

PEER-TO-PEER: BETTER TURF THROUGH NETWORKING

MGCSA Superintendents were asked:

Are you changing your maintenance practices to account for the rise in fuel costs? More PGRs? Longer rough?

Yes, our maintenance practices have changed dramatically. I fish more than ever now and have every weekend off! Two big thumbs up on this season already!

- Justin Gustafson
Ely Golf Club, Ely

At Enger Park Golf Course in Duluth, the only maintenance practice I am changing is adding some no-mow areas to reduce rough areas. Also looking at possibly purchasing electric maintenance vehicles.

- Geoff Jordan
Enger Park Golf Course, Duluth

The biggest change that Hollydale has seen is few part-time help and my assistant Ryan and I on mowers more often. We do all the maintenance on the equipment on weekends, which makes for a long week. Between Ryan and I, we work about 150 hours a week, compared to 100 hours a week last year. I sure wish we were paid by the hour.

- Casey Flatten
Hollydale Golf Club, Plymouth

At Somerset Country Club we are using Primo and Cutless tee to green. When the products are kicked in we can practically get away with mowing twice a week on tees, approaches and fairways. In regards to rough our members are okay with rough that is brown, therefore, we have to water and mow it less. We mow the rough at 2.5 inches or slightly higher.

I may walkmow a bit more, for example tees and approaches to save on fuel costs. I think PGRs and wetting agents will help decrease the need to mow fairways as much and still have a great lie.

- James Bade
Somerset Country Club, Mendota Heights

Here in Hong Kong we have not altered any maintenance practices to compensate for the cost of fuel. We currently pay approximately \$8/gallon for gasoline. The membership is more concerned with course conditions versus cutting back on mowing due to fuel costs.

- Randy Witt, CGCS
Hong Kong Golf Club, Hong Kong

Golf standards I feel will not change much, but the Maintenance equipment we use will change. Hybrid mowers are now available.

- Dave Schwarz, Ass't Superintendent
Phalen Golf Course, St. Paul

We are not doing anything different this year. We are aware of the situation but it is part of our challenge to keep the course the same but watch the bottom line carefully.

- Kevin Clunis, CGCS
Tanners Brook Golf Course, Forest Lake

I have chosen some areas that are less in play and have been mowing them every 3 weeks at a height of about 4 inches. Total area is about 4 or 5 acres, not much, but every bit counts.

- Jeremiah Niebolte
The Crossings at Montevideo, Montevideo

We haven't done anything differently. Electric carts and mowers will be the way of the future.

- Eric Peters
North Links Golf Course, North Mankato

We have cut out rough fertilization and are watching our spending on other items, but we have not changed any mowing practice.

- Barry Provo
Deer Run Golf Club, Victoria

Our mowing practices have not changed, but we have upped the regulators slightly to shorten the amount of mow time on our fairways. Also, line items in the budget continue to be evaluated weekly to figure out where we can make up for our shortfalls on fuel and fertilizer. Efficiency and productivity are also evaluated weekly to hold labor at or below what was budgeted for each month.

- Jake Schmitz
Olympic Hills GC, Eden Prairie

We will be looking closely at ways to reduce our fuel use when our budget is reviewed in August. I hope to make some cost analysis charts comparing mowing

and PGR use in my roughs. Fertilizing our roughs may also be under scrutiny. Finally, we have learned the hard way that equipment stored outside will quickly be drained of fuel by a slippery thief! The dog removed the catalytic converter from the plow truck last winter! Dang, double dang!

- Jack MacKenzie, CGCS
North Oaks Golf Club, North Oaks

At Chisago Lakes Golf Course we are contour mowing our fairways rather than mowing with diagonal straight lines. This has been about 25% faster and saves us 6 hours per week of labor, fuel and equipment hours. Additionally we have moved our flexstake yardage markers to the middle of the fairways so our rough mower doesn't have to remove the stakes before mowing. Flexstakes are mowed over with fairway units; however, if the stakes are not replaced properly, they will break the barbed bottoms (couple per week). Savings about 3 hours per week.

- Brian Brown
Chisago Lakes Golf Course, Chisago Lakes

We have altered our maintenance plan to a point. Some of the little extras that go into the season are being omitted, but overall, we have a standard we want to stick with. The cost of more PGRs, or the negative effect on speed of play from longer rough, doesn't really outweigh the cost of standard maintenance for our facility. Not to mention the fact that the current climatic situation, and the need to have efforts from winter recovery have been just as much of a need to enhance our practices. Granted, when a budget is set forth in November, it's hard to forecast many of the changes that can occur from situations such as an open winter, or high heat, or a sudden spike in shipping and operating costs. What we are doing is robbing Peter to pay Paul inside our budget, hoping we can stay good throughout this operating season. But with that being said, we don't want to compromise the integrity of our facility, or our playing conditions.

- Kyle Fick
Bully Pulpit GC, Medora, ND