

# water matters

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

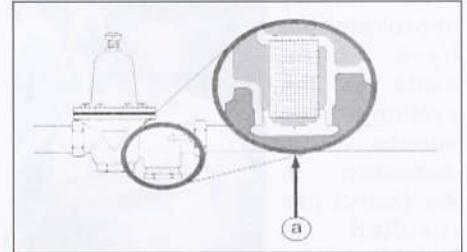
If your watering needs are limited to a small lot or garden, try these steps:

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- 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.

