Environmental groups have been patiently hanging around for the time and opportunity to pounce on our industry and our colossal water-use rate.

courses were first planted — problems ranging from unsuitable water supplies to massive water restrictions from suppliers. These guys are no strangers to the problems that the rest of us superintendents were facing this year, particularly those of us in the Southeast. You couldn’t pick up a newspaper or turn on the TV without reading or hearing about the lack of available water in the country this past year. You can certainly believe that all the hard-core environmental groups have been watching.

We are an industry that weathers enormous scrutiny from almost every environmental group on the planet. There isn’t one of them out there that wouldn’t enjoy having the golf industry’s proverbial head stuffed and mounted on their wall like a prize buck and take credit for being the group who finally forced our industry to be, at least, regulated with our water use.

Let’s face it; we are an industry that uses water, not in the millions, but by the billions and billions of gallons each year. That alone paints a very large target on all of our backs.

Like hungry lions on the African plains, lying in the tall grass waiting for the injured gazelle to come limping by, these environmental groups have been patiently hanging around for the opportunity time to pounce on our industry and our colossal water-use rate. That time might be now.

In a time when towns like Orme, Tenn., has its mayor turn on the city’s water supply for only three hours a day, it’s easy to gain political support for regulating water use for a business like us, which is still publicly classified as a recreational activity. When you start to weigh the golf industry against an entire town population’s basic needs, we quickly lose the most important battle — the one of public opinion. Ultimately, it’s this arena that will decide our future regarding water regulation. Having to deal with this impending problem categorically qualifies it as “interesting.”

Myriad other issues are poised to restructure our entire industry and how we do business over the next decade. Some of us will embrace these looming and inevitable changes, while others most certainly will not. It’s our unique ability, as an industry, to solve problems that will serve us best when these new challenges come to fruition.

In the end, if nothing else, these challenges will unquestionably be “interesting.”

Christopher S. Gray Sr.
is superintendent of The Marvel Golf Club in Benton, Ky. He expects an interesting year.
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
PIN: # 8462008X126S01

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT SERVICES

ISSUE DATE: January 11, 2008
DUE DATE: March 7, 2008
SITE VISIT: February 8, 2008 at 11:00 AM

The City of New York is committed to achieving excellence in the design and construction of its capital program, and building on the tradition of innovation. As part of this effort, Parks & Recreation is pleased to announce the following contracting opportunity:

Design & Construction Management Services for the Construction of a Tournament Quality Golf Course in Ferry Point Park in the Bronx.

Parks and Recreation encourages potential proposers to include subcontractors and/or to form joint ventures so as to ensure that the full range of services described in the RFP can be provided.

These procurements are subject to participation goals for M/WBEs and/or WBEs as required by Local Law 129 of 2005.

Copies of the RFP can be obtained on January 11, 2008 at the Agency's website http://www.nyc.gov/parks, the City Record's website www.nyc.gov/cityrecord and at the Olmsted Center, Room 61, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Flushing, NY 11368 during the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday - Friday from January 11, 2008 to March 7, 2008.

AUTHORIZED AGENCY CONTACT:
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Birdie on crabgrass; eagle on sedges and goosegrass.
LEGO mania

By Mark Luce

The sets have changed, but the ingenuity remains the same.

Time for a linguistic lesson: Leg Godt means "play well" in Danish; lego is Latin for "put together." Strangely, Mr. Ole Kirk Christiansen, back in 1934, wasn’t aware of the Latin when he settled on the name for his new toy company. Fifty-four years later the name has become synonymous with fun and creativity.

My own LEGO experience began sometime in the 1970s, when stacks of bricks at my cousin’s house were a staple, complete with flat green bases. Through the years, I would see the sets at various stores, but it wasn’t until a few years ago that I got the fever. My current love of the little bricks wasn’t based so much on my perpetual desire to be a kid, but more my love of watching my son Miles’ eyes light up once he built something. Now, I flat-out love the things, even if it takes an inordinate amount of time to build a big set (try more than eight hours for a giant Star Wars Trade Federation MTI) and it thins my wallet.

Miles started with Duplos, the toddler-sized big blocks, and immediately showed an uncanny ability for symmetry, whether making a parking garage for countless Matchbox cars (another story entirely) or color-coordinated high towers plum for crashing down into said cars. What followed were basic tubs of bricks and simple things, including boats, mini-cars and rudimentary space ships. It wasn’t until the first set — a little fire truck complete with string hoses and that most kid-friendly part of LEGOs, the mini-figure — that I realized I was enjoying the sets as much as my son.

This past holiday may have well been called a legomas, for in the span of four days, I, with the help of my assistants, put together no fewer than nine LEGO sets of various sizes and complexities. From the zoom-zoom of a Formula 1 garage to the evil-idiot lair of Plankton’s Chum Bucket, from Darth Maul’s wicked Sith Infiltrator to the newest LEGO craze Indiana Jones’ Lost Tomb, I seemingly breathed multi-colored bricks.

At some level, the instructions for these kits remain quite simple, but a small oversight can cause serious misfortune later. But what continually strikes me is the sheer elegance of the engineering. It’s not enough to build a garage for Formula 1 cars, it’s the little things: a peg for extra helmets, the storage cases for wrenches, drills and the like. Over time, I have come to appreciate the artistry of the set design as much as I appreciate watching my sons play.

Over these last few years, I have poked around the company in hopes of buying stock. However, it’s privately held, so forget it. But I have learned that the molding process of making the bricks is amazingly precise — within .002 millimeters. And every year a select group of folks pay $1,700 for a two-and-a-half day tour of the Billund, Denmark, factory, the equivalent of Willie Wonka’s Golden Ticket.

While the price isn’t right for a trans-Atlantic LEGO blowout, we’re thinking about vacationing in Southern California at the end of the summer — ostensibly to see old friends, but, really, to take the kids to that other place where dreams are made: LEGOLAND.

Happy building.

Mark Luce lives in Kansas City, Mo., where he’s ready to challenge any comers in a LEGO speed-building contest.
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