



IWA PIPELINE



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3651 Sanibel-Captiva Road, Sanibel, FL 33957 • <http://www.islandwater.com>

Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. • Phone: (941) 472-1502

IWA'S AMBASSADORS



Of all IWA employees, those who read our meters every month are probably the most visible to our customers. They are very much our ambassadors to our membership. Despite an occasional incident of unappreciated attempts at landscaping (see article below), members treat our meter readers very well. Not infrequently, they are offered gifts of fruit and other goodies. It's a hot job in the Summer, but someone has to do it!

At IWA, we have resisted the growing trend being followed by many other utilities to contract-out meter reading to third party companies who specialize in providing this service. We have made that decision for several reasons. First, we value the opportunity for our employees to interact with our members. We believe that promotes good will and provides a degree of personal service which is consistent with our small and unique islands. Second, by visiting every member's premises once a month, we are able to detect problems such as leaks and either correct them (if they are on our side of the meter) or notify our members of

problems on their premises. Third, reading the meters helps keep our employees familiar with our extensive water distribution piping system and facilitates quick emergency repairs, when needed. Lastly, we have found that our own meter readers do a quicker and more accurate job of reading our meters than outside contractors, who typically have an error rate of around 1.5%. We always read with a much lower error rate, and sometimes with zero errors. That's pretty amazing, with over 4,500 meters to read every month!

If you have seen our meter readers in action, you have probably noticed that they carry what looks like an oversized portable calculator, upon which they keep punching keys. That device is actually a portable computer commonly called a "Roadrunner." This device is filled with data on the meters, which is "downloaded" from our mainframe computer. This gives our meter readers information on your meter location, normal water consumption, etc., and it helps us do a quick and accurate job of meter reading. After the reading activity is complete, the "Roadrunner" is "uploaded" into the mainframe computer, from which we then produce the bills which we mail to our members every month.

Meter reading has not always been such an automated, "high tech" activity. In the "old days," we kept a card for each meter. The meter readers would carry those cards with them and manually write the readings on the cards once per month. The cards were then brought back to our offices, where the readings were transferred by hand to a "billing computer" that was linked to an outside contractor who generated the bills for us. As you can imagine, all that hand writing and hand transferring of data introduced many opportunities for making errors. It also was a much less efficient process, taking much more time per meter reading and obviously costing more money.

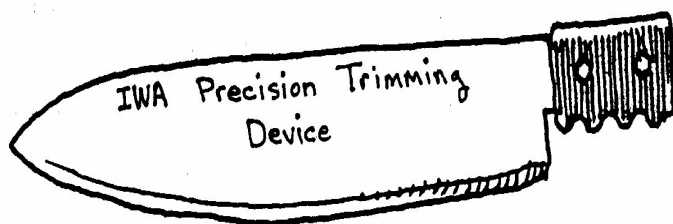
In the future, it is quite likely that we will look

back on today's "high tech" meter reading activity and remark about its primitive nature as well. There are many systems under development, and some actually in use, that will further automate the meter reading process. We will be able to obtain readings from our meters without ever having to leave the office. There are many types of these systems, known as Automatic Meter Reading (AMR), which use a variety of different technologies, ranging from wireless technologies such as cellular phones, to hard-wired systems using phone, cable TV or electric power lines. None of these systems seems to make sense for our specific situation at this point in time. We have some rather unique situations with our meters located in underground boxes at the street and with our heavy vegetation, both of which present challenges to current AMR technology. We plan to continue to monitor developments in this area and to implement it as soon as the technology becomes economically attractive and when we are convinced of its reliability in our application.

Meter reading also has a number of safety hazards associated with it. The below ground boxes in which our meters are located seem to be attractive homes for many island critters. Snakes, scorpions and fire ants are frequent inhabitants. Can you imagine the feeling when you remove the meter box lid to read it and find a snake curled up on top of it! Another hazard concerns nasty vegetation surrounding the meters, as discussed in the following article. Finally, traffic on the island presents an ever-present danger. Repeatedly parking and exiting/entering a vehicle on Periwinkle Way or Captiva Drive in high season can be a dangerous activity, although we try to make it as safe as possible by such things as using a right-hand-drive vehicle.

So the next time you see our meter readers in your neighborhood, say "Hi!" to them and ask them if they want a cool glass of water!

WEED (AND BUSH) WHACKERS



It's Summer time again! That means it's time

for our plants (and weeds!) to grow at a rate that would amaze people who live in cooler climes. It sometimes seems that 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 place 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 (see above article). 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 the involved 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., etc.

Our Service Rules and Regulations, which every IWA member agrees to follow when he/she purchases a membership, states that meters are to be kept "unobstructed and accessible at all times to the meter reader." 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 over 4,500 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. 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 18 inches from the devices in all directions. We periodically test these devices for our members (at no cost), and clear access is

again a necessity.

~~Thanks for your assistance with this "growing" problem.~~

CCR ISSUED

In June, we issued our first annual Consumer Confidence Report (CCR). This report is a new requirement enacted by the 1996 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, and an update will be mailed to all our customers every year. The report reiterates what we have said many times in the *Pipeline*: **our water is very safe to drink, and it meets or exceeds all Federal and State quality requirements.**

While we welcome this additional opportunity to communicate with our members regarding the excellent quality of our water, issuing this first CCR was neither inexpensive nor easy. We estimate that it cost us around \$4,000 to issue the report. The exact language and format used in portions of the report were dictated verbatim by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In our opinion, the report would be a little more readable and understandable if utilities were given a little more freedom to tailor the report to their unique situations. But then, who are we to question the bureaucrats? So you can look forward to a nearly identical report every year, unless the rules are changed yet again.

~~If any recipient of this newsletter did not receive a copy of the CCR, please stop in or contact our~~



office, and we will be happy to give or mail you one immediately.

IWA EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Several months ago, Lizzie the cat became the newest member of the IWA family. We noticed this very small little kitten hanging around outside of

our office building and looking longingly through the window at us. We couldn't stand it! After repeated attempts to catch the kitten, we enlisted the help of Sanibel Assistant Fire Chief, Don Frye, and tried to catch her using a baited cage trap developed by our Engineering Department. It worked! Only now we felt even worse, when the kitten's poor state of health became evident.

We next enlisted the aid of the local PAWS organization and took the kitten to the veterinarian to see if she could be saved. To our delight, after two weeks at the vet, the kitten was returned to us, still very small, but at least in much better health.

IWA employees then badgered the General Manager (ogre that he is) into accepting the idea of an IWA office mascot. The kitten became known as "Lizzie" for her attachment to chasing lizards at every opportunity. Employees established a fund to pay for her food and care.

Lizzie has responded well to the care and pampering of IWA employees. She has grown considerably and seems to have recovered from all of her health problems. She likes to sleep on the chairs used by the Board of Directors at their monthly meetings (could they be the softest ones we have?) Now if we can just train her to do ~~something useful, like mouse proofing our offices,~~ but she is probably way too well fed to adopt that occupation. Ask someone to let you see Lizzie the next time you are in our offices.

INJECTION WELL UPDATE

On July 20, 1999, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) issued the permit for construction of our deep injection well. This well will be jointly used by IWA for disposal of the brine waste stream (concentrated well water) from our reverse osmosis water treatment plant and the City of Sanibel for disposal of the excess (more than needed for irrigation purposes) treated effluent from its wastewater treatment facility.

We applied for this permit back on December 11, 1998. It took over seven months and a lot of paperwork to obtain the permit. FDEP reviewed the application very carefully and also held a public meeting in IWA's offices on June 1 to receive citizen input on the project. Several questions were asked by members of the public and answered by experts from FDEP and IWA's consulting hydrogeologist, Missimer International. The bottom line was perhaps best stated by FDEP's Director of District Management, Margaret Highsmith (who lives on Sanibel), in her letter dated July 8th, when she said, 'While the injection

of treated wastewater underground may not be the most ideal solution, the other possible options are even less attractive." The option that has received the most consideration is one which would eliminate all wastewater treatment plants on Sanibel and pipe the raw sewage (not IWA's brine) to the mainland for treatment and disposal. In addition to the greatly increased cost involved in such a scheme and the potential environmental hazard created by piping raw sewage over/under San Carlos Bay, it just doesn't seem right to send Sanibel's problem elsewhere for someone else to handle. It is also interesting to note that even if this option were implemented, the excess effluent would still be pumped into an injection well on the mainland that utilizes the exact same underground disposal zone as we will be using on Sanibel.

Drilling of the well began on July 26th. As of the writing of this newsletter, the uppermost casing (34 inches in diameter and 400 feet deep) and the next deepest one (28 inches in diameter and 965 feet deep) have been installed and cemented in place. We are now proceeding with drilling of the 12 inch diameter pilot hole to a total depth of approximately 2,900 feet, so that we can ensure that the actual geology is consistent with our hydrogeologist's predictions. After that, we will install 18 inch and 14 inch diameter casings to a depth of approximately 2,500 feet.

To date, our neighbors have been very ~~understanding concerning the noise and light created by drilling activities. We will continue to do our best to minimize any problems. Drilling should be complete before the end of the year.~~

Y2K STATUS

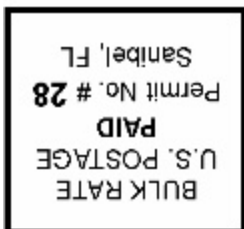
IWA continues to make good progress on

eliminating potential problems that may develop as a result of the much publicized Y2K computer bug. At this point, we are confident that the Islands' water supply will be reliable on January 1, 2000.

On the business side, we have upgraded our mainframe computer hardware and software. That has been a major undertaking, and we still have a couple of minor steps yet to complete. We have handled all these major upgrades in-house, without the use of expensive consultants.

On the operations side, we have also upgraded our computer hardware and software. Our SCADA system, which controls and provides data on our water distribution system, is completely upgraded and operational. The systems which control our reverse osmosis (RO) plant operations have also been upgraded, with only minor programming work remaining to be completed.

Our major concern regarding Y2K readiness is in the area of our electricity supply from Lee County Electric Co-op. As anyone who lives on the Islands well knows, our electricity is less than 100% reliable in the base case, regardless of Y2K. In fact, as this newsletter was being written, power went off for about an hour, in the middle of a bright, sunny Tuesday morning. For several years now, IWA has had a large generator capable of running our RO plant. Our vulnerability was with our wells, which are scattered up and down Sanibel-Captiva Road for several miles. These wells are not connected to our main generator at the plant, since we aren't in the electricity distribution business. A couple of months ago, we decided to buy two large portable generators, each capable of running two wells. With this new equipment, we should now be able to produce all the water we need, independent of our normal electricity supply. Now, all we have to worry about



The Island Water Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 509
Sanibel, FL 33957