

West Wabasso should begin getting county water today

By HENRY A. STEPHENS

WEST WABASSO — Pauline Powell, a resident of 64th Avenue, can expect to toast today with her first glass of county water.

Eight months after Indian River County contractors started a \$575,000 job laying the first water mains in the economically challenged area, Powell will be the first one whose home is connected to county water.

"I'm quite sure it will be exciting," she said Thursday. "We always had to buy salt for the water softener. We never did drink the water."

In much of West Wabasso, private wells yield brown water and the residents are forced to buy bottled water.

In fact, county Health Department records show the water from those wells in West Wabasso has 10 times the acceptable level of iron.

Powell, 60, a native of the community, counts herself lucky because her home always had a water softener to remove the iron taint from the well water. Even then, she said, the family bought bottled water for drinking.

Still, the family bathed in the well water and washed clothes. And when the salt ran out of the softener, the iron taint was back.

"When there was not enough salt, you'd know it," she said.

Powell's next-door neighbors, Edward and Vivian Coney, may also get water today. For them, county water will mean they will finally get to wash their white clothing at home.

"You can't wash your whites in this water because it will leave them so yellow and dingy," Vivian Coney said, pointing to a heavily discolored wash basin.

Okeechobee plumbing contractor Leroy Wise is first scheduled this morning to flush the well water out of Powell's system.

Before anyone can drink the county water, however, Sheltra & Son Construction Co. Inc. of Indiantown has to open the valves into the new water mains, county Project Engineer Himanshu Mehta said.

The Powell and Coney homes are among 79 originally identified in the grant area, Mehta said. So far, he added, 64 homeowners have approached the county for the hookups. And the required \$50 deposits, he said, are trickling in. After tallying 10 on Tuesday, he said Thursday he didn't have the latest count.

But West Wabasso residents who want to apply for the hookups and have yet to do so can bring their \$50 deposits to the West Wabasso Progressive Civic League meeting at 6 p.m. Monday at the Daisy Hope Center, 8465 62nd Ave., Wabasso.

- They need to pay their \$50 deposit to the county.
- County contractors need to open the valves of the new water mains.
- County building inspectors need to inspect the hookups.
- To hook up: Call county utilities engineer Himanshu Mehta at (772) 226-1822.