The Buzz on Feedback

SUPERINTENDENTS CAME AWAY FROM TURF PROGRAM IMPRESSED WITH JOHN DEERE’S GPS TECHNOLOGY AND HYBRID GREENS MOWER

By Larry Aylward, Editor

The greensmower with electric reel drive was a popular attraction.

the mower because of its nonhydraulic reel drive, which eliminates the possibility of fluids leaks on greens.

Many superintendents were interested in Deere’s GPS technology. Earlier this year, Deere announced it was shifting its GPS focus from golf cars to turf equipment. (The GPS is a government network of 24 satellites orbiting the earth that tracks the location of moving objects on the ground.)

“This is what I wanted to see,” said Shelly Israelson, superintendent of Royal Palm Yacht & CC in Boca Raton, Fla., as he studied the GPS software on computers. “Soon we’ll need a computer-science degree to work in this industry.”

Israelson was joking, of course, and he’s excited about the GPS’s application to the industry.

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"It’s only going to benefit superintendents and anybody that deals with having to keep records," Israelson said. "Architects and contractors are using the GPS technology. It makes sense for us to start using it."

Mark Schmidt, Deere’s senior project manager, was attending his fourth Feedback program and said more superintendents are gaining an interest in GPS. Deere touted its GPS spray record-keeping system, and fleet and service management program.

The former provides superintendents with the capability to record spatial spray applications automatically so they can manage and assess performance of applied products — and use the data to prove compliance with environmental regulations. The system’s technology allows for a sprayer to capture information about a particular application. The information is transferred in real time to a base station where a superintendent can record and analyze it.

“The system allows superintendents to keep historical records of all the applications they’ve done,” Schmidt said.

The fleet and service management program features a preventative-maintenance hour meter that can be programmed with service intervals. “When the machine logs 25 hours, you can program it to be ready for an oil change,” Schmidt explained.

E. Charles Ulevich, director of golf course maintenance for Hayfields CC and Turf Valley Resort Conference Center in Ellicott City, Md., said the GPS would likely become a tool superintendents can’t do without. Ulevich said he played golf at a course whose GPS system would shut down golf cars if they strayed 10 feet from the cart path. “It’s phenomenal,” he added.

Ulevich said he would use the system for record keeping of pesticides and fertilizers. Ulevich, who oversees 54 holes and 60 employees, would also use GPS to track maintenance vehicles.

“But tracking maintenance vehicles might keep you in the office too much,” he added. “[GPS] is another tool that makes our lives easier, but it also has the potential to make you lazy.”

Ulevich is also concerned about price and says cost will be the driving factor on whether GPS is widely used in the industry. “Like all technology, though, it will get cheaper in the future,” he predicted.