases, we will not be able to tell a Member where the water went. Unfortunately, with our porous, sandy soils, leaks often leave few, if any, telltale signs. Therefore, finding them can often be a challenge, even for a good plumber.

There are two other possibilities which could cause a high water bill for our Members. First, we could have read your meter wrong. Our "misread rate" is very low, at 5 to 10 (out of 4,900) a month (less than 0.2%!), about half of which are read low and the other half high. We normally catch incorrect readings before the bills are mailed, but not always. If a Member contacts us about a higher than normal bill, we will reread the meter and make any necessary corrections immediately. The second possibility is that the meter itself is faulty and reading high. If requested, we will remove the meter and bring it back to our facilities for an accuracy test, which the involved Member is welcome to witness. The test is free if the meter reads outside the accepted accuracy range (high or low). If the meter is reading correctly, the test costs the Member \$50. However, it is important to realize that when meters fail, they almost always (or always) fail in a way that makes them read low, not high. In the last 15 years at IWA, we have found one meter reading high. That was due to a faulty rebuild procedure on our part, and we no longer rebuild meters. We found that it was substantially cheaper to just buy new ones.

BUSH WHACKERS



In Southwest Florida, our plants (and weeds!) grow at a rate that would amaze people who live in cooler climes. It sometimes seems like you can actually see the plants growing right before your eyes. While this rapid plant growth is one of the things that makes our islands the attractive places that they are, it also has a tendency to quickly turn our home landscaping into an impenetrable jungle.

This very rapid plant growth also creates a number of problems for our IWA meter readers. Previously accessible meters quickly become completely overgrown and inaccessible. In addition to slowing down our meter readers in their work, some of our plants are not too "user friendly" and are either poisonous or covered in thorns and other nasty things. This makes reading overgrown meters a real safety problem. For example, we have had meter readers who have gotten serious cases of poison ivy, cuts from bougainvillea thorns, etc.

Our Service Rules and Regulations, which every IWA Member agrees to follow when he/she becomes a Member, states that meters are to be kept "unobstructed and accessible at all times to the meter reader." We need a clear path to meters, which is at least 7 feet high and 3 feet wide, with two feet clear on all sides of the meter itself.

We would **greatly** prefer that Members keep their own meters clear of excessive vegetation, and when time permits, we will notify Members who have an accessibility problem and ask them to remedy the problem themselves. However, with nearly 4,900 meters to read every month and our rapid plant growth, that would be a full time job for a couple of employees in the Summer months. Therefore, we sometimes resort to trimming the vegetation ourselves, sometimes with results that dismay our Members. The majority of meters and problem vegetation are located on public right-of-ways. While we try to do a good job, our idea of trimming sometimes looks like butchery to some of our Members. We apologize if you are one of those Members!

So please help us out and make sure your vegetation is trimmed so that we can quickly and safely read your meter. Remember, the quicker we read your meter, the less it costs and the lower

we can keep your water rates. If we trim around your meter, please try to understand that we are not professional landscapers, and we are only trying to do our jobs in a safe and efficient manner.

On a related subject, those Members who have installed backflow prevention devices on their water service lines also need to keep the area around these devices clear. While we understand that the devices are not pretty, and a little vegetation hides them from view, please keep the vegetation at least two feet from the devices in all directions. We periodically test these devices for our Members (at no cost to them), and clear access is again a necessity.

Thanks for your assistance with this "growing" problem.

YET ANOTHER AWARD

Over the last year or so, as we have reported in previous editions of this newsletter, we have won a variety of awards for our operations at IWA, including:

- Two Safety Awards from the Water and Pollution Control Operator's Association.
- Safety Award from the American Water Works Association.
- Outstanding Membrane Treatment Plant from the Southeast Desalting Association.
- Excellence in Plant Operations from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Recently we have been notified that we have won the award for Excellence in Plant Operations from DEP for the second year in a row. This award is the most important one we can receive, since it is given by the agency which regulates our operations. It clearly confirms the fact that we are providing our Members with a safe supply of water. Our Chief Plant Operator/Production Supervisor, Robbie Smith, will be receiving this award for us in Tallahassee on November 18th. Again, congratulations to all IWA employees for a job well done!!

PARDON OUR FLOODS!!

Our water distribution piping system is quite extensive for two such small islands, consisting of over 122 miles of piping, ranging in diameter from 2 inches up to 16 inches. In the design of this system, we always try to "loop" the piping, for a couple of reasons. First, looping frequently makes it possible for us to minimize the number of people who lose service when a water main break occurs. We can close main valves and isolate the break, while