



Turfgrass Base Paper Executive Summary

SITUATION

The turfgrass industry in Florida encompasses 4.4 million acres of managed turf that provides over \$7.3 billion to Florida's economy. Homeowners make up the largest segment with 75% of the total Florida turf acreage maintained at a cost of 3.9 billion dollars annually.

Florida has the most golf courses of any state in the Union with over 1,400 in use. Only two countries (the USA and Japan) have more golf courses than Florida. Over 60 million rounds of golf were played in the state, making golf a major recreational and economic activity in Florida.

More than 53,000 acres of sod were produced annually in Florida in the 1990s making Florida the largest sod production state in the USA, double that of Texas the next largest sod producer. Turfgrasses produced on sod farms are found on golf courses, athletic fields, cemeteries, roadsides, and in the landscape. The turfgrass industry essentially includes and/or impacts all people living in or visiting Florida because nearly all people use it on a daily basis.

CURRENT TRENDS

Many trends are having great impact on the turfgrass industry and will continue to do so in the next decade.

- 1) increased government regulation including the implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act and the resultant loss of chemicals available for pest management;
- 2) the increase in popularity of golf and athletics, the increased requirement for better performance turf venues, the increased use of outside consultants, and the increased competition for players among golf and sport facilities;
- 3) Florida population increases leading to greater use of turfgrass sod;
- 4) aging of the baby-boom generation with migration to Florida for retirement and use of green areas for and recreational activities;
- 5) increased wealth and expendable income for recreational tourist activities;
- 6) sod quality issues including off-type contamination and the proliferation of troublesome perennial hard-to-control weeds, diseases, insects, and other pests as impacted by the changes in global weather which influence both turf management and pest pressure in Florida;
- 7) Environmental issues including water quality and water conservation efforts and impacts of other turfgrass management practices such as agrichemical use on environmental quality and human health; and (8) Labor competition due to low unemployment, and associated communication challenges of a migrant and foreign-based work force concentrated in the large yet low paying job sector in the turf industry.

DETERMINANTS OF CHANGE

Relevant determinants of change which will likely shape the Florida turfgrass industry include politically-heightened environmental regulations, US and state economies, water quality and quantity issues, labor pool issues, global warming, and the unpredictable nature of change itself. Overall as long as the economy is strong and population demographic projections remain on target, there should be an increased demand for turfgrass venues, and for professional turfgrass management.

Association "Future of Golf" tournament, Steve Pearson, superintendent at the Falls CC and a director of the PBGCSA, presented the FLREC with a check for \$7,500 to support new research on ultradwarf bermudagrasses.

At the April Envirotron Classic, the Seven Rivers Chapter announced that it would be providing financial support of a shade-tolerance research study in the Envirotron to be conducted by Drs. Russell Nagata, EREC and Grady Miller, Gainesville. This is a great precedent for Envirotron funds to support interdisciplinary research. Seven Rivers also announced support of Dr. Jerry Sartain's soil and tissue analysis research. All the scientists extend their deep appreciation.

Turf Faculty Notes

Congratulations to Dr. Lawrence Datnoff, EREC pathologist, on his promotion to professor, beginning this summer 1999.

Our three Florida turf faculty on sabbatical leave are set to return in mid to late summer. I recently heard from Dr. Robin Giblin-Davis, FLREC, so I guess the great white sharks and the crocs from down under haven't gotten him yet.

The Florida First Conference May 20-21 was VP Mike Martin's exciting new approach to focusing on the University of Florida's future role in Florida agriculture. Turfgrass was one of the key groups included as industry sector. Many thanks to Joel Jackson, Ray Carruthers, Mark Jarrell, and Don Benham for representing the turfgrass industry.

JOHN CISAR
Turf Coordinator

FLORIDA FIRST

Focusing IFAS Resources on Solutions for Tomorrow

On May 20th and 21st the University of Florida held a conference in Safety Harbor, Fla to bring together representatives of all the state's agricultural commodities.

The purpose was to discuss the future course that the Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) should take to meet the needs of producers, managers and consumers in Florida.

For the golf industry there were some

Pyramid Bermudagrass

very early positive outcomes before the opening gavel was even struck. First and foremost was the naming of turfgrass as one of the eight commodity groups of concern. Turfgrass joined such groups as Animals, Field Crops, Fruit Crops, Vegetable Crops, Environmental Horticulture, Forestry, and the group of Aquaculture, Fisheries and Wildlife.

There were 18 breakout groups from these eight major commodity groups. The turfgrass group included: Drs. John Cisar, Barry Brecke, John Haydu, Jerry Sartain, George Snyder, Everett Emino, Terril Nell and Bryan Unruh from IFAS. Industry representatives included Ray Carruthers, Sod Growers Association; Greg Tolle, Lawn Maintenance Association; Don Benham, Florida Turfgrass Association; Mark Jarrell, FTGA/FGCSA; and Joel Jackson, FGCSA.

The turf group discussed issues ranging from public awareness and education to timely technology transfer from researcher to end user. We talked about

grass varieties and the need for breeding to pursue more drought- and pest-resistant strains to meet the growing restrictions on chemical use and water availability.

We also talked about facilities and infrastructure of IFAS including the continual process of training new students and hiring faculty that can meet the needs of the turfgrass industry.

It was an eye-opening experience to see and hear the concerns and needs of the various commodities. It gave one a clearer sense of perspective of the mission of IFAS at Florida's land grant University serving a population that is 80 percent urban while 80 percent of the land is in under cultivation or in its natural state. I had a chance to chat with Dr. Mike Martin, the new vice president of IFAS and he is no stranger to the golf industry. His son works on a golf course and he was very aware of the Minnesota GCSA when he was at the University of Minnesota.

In the accompanying sidebar, I have

provided the executive summary of the Turfgrass Base Paper which the turfgrass used to kick-start our discussions. There are some familiar themes and some new thoughts to challenge you as you think about the future of the turfgrass industry in Florida.

JOEL JACKSON, CGCS

FGCSA Director of Communications

GCSAA PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

National Committee Service Broadens One's Perspective

Spring is the time for GCSAA committee Meetings. As soon as staff gets back from the International Conference and Show they have just enough time to clear their desks, return calls, follow up on contacts from the conference and show and then prepare agendas and working papers for nearly two months of continuous committee meetings.

I was asked to serve on the publications committee for the second year in a row and



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