water matters

A newsletter from
Black Mountain
Irrigation District

June 2004

Drying Times

In 2003, the Okanagan, with its already semi-arid climate, was hit particularly hard by hot weather and lack of moisture. The cumulative effects of drought over the previous three years resulted in low reservoir, stream, and lake levels. Crop yields plummeted, and our bone-dry forests experienced several major wild fires.

The outlook for 2004 is lightly less bleak than it was in 2003 due to the higher snow packs and precipitation in January. Even with the heavy rains in late May, Okanagan Lake will not fill and we are still in the midst of a drought cycle.

BMID has hired a water bailiff student who will be patrolling the District in an effort to improve efficiencies of water use. As well, the directors have passed a motion for all irrigation systems to be fitted for flow control valves to be installed on either the sprinkler head or at the property line. This will control the flow of water and make sure that owners are within the District's requirements of 5 gpm per acre.

Doing Your Part

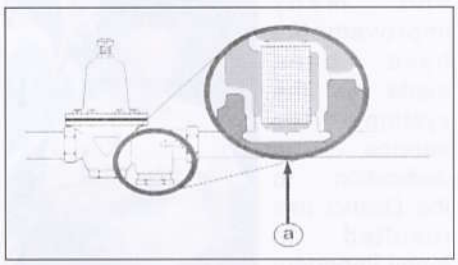
If your watering needs are limited to a small lot or garden, try these steps:

- Become familiar with the water needs of your trees, shrubs, flowers and grass.
- Plant drought resistant varieties of plants.
- Adjust automatic sprinkler systems to deliver less water to shady zones.
- Position sprinklers carefully to avoid watering sidewalks and roads.
- Water only at night or in the evenings.
- Use only one above ground sprinkler at a time.

What is a Pressure Reducing Valve?

To reduce water pressure to safe working levels, most homes are equipped with water pressure reducing valves. Usually found immediately after the shut-off valve that controls water supply into your house, your reducing valve prevents pressure build up that can stress your pipe connections. Current building code requires that a PRV be installed in any home that could experience pressures greater than 85 psi.

To ensure proper long-term operation of the valve, it should be cleaned regularly. When the valve needs cleaning, you may experience low water pressure.



Cleaning your reducing valve is easy if you follow these steps: **1.** Turn off all taps and stop all water use in the home; **2.** Shut off the in-line valve (shut-off valve) in your house; **3.** Use a bucket to catch any drips; **4.** Undo the hexagon nut **(a)** nearest the shut-off valve on the bottom of the unit, and remove and rinse the stainless steel screen; **5.** Replace the screen and nut and turn the water back on slowly, checking for leaks.

Meet The Staff

Black Mountain Irrigation District supports the Okanagan University College Water Quality Program and has this year hired two students as part of their co-op term with the college. Both join us for a four month term.

Brian McColl is our new water bailiff and has been spotted cruising the orchards to assist the orchardists in improving irrigation efficiencies. He is also recording an inventory of our irrigation systems and crops, and assists the works department in their duties on the wetter days. Brian is a welcome addition to our works department.

Drew Allingham is from a family with a long history in the water supply industry in Lake Country. Drew is working on the less exciting, but still very important jobs of hydrant maintenance, installation of blow-off valves and system flushing.

The District wish both of these summer employees well in their studies and endeavors, and appreciate having them work with us.

Staff Changes

When Phil Ruskowsky started as manager of the Black Mountain Irrigation District, there were only 700 domestic connections. Most of the water was diverted from Mission Creek and sprinkled over farmland.

Today, there are more than 6,800 connections and many improvements have been made to the system. His service and dedication to the District has resulted in many important projects such as: Chlorination improvements, 1988; Belgo Dam, 1975; Stevens Reservoir Construction, 1993; Water Treatment Plant, 1999; and numerous other upgrades.

After 29 years of service to the District, Phil has decided to retire at the end of April. He plans to attempt to keep up with his wife's projects and will still assist the District in monitoring upland storage reservoirs and facilities.

Replacing him in the manager's chair will be Bob Hrasko, an engineer who has been the District's consulting engineer for the past twelve years.

The District would also like to send condolences to the family of Neil McKenzie who recently lost his battle with cancer. He worked with BMID from late 2000 to 2004. Neil will always be remembered as a friend, hard worker, and dedicated employee.

District Elections

BMID had a recent election of trustees for the district. The first since 1999 saw three candidates running for two positions. Heinz Koetz, Laurence Petch, and Frank Schell. Heinz and Laurence were successful in seeking re-election and will be serving a 3-year term.

Your Board of Trustees are:

Gordon Ivans, Chairman
Allen Kirschner
Alfred Kempf
Heinz Koetz
Laurence Petch

Your Right To Know

Among the many legislative requirements, Black Mountain Irrigation District must make what we do here publicly accessible and transparent as possible.

Information such as water quality monitoring results, capital works planning, emergency response plans, budgeting, yearly financial statements, along with a variety of reports commissioned by the Board of Trustees are available to our users.

We will be upgrading our website's information (*bmid.org*) to include some of this information; however, if you would like more details, just contact the District office and we will be happy to provide you with what you are looking for.

Rain is grace; rain is the sky condescending to the earth; without rain, there would be no life.
- John Updike

Another Water Quality Improvment

During the spring of 2004, our Water Treatment Operators were also busy. The spring runoff was relatively tame with the poorest quality experienced in Mission Creek due to the heavy rains of late May.

In looking for methods in which to improve the Water Treatment Plant's performance, the Operators, Brian Thorburn and Ted Bashaw, have been conducting a pre-oxidation pilot study.

The objective is to determine whether the addition of a pre-oxidizing agent, will improve the coagulation/ flocculation/sedimentation process for particulate removal. The WTP is performing better than ever and removes all color and particulate matter visible to the human eye, however we do not have filtration on the system. Initial results from the pilot look promising, with an additional 20% removal of particulate matter. If everything proves out, we are planning a full scale operational conversion for the spring of 2005. Brian Thorburn will also be looking to present the results at the Provincial BC Water and Waste Conference to be held in Penticton, 2005.

Upcoming Projects In The District For 2004

- With much of Rutland being dug up for sewer installation, the District objective is to make in ground installations secure as possible and to minimize the need to excavate in these areas for a long time. Such District installations include blow offs, new services, and hydrants.
- McCurdy Road watermain extension is being installed as part of the McKenzie sewer extension contract. This will allow water to be provided to the flats when we service our PRV#1 station later this year.
- Update Capital Plan for projects.
- Watermain flushing.
- Contribute to initiatives of the Kelowna Joint Water Committee including their strategic plan update for the Kelowna Region.

When the well is dry, we know the worth of water.
- Benjamin Franklin

Be Responsible When Playing In Our Watersheds

- Recognize that you are in a community watershed and that water is a priority resource.
- Stay on designated roads to avoid damaging soft ground such as meadow lands and creeks.
- Pack out what you pack in.
- Go to the bathroom away from streams and lakes.

OBSERVE, RECORD, and REPORT questionable activities to BMID at 765-5169.