Drought, heat and fire ravaging Mountain West

By KEVIN J. ROSS, CGCS

EDWARDS, Colo.—The western part of the United States, in particular the Mountain West, is suffering through its worst drought in more than 150 years. Water supplies throughout many areas are at critically low volumes and the prognosis doesn’t appear to be getting any better.

Along with this drought came the worst fire season in decades. Major wildfires have been occurring throughout the west with Colorado and Arizona getting hit particularly hard. As of mid-summer, Colorado already had seen its worst wildfire year on record.

The impact on golf facilities has been dramatic. Water availability may be the most difficult problem facing courses to date. Most of the Mountain West depends largely (70 percent) on snowpack to fill ponds, reservoirs and rivers. After a year of below-normal snowpack and above-average temperatures and windy conditions, there is very little water to go around.

Kevin Calahane at Telluride Golf Club has gone from using up to 1,750 gpm in the spring to only 450 gpm during the summer to water his entire golf facility. “They will probably make a call on the water in the river soon and if that happens we will be able to water greens and tees only, and all resort/homeowner irrigation will be eliminated,” he said.

Another example is the completely redesigned and renovated Snowmass Club near Aspen. As of press time, the club was debating whether to start seeding or hold off until next year because of the low water supply.

“There is just not enough water in our streams to supply what’s needed for a grow-in, and it appears that the situation is getting only worse,” said project manager Al Ogren.

Another factor in the water supply equation is the demand for domestic use. Most golf courses own water rights from...Continued on page 10

Champion bermudagrass quickly becoming top dog in Arizona

By D. HUBBARD

HIGLEY, Ariz.—Over the last 15 years, as golf in Arizona’s Sonoran desert has developed into an international attraction, the demand for premium-level golf courses has pushed bentgrass greens beyond their reasonable limits to cope in the desert.

In its five years at three Arizona golf facilities, Champion has proven its claim as the bermudagrass that most closely mirrors bentgrass in appearance and performance, while withstanding the ravaging from the dry summer heat.

As scores of high-end golf properties convert to such hybrids as Tifdwarf and Tif Eagle, Champion is the ultradwarf of choice at Superstition Mountain Golf Club, The Pointe Hilton Golf at Lookout Mountain, and the Omni Tucson National Golf Resort.

While maintenance philosophies and practices vary from one club to the next, everyone agrees that Champion is “high maintenance.” Of course, the most notable advantage is the return to more normal irrigation practices. Though Champion may require more attention, maintenance crews...Continued on page 10

Postemergence crabgrass control improving

By T.L. WATSCHEK, Ph.D.

The herbicidal possibilities that exist today for the postemergence control of smooth crabgrass are vastly improved compared to 12 to 15 years ago. There is still no silver bullet in the marketplace, but the potential for a single application with high efficacy is possible.

The challenges involved in the process are proper timing (stage of growth of the smooth crabgrass), the addition of appropriate adjuvants, and possible sequential applications. Continued research is necessary to fine-tune the use of these newer materials to provide end users with consistent and highly efficacious programs for the control of smooth crabgrass.

One of the most important ingredients in controlling crabgrass, regardless of herbicidal tactic, is to have as competitive a turfgrass stand as possible. Crabgrass cannot invade and compete unless it has space.

In addition to needing space, crabgrass seedlings need light. The shade provided by a dense turfgrass stand can compromise the competitive ability of crabgrass seedlings. Thus, proper fertilization programs, particularly with respect to nitrogen rate and timing, can influence the ability of crabgrass to compete. At times, continued on page 10

Delhi’s course wins Audubon nod

DELHI, N.Y.—The Delhi College Golf Course has been certified as an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary by Audubon International. The course is the 15th in New York to become certified.

The college’s student chapter of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, with assistance from the course’s assistant superintendent Vivian Walker, initiated Delhi’s certification process in 1998. The 18-hole course serves as an educational lab for the college’s two- and four-year programs in golf and turf management.

“This certification justifies the hard work of the college and the community members who have kept the program going for the past four years,” said Dominic Morales, Delhi’s applied sciences and recreation dean and member of the course’s Audubon advisory board. “Besides offering village residents, golfers and visitors the opportunity to enjoy wildlife in a unique setting, the Audubon program has also provided an interesting facet to the college’s programs.”

Continued on page 10