



Presidential Perspective

by Scottie Hines, CGCS

Wow! What a difference from a year ago? Most of us had been open three to four weeks at this time last year. Right now we have six inches of snow on the ground and possibly more coming? People often laugh when I say that Mother Nature has a sneaky way of meeting the average. I have found this to be true in many cases. The bottom line is: we can't control the weather, much to the dismay and disbelief of our members and guests, we just have to deal with what we are handed the best we can. That's about enough of the weather talk, for now.

I am sure by this point everyone has heard of the developments on waters at the state level. The DNR has proposed legislation that will significantly raise the cost of irrigation water. The proposal jumps us from \$8/million gallons to \$70/million gallons. An increase of this magnitude is absolutely absurd in my opinion. In retrospect, I guess, I knew the increased fees were inevitable, but a \$62/million jump in a single year seems outrageous. That said I now believe our focus has to be on adopting the BMP's on water management and to work with the DNR to guarantee that we, as golf course operators, and arguably the most responsible users of water, ensure that none of us will ever have our irrigation water permits pulled. This will be a monumental task, but I feel confident it can be accomplished. ALL of us: superintendents, owners, golf professionals and general managers will have to fully buy into the plan to make this happen. The Environmental Stewardship Committee will be meeting in late April to fine tune this plan and start the implementation process. Stay tuned for further information.

Despite the slow melt and the latest rounds of rain and snow, 67% of

the state is still in moderate to severe drought. The next drought update will come out April 18. Hopefully, we see some relief from the last bout of precipitation. Personally, I am not sure if it will make a significant impact on the drought status, as there is still significant frost in the ground and most of the waters, rain or melt, will run-off and not be absorbed into the ground. Lake levels may rebound a bit, but we need to re-charge the ground waters to really impact the drought status across the state. If you would like to monitor the drought and other environmental and climate impacts, please check out www.climate.umn.edu. This is as good a source as I have found on this subject.

I left Sunday, April 14 to Washington D.C. for the annual GCSAA Government Relations Committee meetings and visits on Capitol Hill with our local lawmakers. We also participated in the We Are Golf (WAG) coalition meetings. The GR Committee's two main focuses this year were the NPDES legislation and immigration reform. There seems to be growing support to eliminate the national NPDES legislation and we did our due diligence to further that cause. I am not going to get into the nitty-gritty of this, but we are already regulated and there is no need for plurality in this regulation. The other focus was bolstering the H-2B visa program to ensure that any industry that utilizes these workers can continue to get a legal work force at the appropriate time of year. I met with Senators Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken and Representative Erik Paulsen.

Well, I guess we should all be happy we can relax for one last weekend, watch some TV golf and spend some time with family. Just keep in mind, only 60 more days until we start having shorter days. I have no fear that by that time we will be ready for shorter days!

Good Luck in the season ahead!