2001 Newsmakers

Winterkill, drought and floods deal hard lessons in 2001

By JOEL JOYNER

HOUSTON — Mother Nature was both forgiving and unforgiving to superintendents in regions throughout the country this year. Winterkill, drought, disease, and floods dealt some hard lessons and reminded superintendents that there’s only so much that can be done when faced with the unleashed force of nature.

Superintendent Michael Wing at the 18-hole golf and ski resort, Sugarloaf Golf Course in Kingfield, Maine, started the 2001 season off with 14 greens severely damaged from winterkill. In the mountainous, western part of the state the golfing season is limited and soil temperatures make it a tough region to grow close-cut bentgrass.

“With a new construction course, you normally grow in greens 12 to 18 months before play is allowed on them,” said Wing. “We tried to do it in four weeks.”

The course, usually open around mid-May, delayed its opening to the first of June. The greens were cultivated and overseeded a number of times, according to Wing. “With the exception of two, we had the greens back into condition by the end of June to the first week of July,” he said. “We got the last two back by the middle of July.”

George Hamilton, agronomist at Penn State, paid a visit to the course in the spring to access the damage. “He said he had never seen anything like it,” said Wing.

Fall preparations for this winter were altered slightly, mentioned Wing, but nothing radically different. “Unfortunately, I don’t think there’s a cure-all for this kind of damage,” he said. “The best thing you can do is have a good, healthy stand of turf going into the winter. We’ve hardened the turf off with some high-potassium fertilizers and tried to keep any water on the surface of the greens to a minimum.”

The greens were verti-drained in October and dormant seed was used in areas where there is quite a bit of Poa annua. “Chances are we’ll be under enough cover to kill the Poa,” explained Wing. “I’ve also placed permanent covers on all the greens for added protection. Hopefully, next spring, the covers will get soil temperatures up quicker to help the germination of the dormant seed. ‘I’ve been here 15 years, and it’s rare to come through the winter in real good shape,” he said. “But this spring was one of the worst.”

FLORIDA DROUGHT

Florida has spent the past three years in a drought. This spring didn’t look very promising to most superintendents who were faced with phase two and phase three water restrictions. However, by late summer and fall, the state was on the

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Superintendents initiate innovative plans to get golf courses Audubon certified

By JOEL JOYNER

CHICAGO, Ill. — Audubon International provides information and guidance to help preserve wildlife habitat and protect natural resources, but superintendents are the ones who make it a reality by implementing innovative plans to make golf courses more environmentally friendly.

Superintendents fulfilled Audubon International’s environmental mission this year by protecting bald eagles and creating trout spawning channels, establishing buffer zones and native areas, identifying and attracting wildlife, and sharing their environmental message with their communities.

This year has shown an impressive turn out in the number of courses striving to get their courses registered and certified with the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP). There are now more than 300 golf courses worldwide that have met the challenging but rewarding certification process.

SEA MARSH AT SEA PINES

Identifying wildlife and maintaining 600 acres of preserved land at the Sea Pines Plantation on Hilton Head Island, S.C., has helped superintendent Jim Cregan at the Sea Marsh course (GCN May) reach certification.

The course has gone above and beyond certification requirements by having 100 percent of their landscape plan native and buffering as much as 25 percent of their shorelines.

“Members and people in the area know

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GCSAA to launch Internet venture by year’s end

By ANDREW OVERBECK

LAWRENCE, Kan. — Despite industry objections and the general unwillingness of superintendents to purchase supplies online, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America has finalized its e-commerce strategy and plans to roll out the refined Web site before the end of the year.

When the association announced its e-commerce intentions in late April, the industry and superintendents bristled at the idea that the GCSAA would profit from the venture at the expense of its members. In order to gauge response, the association held a 90-day pilot program that was followed by a series of industry feedback meetings. By late summer, the association had abandoned its net market strategy (that would have levied a percentage fee on all transactions) in favor of a more traditional storefront model that protects existing distribution channels.

“We are not trying to cannibalize the distribution channels or affect relationships,” he said. “We are trying to take advantage of the traffic on our site and be the third party that helps our industry partners get together with buyers in a way that gets the local distributor involved
doi with e-commerce,” said Bryce Gartner, senior manager for Internet services for the GCSAA, who stepped into his role during the end of the pilot program. “The industry and superintendents had opinions on where they thought we should take this. Since the pilot, we have changed the approach and gotten a more favorable response.”

According to Gartner, the storefront model will preserve existing relationships between suppliers, distributors and superintendents.

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