In defense of Cape Cod study

To the Editor:
The New York Attorney General's office attacked Long Island golf courses this summer in a report that contained some interesting facts and survey results, much conjecture, and much sensationalist anti-pesticide, anti-golf course verbiage (GCN, Sept. 91, p. 15).

When Dr. Michael Surgan, a co-author of the AG's report, criticized the Cape Cod study, I responded with a professionally written, scientific-point-by-point rebuttal (I was the director of the study, and published the results in February 1990 in two publications).

Surgan then attacked my defense and some statements made by GCSCA President Stephen Cardelli (GCN, Dec. 91, p. 11).

I responded by rebutting Surgan's attack once and for all, I would like to make some general comments.

First, this type of politicized polarization of the golf course issue, which the AG's office is attempting to create by becoming a pariah among many of the elected and career officials with whom I deal around the country.

Increasingly, I am finding it very difficult to listen to science. This science takes the form of the state-of-the-art risk assessments and monitoring efforts, coupled with detailed integrated golf course management plans (IGCMPs).

The IGCMPs use proven techniques of integrated pest management, fertilization, construction, etc., to minimize the health and minimize the need for pesticides.

It is a developing government/golf industry/citizen partnership that includes all interested and organizations that issue anti-golf course reports with a questionable basis. Second, people are really care about the environment should be careful about issuing reports such as "Toxic Fairways" (The AG's report), because others may ignore whatever good recommendations and information the report contains.

The AG's report actually contains recommendations and a lot of useful information, but the average person knowledgeable in this area would probably not take this report seriously because it is mostly just a dissertation with not much practical application, such as this can sometimes cause the pendulum to swing in the other direction, away from the environmental cause.

Dr. Surgan's second set of remarks to the press can be rebutted as follows.

The results of the monitoring wells were appropriate for identifying shallow contamination. This was thoroughly explained in my GCN letter (Dec. 91, p. 11), and supported by reference to my subsequent publications, one of which presented the results of the Cape Cod study, the other discussed results from Long Island (the subject of "Toxic Fairways"). Surgan skipped right over the science — the peer-reviewed literature — and cited a reference that was reported to him by people whom I never met and who never participated in the study.

Had he looked in the appendix of the 1980 American Hazards report, he would have noticed that no justifications were presented for the statement "in one case the top of the screen was 11 feet below the water table." This statement is wrong. One need only look at Table 1 of our Cape Cod paper published in the peer-reviewed literature (Ground Water Monitoring Review, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 147-170) to see that the greatest screen top depth had to be shallower than 9.5 ft, depending on the thickness of the bottom plug and/or well foot. Even the Cape Cod Commission report Surgan cites states "...the tops of the screens mostly range from 2 feet below to 2.5 feet above the water table.

To the Reader's comments that discuss pesticide use rates was misleading. It appears the Surgan's December statement was also misleading...("Long Island courses reported annual application rates up to 22 pounds of active ingredient per acre.") Table 1 in the "Toxic Fairways" report, which he coauthored, also contained other relevant information.

For example, it is interesting to note that the average use rate is 7.7 lb/acre. Also, approximately 22 of the 52 golf courses reported in the GA's report has pesticide use rates exceeding 1 lb/1,000 square feet (Long Cod rate quoted by Surgan in his December letter [2.74.4 lb/A]).

Although I agree that it can be difficult to make meaningful comparisons from one study site to another, one must be careful about making sensationalist remarks regarding pesticide use rates, which are not a government agency.

Placement of the wells was in or immediately adjacent to turf grass. Wells were then used to maximize the chances of detecting turf chemicals, within the constraints of practical considerations and the need to obtain results from different management areas — trees, greens, fairways, and background wells.

Dr. Surgan's letter was professionally written and the last paragraph, especially with some of his points, and he may have hamstrung the AG's report, but it could have been one of these issues where professional people just agree to disagree, and walk away unenlightened.

Unfortunately, Surgan decided to get personal on the last paragraph, in another gratuitous attack on the AG's report, the E.S. Environmental Protection Agency, I never wrote such an arrogant potshot. But I, while not the best career counseling for Dr. Surgan as he has done for me, I would counsel his supervisors to review his correspondence for the future.

However, this can be taken with a grain of salt. For I am still naive enough to believe that good science will win out over bad politics in the long run, although there may be momentary setbacks along the way.

Sincerely,
Stuart Z. Cohen, Ph.D.
Environmental & Turf Services, Inc.

Apathy, excuses are the culprits

To the Editor:
Your trade newspaper does a good job of keeping people up to date on golf course issues, but please spare us your personal views on abortion and school support. Don't let these issues enter in this paper. Apathy and excuses instead are leading the country into a reduction in personal rights.

Secondly, don't forget the research community of apathy and lack of interest. Obviously you are unaware of the demands placed on time in the field with all these arguments. I see bent cut continuously reducing research funds and increasing workloads. A researcher is very willing to present the facts "armed with research documentation to help quell the storm." However, the same storm quells up repeatedly with the same facts as the research wasn't presented at all.

Education of the public must be done by everyone in the industry, and not just as a potential marketing angle, but to deal with the real environmental issues we face.

Sincerely,
Paul G. Johnson
St. Paul, Minn.

Please mail letters to: Golf Course News, P.O. Box 597, Yarmouth, ME 04096.

'Megafactors' will drive golf industry through the decade

Continued from page 14
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