Michigan pioneers environmental self-audit

EAST LANSING, Mich. — The Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program was officially launched June 25 at Michigan State University here, pioneering new ground for golf courses. Golf turf representatives from throughout the state attended the first Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship seminar to learn how to improve water quality, prevent pollution and increase compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Director Russell Harding and Michigan Department of Agriculture Deputy Director Keith Cregah provided opening comments and welcomed participants to this new partnership.

"As this groundbreaking initiative gains momentum, we expect to see increased levels of environmental protection and habitat enhancement statewide," said Harding. "This effort holds tremendous promise and will no doubt serve as a model for other states."

The program is the first of its kind in the nation and is supported by Michigan State University, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan Turfgrass Foundation, Golf Association of Michigan, Michigan Golf Course Owners Association and environmental advocacy groups.

Dwarf hybrid Bermudas need special regimen

By BRUCE SHANK

IFTON, Ga. — The latest generation of dwarf hybrid Bermudagrasses is changing the way golf greens play and are maintained in warmer regions of the United States. And, according to Dr. Wayne Hanna of the Coastal Plain Experiment Station here, as with any quantum change in turfgrass management, superintendents face a learning curve with these Bermudagrasses.

Hanna, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Bermudagrass expert for two decades, is in the final stages of publishing a booklet on how to manage the new Bermudagrasses.

The advantage of the new Bermudas is their absence of seedheads and preference, not tolerance, for cutting heights below 5/32 inch. They also exhibit finer texture and higher density.

Because they are very aggressive and very dwarf, they are maintained to prevent predictable problems, such as thatch.

"You can only see the differences among the new Bermudagrasses at close mowing heights," said Hanna, who developed the dwarf TifEagle. Only trials mowing the new Bermudagrass below 3/16 inch provide a true comparison of qualities. Test sites at 33 golf courses and universities enable superintendents to see the differences firsthand.

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS COUNTS

The prevention steps Hanna recommends are typical for many golf courses — grooming, top dressing, verticutting and aeration. The difference is frequency and consistency. While standard Bermudagrasses perform better at longer heights of cut, the new varieties don't perform as intended when allowed to grow much above 1/8 inch.

Grooming (light verticutting with greensmowers) should be performed every week or two, followed by light top dressing, according to Hanna. More aggressive verticutting and top dressing should take place two to three times during the summer. Intervals between aeration should be shortened and cores removed.

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As we live & breathe: Golf courses as open space

By RON DODSON

As we live and breathe, could it be that golf courses provide some value to the environment? Part of the answer to that question can be found in the air around us. The quality of air depends on open space and, consequently, open space is an essential environmental management tool.

Colonial Acres joins world’s elite 135 fully certified

GLENMONT, N.Y. — Superintendent Patrick A. Blum, who said he learned from his superintendent father that golf courses can and should help to preserve and enhance wildlife habitat and protect natural resources, has led Colonial Acres Golf Course to full certification in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System (ACSS).

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think of parks.

Others are:

• "Resource open spaces," where land or water is devoted to some form of non-structural production activity. A forest, range lands, water-storage lakes or rivers are examples.

• "Utility open spaces," which include flood-control and drainage lands, and lands used as wildlife refuges, or reserved for urban development.

• "Corridor open spaces," where space is allocated for the movement of people and material from one point to another. Examples include right-of-ways such as highways and streets or railroads, and the areas associated with the terminals or interchange areas.

• "Green open spaces," where recreation or relatively non-structural uses are sought and where natural vegetation tends to dominate the area. These are national and urban parks, buffer areas, golf courses, and greenbelts that may be mixed with urban development.

Open space, in its natural or manipulated state, can have a varied and far-reaching effect on regional air quality. It is well documented that open spaces, particularly when planned as base soil or as bodies of water, can act as "sinks" for many air pollutants. Through the natural process, pollutants generated by urban land uses can be entrapped by these areas. From a planning point of view, open space has been used as a buffer to contain urban development and its resulting air pollution.

Perhaps more thought should be given to locating some golf courses to serve a role in helping regional air quality. This would result in looking for areas that could serve to form an important "link" in an urban greenbelt, for example. This sitting process could also benefit some forms of urban wildlife that need habitat corridors.

Properly sited, well designed and appropriately managed golf courses, particularly in urban and suburban areas, may help regional air quality more than they are presently given credit for. The next time you are in an airplane flying into a major metropolitan area, look down. You will be amazed at the mosaic of the landscape and the prominence of golf courses in it.

They are frequently the only remaining "open spaces" on the landscape and, as such, can benefit air quality in areas heavily impacted by human development and activity.

Colonial Acres

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integrated pest management, water conservation, and water-quality management.

In 1997, Colonial Acres Golf Course joined the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, which provides information and guidelines to golf courses to help them preserve and enhance wildlife habitat and protect natural resources.

Almost one-third of Colonial Acres contains woodland, water and naturalized areas, some of which are within or in close proximity to playing areas. Nobody playing the course can miss the many bird houses, especially the 24-apartment purple martin "condo" rising above the 9th tee.

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