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A newsletter from the
Black Mountain
Irrigation District
No. 22

CUSTOMER SURVEY RESULTS

A customer survey was issued to BMID customers in September of 2006. The objective was for BMID to receive feedback and become educated on customers needs and perceptions. This newsletter summarizes what you told us and provides some insight into the results.

The response received was excellent and we thank you for taking the time to fill out the forms. As of November 21, 2006, BMID had received 591 completed responses which provides a valid sample group of results. BMID currently has almost 5,000 residential accounts.

Four prizes of a free quarter of a year of water were drawn. The winners are:

- Ian MacDonald
- Dennis Matthews
- Harry Bentien
- Ken Klonteig

Congratulations to our winners and thank-you for your valuable feedback.

“Water and air, the two essential fluids on which all life depends, have become global garbage cans”
Jacques Cousteau (1910-1997)

CUSTOMER QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Comments on the results of our Questionnaire

The following comments correspond with our survey questions. More insight into some of the questions is provided.

1. **Overall Level of Service:** The overall rating was higher than expected. Thank-you. Approximately 90% of our customers were either satisfied or very satisfied with the overall level of service provided by BMID. Approximately half of the 18 customers that were very dissatisfied rated the staff service very high, therefore we believe there was confusion by some in answering the first question. A number of the dissatisfied customers are located along Old Vernon Road and Scotty Creek Road and receive water from our Scotty Creek source during the summer months. ***We are committed to improving the water quality to the Scotty Creek area by the spring of 2008.***
2. **Staff Service Level:** Seventy two (72%) of responses rated the level of service by staff as above average. ***We have room to improve and will be working to do so.***
3. **Customer Knowledge:** Sixty percent of respondents felt they had an average level of knowledge on valley water issues; 20 percent felt they had above average knowledge. We recognize that not all of the customers want to be water experts. Given that it is such a critical component of our lives, we want our public interested, engaged and informed on the issues of water. ***Through our newsletters and web page, we will continue to work to increase the knowledge of our customers on water related issues.***
4. **Newsletter Content:** Response to newsletter content was positive. 23% rated it as adequate, 52% as good and 19% as very good. ***Our objective for future newsletters is to have a theme on specific topics with more focus and information for our customers.***
5. **Newsletter Frequency:** Based on responses, we will be issuing future newsletters on a quarterly basis.
6. **Perceived Water Quality:** 50% of our customers believed the water quality was good and another 39% rate it as very good. The water from our Mission Creek source (primary BMID source) meets the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality year round.
7. **Perceived Water Safety:** 62% of respondents felt that BMID water is safe to use for all household purposes. For a person with a normal immune system, the water ***is*** safe for all domestic purposes. When the safety of drinking water supply is compromised and there is a higher than normal risk to the public under the Drinking Water Protection Regulation, BMID is obligated to notify customers of the risk. This is not new and has been common practice for many years. Because we do not filter the water, the message from the Provincial and Local Health officials is that for all infants (< 2 yrs), immunocompromised persons, and seniors (> 65 yrs), extra precautions should be taken to ensure they have a safe source of water. ***We strongly support this message for these specific user groups.***
8. **Home Treatment Survey:** We were surprised by the high number of respondents who use additional treatment for their tap water. Eighty-nine (89%) percent of the responders to Question 6 believed the water quality to be good or very good, yet overall, only 38% of the responders do not provide some form of additional treatment to the water. The extra treatment provided in the home was found to be 44%. There has been excellent marketing carried out for the home water treatment and bottled water industries. The proper and timely maintenance of the home treatment devices is paramount to the safety of our customers. ***The proper maintenance of home treatment systems will be the focus of one of our up-coming newsletters.***

“We’re all downstream”

Ecologist’s motto adopted by Margaret & Jim Drescher, Windhorse Farm, Nova Scotia

CUSTOMER QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS (CONTINUED)

9. Home Treatment Expenditures: The amount of money that is spent on additional treatment varied. Based on the numbers submitted, the total annual revenue diverted to the bottled water industry or the home treatment industry within BMID is conservatively estimated as \$ 650,000 or \$32 / person/ year for persons within BMID. **This is sufficient revenue to finance an \$8,000,000 construction project to improve our water quality.**

10. Drink Tap Water? 47% of BMID customers regularly drink tap water. This response correlates relatively well with the other related questions. **BMID's tap water is generally very clear and has an inoffensive taste or odour.**

11. Drink Bottled Water? Bottled water drinkers account for approximately 25% of the population. The reasons for drinking bottled water are the convenience, lifestyle, perception of safety, and not wanting to drink carbonated beverages. Although it is a healthy choice, it is also a very expensive choice. Compare the table below:

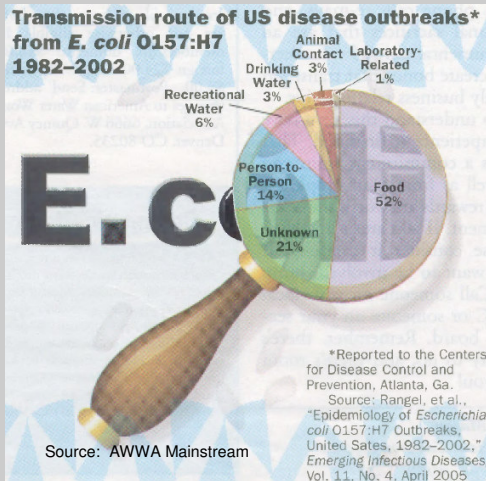
Municipal water supply	\$ 0.50 / cubic metre	\$ 0.50 / m3
Bottled Water Service	\$ 8.00 / month / 5 -18 L jugs	\$ 90 / m3
Bottled Water (store)	\$ 1.39 / 600 ml container	\$ 2,316 / m3

BMID has plans to develop an at-cost fill-your-bottle water service for our customers. This will provide the elderly, immuno-compromised or those with infants the ability to obtain the most cost effective highest standard of water that we can reasonably provide.

12. Water Terminology: We are please to see that most people understand the difference between a "Water Quality Advisory" and "Boil Water Notice". The IHA Turbidity Education and Notification campaign of 2006 has resulted in reduced public confidence in the safety of the regional water supply. IHA is reviewing the program at the present time and BMID has provided comments to IHA in this regard. **To sign up for automatic e-mail notifications on any water quality risks throughout all five water utilities in Kelowna, please visit www.kjwc.org and go to the "Water Quality Alerts" area.**

13. Current Advisories: Halfway through this survey's time, residents of Scotty Creek were taken off of a Water Quality Notice. As a result, there was confusion on this question and **the results are deemed to be invalid.**

14. Illness: Gastro-intestinal illness can originate from water supply. The adjacent graph shows 20 years of data from the USCDC related to the percentage of e-coli outbreaks from various sources. Generally, the percentage of illness estimated to originate from drinking water was 3%. It is likely that the three percent of our customers who stated they experienced a GI illness in the last five years would have been ill from one of the identified sources. **We believe that reducing the amount of cattle and human waste in our watersheds is the most cost effective measure in reducing public drinking water risk.**



15. Rate Increase for WQ Improvements? Over half of our population (52%) stated that they were unwilling to pay any additional money for Water Quality improvements. 98% of the persons surveyed stated they would not pay over \$10/month for water quality improvements. It is estimated that annually, BMID customers are spending \$650,000 on after market home water treatment devices. The marketing of the bottled water industry has changed the way water suppliers operate. **Funding and regaining public trust in the water supply is one of the largest challenges facing IHA and the water utilities.**

*"Before enlightenment,
Chop Wood, Carry Water,
After enlightenment,
Chop Wood, Carry Water"*
Zen saying

16. Higher Regulatory Requirements: This issue was listed as a concern or somewhat a concern for many of our water users. Recent headlines in our newspapers stated that \$500M of capital improvements are required to meet IHA's interpretation of BC's Drinking Water Regulation. Last week, over 200 people attended the Sustainability Conference in Kelowna, which focused on protecting our natural ecosystems. **There is a disconnect between the long term protection of our resources, such as Okanagan Lake, and the fiscal message from our regulator.** This topic will be the focus of our next newsletter.

17. Conservation: Generally BMID customers are concerned about the efficient and effective use of water. 78% practice conservation most of the time. **Future newsletters will give you ideas and information on how you can use water wisely.**

18. & 19. Metering: Although the public is generally ready for water meters, not all residents are comfortable with a program. We are sensitive to metering concerns and will not be implementing a Universal metering program for a few years. All new connections within BMID must be metered. **BMID is currently implementing a metering program for our large irrigation parcels.**

20. Organizational Structure: A strong vote of confidence was received to have BMID remain as is. A significant percentage also stated they would require additional information before answering. The ratio of decided respondents was 18:1 to stay as is. **BMID continues to be an effective utility because :**

- It is a single focus, single service;
- It has a committed and focused Board;
- It implements full-cost pricing;
- It is community-oriented

**OBSERVE, RECORD & REPORT
questionable watershed activities to
BMID at 765-5169**