

I had the privilege last month of attending the annual meeting of the Florida Sod Producers Association (FSPA) held in the heart of Polk County. It was an excellent meeting with an educational session, awards presentation and equipment demonstration after the barbecue lunch.

At the morning session an update was given on the status of developing and implementing a state-sanctioned and -regulated sod certification program. All of the FSPA members were very interested in the program, how it would work and what the costs would be. However a major concern was over whether

the customer would be willing to pay more for "certified" sod than they would for non-certified.

This is a very valid point. Will you as a customer insist on using "only" certified sod and sprigs? Will you as a customer for Tifdwarf or Tifway 419 bermudagrass pay three to five cents more per square foot for certified sod or \$1 per bushel more for sprigs over non-certified?

If the answer is "No," then you have just driven the first nail into the coffin of the sod certification program. If the answer is "No," then you have also decided that you are willing to continue accepting the Heinz 57 mixture of grasses coming out of sod fields all over the state.

You see, the sod certification program will not be without its costs to the producers. Those producers who sign up to participate (and not all in the state will) in the program will have no choice but to pass these costs on to you the consumer.

At the same time, there will be the non-certified producers out there. You can probably tell who they are going to be right now. They will be the ones that cut corners on their production costs in order to undercut prices of legitimate producers. You know... a few more weeds in the sod, a few more diseased pallets in the truckload, a few more different types of grasses than the one they are supposed to be delivering. Hell, maybe with a little luck you might actually get some of the type of grass that you ordered.

And then again maybe you won't.

It is an interesting scenario we have here. What we have right now is everybody in the sod business in a gray area. Maybe they have the real McCoy and maybe they don't; there is no way to be sure.

There are no real good guys and no real bad guys, just a bunch of gray guys... no standards, no controls, no criteria and no demands, just grass. Are you ready to step forward and put your money where your mouth is? Are you ready to pay for the real McCoy?

I hope so. You see, the golf course industry is what is behind this FGCSA/FTGA/FDAC effort to revitalize a certification program. It is because of

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Will you pay for the real McCoy?

Editorial License



Tom Benefield, CGCS Editor

120 attend seminar on environmental leadership

On Friday, May 13, at the Naples Beach Club, about 120 golf course superintendents and other concerned professionals attended a seminar led by Dr. Michael Coffman.

The focus of the seminar centered around the elite leadership in the environmental movement. This leadership probably comprises less than five percent of those people involved in environmental activism.

Dr. Coffman exposed the political

and quasi-religious agenda behind this small but powerful group. They have been very effective in promoting legislation that has had significant impact on our lives, the economy, and amazingly, even to the detriment of the environment, without having to demonstrate any peer-reviewed scientific evidence or proof.

To counteract the emotionalism, extremism, and fanaticism (that incidentally provides good material for the me-

dia), we must fight this battle on a grass roots and local basis. It must be done using the truth, solid scientific evidence and an ongoing commitment to environmental sensitivity and public education relating to our own operations.

If you're concerned about your profession, free enterprise, private property and government growing out of control, please call 207-945-9878 to obtain a copy of Dr. Coffman's book, *Saviors of the Earth?*

Poa Weekend a professional, social success

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ber of the Ridge Chapter, showed any mercy on the field.

A net 69 on a tough day is a score to be proud of so you can imagine how happy David Oliver of the Treasure Coast Chapter was with his gross 69 good for a four-shot victory over Mark Hopkins. It was Oliver's third victory in

the past four Poa Annuas. Dick Harrell won the Suppliers Division with a solid, even-par 72 followed by Gary Whilhelm. A cookout lunch followed the tournament as wives and children congratulated or consoled their favorite linksters.

It almost seems unrealistic to have so much fun and still make money. Over \$10,000 was raised this year for the turfgrass industry.

Of course, a get together like this takes a lot of hard work and great sponsors. The Naples Beach Club and Dick Naccarato were fabulous as always. The sponsors all deserve our respect, our thanks and our business. On behalf of the Everglades board of directors, it was simply a labor of love for our proud Poa Annua tradition.

Poll: 87% say current safeguards adequate

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education and certification for users, easier-to-understand labels and pesticides prescribed and applied only by licensed applicators were the most frequently mentioned solutions for preventing misapplication of pest control products.

Almost 50 percent said there is an area

regarding the use of pest control products that should be regulated more to prevent practices that are unsafe or risky. Application methods and homeowner use of pest control products were the most frequently mentioned areas needing to be regulated more.

More than 87 percent said they agree the safeguards already in place are suffi-

cient to ensure safety to the environment, the public, animals or wildlife and actual users of pest control products.

At 41 percent, wearing protective clothing was the most frequently mentioned pest control regulation/practice that contributes the most to the safe use of pest control products. Record keeping also was mentioned frequently.

Benefield: Are you willing to pay for the real McCoy?

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horror stories from you the superintendent that this work is being done.

And it is up to you the superintendent to assure that the program succeeds. If you don't insist on "certified" sod and sprigs when you rebuild or re-grass your course,

the program is doomed. If you go to non-certified producers because of their lower price you deserve what you get as far as the grass quality goes.

The larger injustice however will be that you will have let down your profession.

You have an obligation to support those programs endorsed by the professional association you belong to which are progressive and of merit. This is one of those programs. It needs your support and help. Don't be penny wise and pound foolish.