Flood devastates Texas courses

By Peter Blais

Jack and Melissa Fletcher stood along the banks of the Brazos River Christmas Eve, watching the rain-swollen waters rise at the rate of an inch per hour and drown their nine-hole course.

"It died a slow death," recalled Jack, who helps daughter Melissa manage Valley Lodge Golf Club in Simonton, Texas, 30 miles west of Houston. "It was a very helpless feeling."

Valley Lodge was one of many courses suffering major damage from the heavy rains that deluged eastern Texas in late December and January. The new Club Managers Association president was a high school teacher in Fairfield, Iowa, when he met Melissa, who became the club's assistant manager and later its bar manager. He quickly became the club's assistant manager and his career was off and running.

That career has taken him to The Whickers Club in Des Moines, Iowa, Nakoma Golf Club in Madison, Wis. and his present employer, Grosse Pointe Yacht Club in Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich.

"This is the first time I've been at a club without a golf course," said Sullivan, who came aboard Grosse Pointe in 1987. "Basically, I've traded in the golf course for a harbor. Where I used to worry about green speeds, weather conditions affecting the course and helping the superintendent deal with turf diseases, now I worry about water levels, how weather conditions affect the fleet and helping the harbor master plan boating activities."

"I grew up in the golf business as a manager and I closely follow the golf industry. I'm still a golfer, although my game has suffered from not having a course out the back door. My handicap used to be in single digits. Now it's up around 18."

As CMAA president, I represent the entire club industry. Two-thirds of our members manage country clubs with golf courses as the association goes through our strategic planning process over the next 18 months, what we do will be strongly dictated by the golf industry.

Completing that strategic plan will be Sullivan's primary goal during his term as CMAA president, as well as the goal of his vice president, Mike Kelly, vice president of Williamsburg Environmental Group in Williamsburg, Va.

Flood waters rise at the rate of an inch per hour and drown the nine-hole course.
Towns toughening pesticide laws in wake of High Court ruling

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sufficient testing and Environmental Protection Agency registration," said Allen James, executive director of Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, an association representing chemical manufacturers and distributors.

"Local ordinances are more likely to be based on emotion and pressure from local groups than reflect good science. Superintendents who rely on thoroughly tested products may not be able to use them."

Approximately 100 communities have begun the process of enacting new ordinances or enforcing existing ones since last June's Supreme Court ruling that local regulations pre-empt the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, James said.

The voters of Missoula, Mont., rejected a proposed ordinance requiring posting of warning signs one day before and two days after outdoor pesticide applications. The vote was fairly close, 5,814-4,612.

The pesticide industry, related associations, local businesses and citizens spent $32,000 on an educational program aimed at Missoula voters to help defeat the measure, James said.

"We won't put that kind of effort into other communities," James said. "We'll use the lessons learned there in other communities."

An ordinance restricting pesticide use within the city limits was proposed last month in the home-tow of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America — Lawrence, Kan.

The ordinance was a rough copy of a proposed U.S. Senate bill that would require posting 72 hours before and after pesticide applications within 1,000 feet of the application site, according to Dave Fears, superintendent at Blue Hills Country Club in nearby Kansas City, Mo.

Fears was on hand for the City Council debate, along with members of the lawn care and pesticide industries.

The woman proposing the anti-pesticide ordinance owns an organic food market, Fears reported. Another person speaking on behalf of the proposal was an official with the Coalition for Sensible Pesticide Policy, an organization of 160 associations, is pushing for pre-emption of local pesticide laws.

"We'd consider tabling the measure a victory, although our ultimate goal is to defeat it. This is important, because what happens in Denver will likely be repeated elsewhere in Colorado."

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The coalition has also started a Local Ordinance Information Network for notifying members of pending local regulations throughout the country.

Towns considering pesticide regulation

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