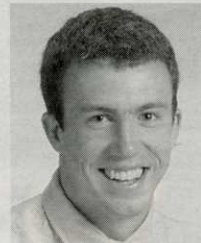


## It's time to walk the walk

When it comes to environmental stewardship, where exactly do superintendents stand?

I was reasonably confident that I knew the answer to that question, but recently I have become less certain. Here's why:



Andrew Overbeck, editor

- For all of Audubon International's bluster, they have only certified two percent of the golf courses in the U.S. A scant 13 percent are members of their programs. I could have done the math myself I suppose, but the numbers were still surprisingly low.

- In a *Golf Course News* Poll last month, we found that 75 percent of superintendents surveyed said environmental stewardship was "very important" to the future economic health of the game of golf. However, if that is the case, how come only 39 superintendents showed up at Audubon's environmental session at the GCSAA Conference and Show in Atlanta?

In last month's Point/Counterpoint, contributing editor Kevin Ross eloquently explained the disconnect between superintendents' environmental goals and Audubon certification, and it makes sense. Perhaps the phrase "environmental stewardship" has become hackneyed. Maybe too much environmental mumbo jumbo was shoved down superintendents' throats

too fast. Or maybe a majority of courses are already using IPM and other environmentally responsible practices but just don't see the value in completing the paperwork necessary to join Audubon or some other environmental program. After all, no one is forcing golf courses to give up chemicals or put up bird boxes – yet.

But equally enlightening was the counterpoint made by Audubon's Kevin Fletcher. Self-regulation, through a program such as Audubon, could prove valuable to the golf industry. By demonstrating that a large percentage of courses are adhering to a set of managed environmental standards, the industry could avoid the scrutiny of federal and state regulators.

Read the story on page one about Audubon's new sustainable communities campaign. Not only does it offer a chance for the golf industry to be a leader in communities around the country, but it is also another opportunity to broadcast the message that golf courses are environmentally responsible and sustainable.

If you are still skeptical, scan down to the bottom of this page and read this month's Point/Counterpoint. The debate over golf's environmental impact (ill-conceived or not) is not going to go away any time soon.

## It's the buying team, stupid

Kudos to the GCSAA and NCGCOA for recognizing what we at *Golf Course News* have known for several years – superintendents, as a rule, do not have blank checks to buy equipment and other products.

It is this common business sense that led the two organizations to merge their shows in 2005 as the Golf Industry Show. The refrain from the upper echelons of the GCSAA is this: "Vendors want more qualified buyers on the show floor." As well they should – they pay enough to be there. Some, like Club Car, attend five shows in the space of a month. Eliminating shipping and other related costs for one show will be, in the words of Club Car CEO Phil Tralies, "Priceless."

The myth that superintendents hold all the purchasing power has permeated the industry for too long. It is only now, when economic circumstances aren't what they used to be, that the idea of a "buying team," which has long been our focus at *Golf Course News*, is starting to resonate. Of the more than 18,000 people who attended last month's GCSAA show, roughly a third were qualified to make purchases on the show floor.

Even more heartening is that this doesn't seem to be simple lip service from the associations. Michael Wallace, GCSAA past president, also recognizes the need to get his bosses involved. When he arrived late to the GCSAA's media roundtable, he apologized, saying he had been on the show floor, kicking tires with his supervisor.

While this move is laudable, what leaves a funny taste is the name. Calling it the Golf Industry Show leaves it open for all sorts of vendors (apparel, clubs, etc.). A more fitting name would be the Golf Course Industry Show. But, knowing how slowly change is affected in one large association, let alone two, the current name will have to do.



Derek Rice, managing editor

### POINT

## Golf contaminates environment

By JAY FELDMAN

Mark Twain's quip "golf is a good walk spoiled" probably characterizes his own frustration with the difficulty of the game of golf. However, he could just as easily have been describing his concern with the golf course as a "spoiled" or contaminated environment.

Golf courses are one of the most chemically treated land areas in the United States, second only to fruit orchards. The attorney general of New York State in a report, "Toxic Fairways: Risking Groundwater Contamination From Pesticides on Long Island Golf Courses," calculated that the average golf course applies pesticides at a rate of 18 pounds of pesticides per treated acre per year, about seven times the 2.7 pounds per treated acre per year applied in agriculture. A University of Iowa medical school study commissioned by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) found that golf course superintendents suffer elevated rates of brain cancer and non-Hodgkins lymphoma, similar to farmers. In evaluating the 36 most commonly used lawn pesticides, using Environmental Protection Agency and government reviews, Beyond Pesticides finds that 14 cause cancer, 21 reproductive effects, 14 neurotoxic damage and nearly all are skin irritants and sensitizers. One product label on an organophosphate pesticide reads that repeated exposure may make a person more susceptible to the effects of this and related chemicals.

When EPA announced the phase-out of "residential" uses of the highly neurotoxic, organophosphate, insecticide chlorpyrifos (Dursban) in June 2000, it retained numerous uses, including golf course maintenance. Despite extraordinarily high levels of concern associated with children's exposure to chlorpyrifos use on turf and its



Jay Feldman

Continued on next page

### COUNTERPOINT

## Pesticides key to IPM program

By STUART Z. COHEN

Pesticides are an important component of an environmentally sound Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program. Turf pesticides should be used carefully and based on strong agronomic science. Their pre-market testing and evaluation are extensive, and their overall environmental track record is good. Finally, it is practically impossible to maintain a high-quality, heavily used golf course without synthetic chemical pesticides.

Pesticides should be used judiciously but confidently as part of a scientifically based IPM program. Each superintendent should establish pest infestation thresholds for all key weed, disease, insect and nematode pests. In the management plan our company produces, we establish lower thresholds that trigger specific cultural or mechanical actions, and higher thresholds that trigger pesticide applications. This helps ensure that pesticides are only used when necessary. This can also help reduce pesticide use relative to other strategies. This approach has become more popular since the early 1990s.

This more focused approach to pesticide use is supported by the trend for modern superintendents to limit broadcast treatment of pesticides only to those areas that experienced heavy infestations in previous years and spot treat other areas. These two approaches tend to reduce pesticide use without sacrificing turf quality. Finally, intelligent pesticide use is being further advanced through the recent development of pest forecasting models such as those by Syngenta and the University of California-Davis. Past and predicted weather conditions for an area are used to forecast insect, weed (e.g., *Poa annua*) and disease infestations.



Stuart Z. Cohen

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THE BUSINESS NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY  
www.golfcoursenews.com

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