My Takes on the Mega-Issues

By Dave Wilber

Career shortages and the overages — It's no longer a desirable career goal to be anything less than a superintendent. We haven't helped this situation by paying our second-tier people low wages and spewing some babble at them about "paying dues." In the next few years, it will be hard to fill all the openings for assistants, irrigation techs, spray techs and foremen. The truth is, it's going to be 10 times harder for some of those folks to find a superintendent's position. Some are going to have to embrace the fact that they just aren't cut out to be another Paul Latshaw, no matter how hard they try to punch their tickets to the top.

Supply issues — Superintendents are talking a lot about how the sales and distribution of the items they buy has changed. Some companies don't have the local leverage and support that they once had. My hat is off to the handful of independent turfgrass supply distributors and product developers who still do business the old-fashioned way — by earning it. In the end, they will continue to be the favorite choice of turfheads.

Economic agronomics — The economy is on everyone's mind. Some superintendents are caught in the middle, and they don't like it. Their facilities have to be maintained. They won't get the revenue any other way than to try to produce the best golf day in and day out. But I see great stuff in the fact that those who can figure out how to do it cheaper and better are going to be on top. That is, if they remember to tell their owners and members that they really did fight a good battle for the money.

In my travels, I hear a lot about specific grass issues. But nothing compares to the volume of these Mega-Issues.

Dave Wilber, a Sacramento, Calif.-based agronomist, can be reached at dave@soil.com.