



# In Bounds

by Jack MacKenzie CGCS

Has your irrigation system ever gone down just when the weather

became hot, humidity dropped, and the breezes whipped into zephyrs from the south? It never happens when the days are cool and we have had ample natural irrigation in the form of timely rains. Rather, it occurs when you need that finite resource the very most to keep your course alive, tills ringing and clientele happy.

Although your heart may be racing, a few phone calls to your distributor, a well company, or pump representative will hopefully rectify the issue in a short period of time. Perhaps you have a secondary or pressure maintenance pump to limp through the crisis. Or maybe you program your system to only irrigate your ‘money makers’, the greens, as your irrigation pond is gradually drawn down. The remedy is in your existing relationships with vendors, and more than likely you have a plan ‘B’ in your pocket to at the very least keep your finest of playing surfaces alive until

your system is operational again.

What happens however, in an extreme drought, if you are told that your water permit has been pulled and you may no longer use any water resource managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources? No, not a five percent reduction in your use, or even fifteen, but 100 percent ***no more water mandate!***

Take a moment and imagine the consequences. Or, if you are Kevin Anderson, Superintendent at Fox Lake Golf Course, you know the sensation personally for on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2012 the DNR pulled your irrigation permit until further notice due to a low river level reading upstream from the lake you draw from. Place yourself in Kevin’s shoes and reflect upon the immediate loss of **ALL IRRIGATION RESOURCES**.

Rather unimaginable isn’t it? The adjectives run afoul. If you think about it long enough, you will view the long, long range ramifications with a painful heart. How much grass will you lose in the first ten days? Do you have the

resources to haul water and for how long? What will the economic impact be from the loss of revenue as golfers drive twenty miles to play the course a city away? Will recovery expenses push your course to bankruptcy? How many individuals will lose their jobs? What are the costs associated with drilling a well or drilling deeper for water? Will our club be allowed to?

**Without this finite resource how long would I have a viable golf club? Could my club recover from this crisis? What can I do today to limit my exposure to this calamity of epic proportions?**

In appreciation of the situation at Fox Lake, the MGCSA is pursuing discussions with the DNR to, at the very least, allow irrigation at a minimum level to keep the green surfaces alive until rain recharges the rivers, streams and lakes in the Sherburn area. Your Board of Directors has also begun additional work to complete the BMP Water Stewardship Program initiated by Paul Diegnau CGCS during his term as President.

This plan, taken from other state initiatives, serves as a template to educate the public about the environmental stewardship maintained

by golf courses, examines the economic impact of the golf and related industries, and supports existing BMPs in use at golf destinations throughout the state of Minnesota.

It is hoped the MGCSA can partner with allied golf associations, state agencies and public organizations to develop a plan that would allow each club to determine when, where and if irrigation is necessary should restrictions be put into place. It is the goal to implement *reductions* on our own terms, rather than a wholesale ban on irrigation.

Imagine how different the circumstances would be for Kevin if two months ago the local hydrologist had mandated a six percent reduction in irrigation use due to an anticipated depletion of water reserves. Anderson could easily have stopped irrigating his range. If four weeks later, another six percent reduction was demanded, Anderson could have taken his roughs out of the cycle. This long-term limit program could easily have prevented the crisis his course is in right at this moment.

Drill a well? Perhaps, but it will not be long until even this is not an



option without a plan in place to address water cut backs. The question begs:

**Would you rather be in charge of your own regulated destiny, or have immediate mandates placed upon you and thus limit, if not eliminate, your ability to pursue your livelihood?**

The Board of Directors will be seeking your help in implementing this statewide Stewardship program. Together, we can develop self-regulating guidelines to be implemented when, not if, the DNR poses mandates upon

our industry. You can begin today by promoting this BMP concept with your Green Committees, Owners, General Managers, Industry Partners and players at large.

The whole 'golf community' has got to stand together to promote this program as the first of several self-regulating programs sure to be developed by the MGCSA for the good of the game, and more importantly, your ability to maintain your position as a professional turf manager.

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