



# IWA PIPELINE



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## A DIFFERENT KIND OF WELL – CHAPTER 2



In the last edition of the Pipeline, we explained how and why IWA got involved in constructing a deep injection well for disposal of our brine waste stream and the City of Sanibel's excess treated effluent. In this article, Chapter 2, we will explain how and when the well will be constructed. In the final chapter, in the next edition of the Pipeline, we will explain the details of the well construction and the safeguards that will be installed to protect our groundwater supply, which obviously is of paramount concern to all of us who depend on it for our drinking water.

As with most construction projects, our work on the injection well started some months ago with finding the best location for it. Our first choice was to drill the well on the Northeast corner of our 53-

acre site at 3651 Sanibel-Captiva Road, near the road and behind the Island House restaurant. This location would have minimized the costs of erecting and operating the drill rig, which was to be over 200 feet high. As we got into engineering for this site, we found that a small portion of it was classified as wetlands. Although this would not have prevented us from using the site, it suddenly became a much more expensive proposition, with a myriad of permits required, as well as offsite mitigation for the disturbed wetlands. About that time, the well-driller found that it would be very difficult/expensive to get his 200-foot drilling rig onto the Island, and he decided he would use one only 100 feet tall. We liked that solution much better, since it obviously would be less of an eyesore on the horizon during the drilling process. More importantly, the smaller rig opened-up other location possibilities. We therefore chose another location, much nearer to the RO Plant and significantly further off Sanibel-Captiva Road, where drilling activities will be much less visible. Also, the new site contained no wetlands, so permitting became much easier and cheaper.

The next step was to clear the 1.3-acre site of the existing dense vegetation, including several hundred trees, predominantly cabbage palms. We did not want to destroy the trees, but we also didn't want to pay a fortune to relocate them. Our Engineering Manager, Dick Derowitsch, worked hard and in the end found a home for nearly every tree, at very little cost to IWA. The City of Sanibel relocated many of them to their Wastewater Reclamation Facility on Donax Street to improve landscaping on that site. Lee County also took many of the trees and transplanted them onto the Causeway islands. IWA donated and planted a number of trees for the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation and the J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife

Refuge (the Refuge) in exchange for the free fill dirt they made available to us, as described below. Finally, we held a public plant dig, when we allowed members of the public to come onto our site and dig whatever they wanted for free. At the end of all these activities, there was virtually no vegetation left, and almost none of it had been destroyed. Now we were ready to start filling the site.

The elevation of the site was around 2 feet above sea level, and it needed to be at around 5.0 feet to match the rest of our facilities and to avoid flooding during the summer monsoon season. Dick calculated that we would need around 6,000 cubic yards of fill to raise the site to that elevation. That's over 300 large trucks full!! As anyone who has ever bought fill dirt on the Islands knows, it can get real expensive, real fast. The going price was around \$12.50 per yard, or around \$75,000 for what we needed, plus the cost of spreading it around. So Dick started looking for cheaper sources of fill dirt. He found that the Refuge wanted to remove a large berm along a mosquito ditch on a parcel of Refuge land. He also scrounged dirt from various IWA and City construction projects and even a few new swimming pool jobs. He located a contractor who would excavate the dirt, load it into trucks, deliver it to our site and spread it for only \$3.00 per yard. Overall, we saved around \$52,000 on the fill operation. The folks at the Refuge were happy as well, since their dirt removal didn't cost them a cent. Not a bad day's work for Dick!! IWA and all our members owe a big thanks to Dick and the various parties who made the dirt available, for helping us to save all this money!

The next step in this project will involve getting the drilling permit from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. This permit, which costs \$12,500, is expected to be issued around early April, if everything goes as planned. Between now and then, we will be working with our engineering/hydrology consultant, Missimer International, to select a drilling contractor and finalize a contract with them. If all goes well in that phase of the work, we could begin mobilization of the drilling contractor by the end of April, with well completion scheduled before the end of the year. This will be the largest project in the history of IWA, with a total cost estimated between \$3 million and \$4 million, depending on which expert you listen to. It certainly makes good sense to be sharing those costs with the City of Sanibel, who needed to find a way to dispose of their excess treated effluent. All

IWA members on Sanibel, who are also taxpayers helping to fund the sewer system, will benefit from this joint project. Our Captiva members may also benefit at some future date, if they decide to utilize the excess capacity we have included in the well design for their treated effluent.

Drilling the well is estimated to take around 6 months. This will be a 24-hour per day, 7 day per week operation. It will be a little noisy at times, although we will take all reasonable measures to minimize noise. Likewise, the drilling operation will not be a thing of beauty. The big "derrick" which was located just off Summerlin Road and Pine Ridge Road in Fort Myers a few months ago was also being used for drilling a deep injection well. The derrick will have to be lighted to allow drilling operations to proceed in a safe manner after dark and to also to avoid problems with low flying planes (e.g.: Lee County Mosquito Control). However, lighting will be kept to a minimum, and it will be aimed so as to cause as few problems as possible off the construction site. After the drilling operation is complete, the derrick will be completely removed and nothing will be visible outside IWA's site. The location for the well is nearly 600 feet off Sanibel-Captiva Road, in the middle of our 53-acre site, so drilling operations should be as unobtrusive as possible.

As noted above, we will discuss well construction details in the final chapter of this story, but suffice it to say, this will be a **big** job. The diameter of the well varies with depth, but it will start at 34 inches in diameter for the first 400 feet below the ground surface. The total depth of the well will be around 2,900 feet, although that number may vary depending on the actual geology we encounter as we drill. To put it all in perspective, the rock which will be removed from the hole during drilling operations will fill over 20 very large dump trucks! Stay tuned for more "exciting" details in the next issue of the *Pipeline*.

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## NO MORE BACKFLOW

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The Island Water Association, like all water utilities in Florida, is required by State statute to have a program for preventing backflow from our customers' premises into our water distribution system, to prevent contamination. Preventing this type of contamination requires the installation of a backflow prevention device on the involved customers' water service pipes, on the customer side of the water meter. IWA's backflow prevention

program began back in 1994, with the requirement for installing backflow prevention devices on all new construction after that time. Over the next four years, we expanded the program to include all commercial customers, all multi-family customers (duplexes and larger) and all single family customers who had a cross connection hazard on their property, most often a private irrigation well.

With only a couple of exceptions (which will shortly be eliminated), all required devices were installed by January 31, 1999. Compared to the experience of most other utilities, this 100% compliance is remarkable. While some people questioned the need for a backflow prevention device in their specific case, everyone in the end accepted the responsibility and the considerable cost of complying with the requirements of the program. We want to sincerely thank everyone who participated in the program for their cooperation and for helping us to protect our water system from contamination!!

Although the installation phase of the backflow prevention program is now complete (except for further new construction), the program will remain active. The devices must be tested every two years to ensure that they are working properly. IWA will handle this testing and will absorb the associated costs. We will notify any member whose device fails the test, and it will be their responsibility to have it repaired. In order to keep the program costs as low as possible, we do not intend to notify members whose devices pass the test.

Thanks again for your cooperation!!

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### ???CELLULAR TOWERS???!!!

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In early 1999, the subject of cellular phone towers has become a hot topic on Sanibel, and IWA has been involved on the periphery of this debate. Apparently, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 encourages the growth of the telecommunications industry through deregulation, while preserving the rights of local governments to control certain decisions regarding the installation of wireless/cellular service facilities. The City of Sanibel responded to these facts by proposing a new ordinance defining the regulations under which the facilities would be permitted on the Island. This ordinance included the designation of eight specific parcels of land on the Island where telecommunications towers would be permitted. Two of those parcels belong to IWA. One is located north of the City Park across Periwinkle Way from Beachview Country Club, where

we have an existing storage tank and pump station facility. The other IWA site is the 53-acre parcel where our RO treatment plant is located, across the street from Ding Darling Refuge.

At the time this newsletter was being written, this ordinance was undergoing a series of public hearings. Some residents object very strongly to the possibility of a tower being constructed anywhere near their property, for a variety of reasons. We understand their concerns, and we would like to explain IWA's position on this matter for the benefit of all our members.

Over a year ago, we were approached by City of Sanibel officials who told us that they would be designating a number of locations on the Island where cellular phone towers would be permitted. Since IWA is one of the largest property owners on the Island, and since several of our parcels are quite large, they felt that our property might make good locations for the towers. We also learned that IWA might obtain a considerable yearly lease income from telecommunications companies if towers were to be located on our property. The IWA Board of Directors carefully considered these facts and decided that they would not object to our property being zoned to permit the towers, since any income derived from the towers could be used to keep our water rates as low as possible. We therefore notified the City to include our sites in the ordinance.

However, subsequent to that decision, it has become apparent to us that we should reconsider our position for two reasons. First, the more we learned about the details of the facilities that would be constructed, the more we realized that they might not be compatible with the neighborhoods surrounding our two sites. Second, we came to the realization that there was little likelihood that either of our sites would ever be chosen for construction of a tower in any case, whether due to proximity to a residential neighborhood or to other existing tower sites. We therefore decided to notify City officials that IWA will not allow the construction of cellular phone towers on our property, regardless of zoning.

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### MORE CONTROVERSY

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In addition to the cellular phone tower controversy discussed above, IWA has also been involved in another area of controversy at City Hall. In late November, after many years of trying, we finally sold our property located at 3425 Sanibel

Captiva Road, where our old treatment plant and corporate offices had been located. The new owner of the property has decided to convert the property to a self-storage facility, and the Sanibel Planning Commission has recommended against the required zoning change to permit such an activity on the property. IWA has been criticized by some parties for selling the property to a private party, as opposed to keeping it "public" property. However, since IWA is a private, member-owned not-for-profit corporation, the property has never actually been "public," although admittedly it was used for a public purpose ... water supply.

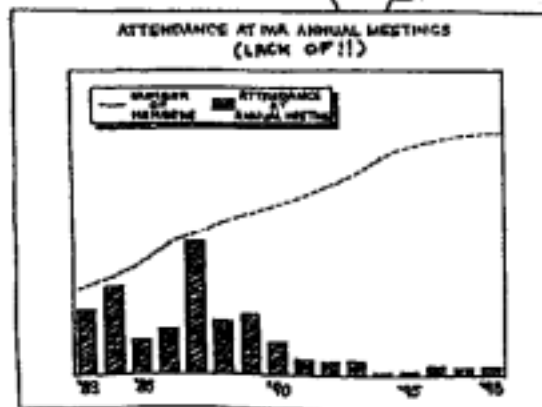
In any case, this piece of property became surplus to IWA's needs in 1994, when we moved our offices to our new facilities located at the RO Plant site at 3651 Sanibel-Captiva Road. The old treatment plant had actually been decommissioned earlier in 1992, when the process became very uneconomical to operate, compared to reverse osmosis.

Once the property became surplus to our needs, it also quickly became a liability. We had to continue to maintain the buildings and grounds, and we also had to pay utilities and insurance on them. This did not make good economic sense for IWA, in addition to the fact that we had a valuable asset that was just sitting idle and not making any income for our members. Therefore, the IWA Board of Directors felt it was their fiduciary responsibility to our members to dispose of this financial liability by selling the property for the highest price we could get.

The Board decided not to use the services of a real estate agent in order to save the considerable fees that would be involved. We therefore marketed the property ourselves, primarily through word of mouth and this newsletter, since 1994. We had many offers and accepted three of them, the first two of which fell through before closing. The last one did not fall through, and the sale closed last November for IWA's asking price of \$500,000. The proceeds from this sale are now invested in IWA's accounts, where they are making a return for our members. This will help to keep our water rates as low as possible for some time.

The IWA Board has not taken a position on the merits of the new owner's proposed use for the property. On the lighter side of this question however, the Board did respond negatively to one previous potential purchaser who wanted to construct a revolving restaurant on top of the large water storage tank on the site. Somehow that just did not seem to be an appropriate use for the property!

## Y'ALL COME, Y'HEAR!!



This year's Annual Meeting will be held on Monday, April 12, 1999 at 10 a.m. in our offices at 3651 Sanibel-Captiva Road. Materials relating to this meeting are enclosed with this Newsletter.

**PLEASE** vote your proxy and return it to us as soon as possible!!

As has been the case at the last few meetings, we'll be happy to give anyone a tour of our facilities after the meeting is over, and we can also show you our new control room and the location for the new deep injection well. Of course we'll also have the customary coffee and doughnuts before the meeting begins. So mark your calendars and plan to attend. Attendance at the last few meetings has been less than we would like, so we'd like to see **YOU** there this year!

The Nominating Committee met on January 26, 1999 to select candidates for the three vacancies on the Board this year. Mr. Paul E. Garvey, currently Board Vice President/Secretary, was re-nominated for his third and last two-year term. Mr. Robert B. Davison, currently Board Vice President, was nominated for his first full term, having completed the remaining term of Paul Storves, who resigned from the Board last summer. Mr. Timothy A. Gardner, who has served as Board President for the last year, has completed his third term and is ineligible for re-election. Stella E. Farwell has been nominated to fill Tim's seat on the Board. The Board and all of the employees and members of IWA join in thanking Tim for his many contributions to IWA over the last six years. Brief resumes of the nominees are enclosed on a separate sheet.