



# In Bounds

by Jack MacKenzie, CGCS

On your behalf, over the last two and one half years I have

had the opportunity to pursue and develop positive relationships with influential individuals who work at our state agencies in the Departments of Natural Resources, Agriculture, Pollution Control and the Bureau of Water and Soil Resources. Prior to these partnerships our industry was synonymous with mineral mining in northern Minnesota and viewed as a spoiler of finite natural resources, simply for a recreational pastime.

Heads lifted when told the “good economic story of golf”; the 2.4 billion dollars of economic impact and the 35,000 jobs maintained annually by our industry, the 75,000 acres of green space, wildlife and pollinator habitat, the responsible attitude adopted when utilizing water, applying nutrients and plant protectants and the willingness to partner with public entities for the betterment of our community at large. Not only do heads lift, but also they

spin real quickly once the positives of golf are touted.

It has been hard work, but the Environmental Stewardship Committee, led under the direction of Scottie Hines CGCS and Superintendent at Windsong Farm, has continued to creep forward with baby steps as they have learned that nothing moves fast when working with state agencies. It has been an education, with each department having their own special requests for consideration.

The catalyst of everyone’s concern is water; its distribution, allocation and availability. It has been said often that the land of 10,000 lakes couldn’t possibly have issues with water, yet we do, because much of the water that drops from the sky eventually runs off our state to the Hudson Bay in the north, the Atlantic Ocean to the east or the Gulf of Mexico via the Mississippi River. We have clean water, the best in the country. Yet without the ability to create a reservoir system, the state agencies have taken the attitude that everyone must take care of and not

waste what we have stored in aquifers or whatever flows from our land.

Both the Departments of Pollution Control and Agriculture are very concerned that golf courses are in compliance with state regulations. In an effort to maintain standards and educate golf turf managers, the MDA has gone so far as create a new industry specific “Golf Course Regulatory Compliance Bulletin” which has been in the last three issues of Hole Notes Magazine. They have also requested an assessment be completed to, “take the pulse of the golf industry in Minnesota.” They want to be educated on water, nutrient and pesticide use, soil types, plant communities and physical logistics of a large turf management operation.

They want a study that has never been done in our state before...until now.

Sam Bauer, UMN Extension Turf Educator and member of the ESC, has been hard at work creating a web-based module to be completed by a pilot group of courses to develop a

baseline of the industry. It is thought that in time the survey would be available to all state courses for their input. This material, combined with existing and current scientific studies, will help satisfy and assure the MDA and the public that golf course superintendents are true professionals, environmental stewards, and that golf

courses are not toxic waste sites.

The Department of Natural Resources is primarily concerned with water availability whether underground or surface.

With the reduction of water levels in many lakes across our state and frequent light flow in streams, the DNR was mandated by the legislature two years ago to develop a strategic plan to better manage our water. The MGCSA’s presence at the table during these discussions has made us important partners in the decisions which will be made in the future, however there are a few you must consider today to protect your projected water source. This is especially important if you are a surface water user.

***“Forewarned, forearmed; to be prepared is half the victory.”***

Surface users, or approximately 20 percent of all courses in the state, must evaluate their water supplies because the current law states that once a specific low level is attained or limited stream flow achieved, the water use permits will be pulled for everyone (except consumption and energy) as there soon won't be water to pull. However, there are measures that can be taken to soften this suspension.

In this issue of Hole Notes are four case studies of courses that have reduced or eliminated their use of fresh water. Superstar environmental stewards, they simply opened their minds to the possibilities and chose, with the help of agencies and communities, a different method of capturing and containing water for irrigation. Read about their successes and consider any change you can make at your club to be proactive.

Consider local businesses that use water to cool their plants or wash their products. Could you capture and reuse this resource? What about a low capacity well, under 10,000 gallons per day or 1 million gallons a year so you don't need a permit, to be used to irrigate your greens and tees

when, not if, surface water permits are suspended. Combined with a large pond to contain stormwater, your course may never enter a crisis period.

Recently I was contacted by the Minnesota Department of Health, because they are curious as to why so few golf courses are using effluent water. They too have been prodded to do more with less water available and create alternate resources for existing industries. In the near future, you will be asked to complete a survey on effluent water use upon your course. Better think carefully about your answers, as in time there may be very few options.

“Forewarned, forearmed; to be prepared is half the victory”, a quote by Miguel de Cervantes is appropriate when contemplating our growing partnership with our state agencies. A modern day axiom would be, “Proper planning prevents poor performance.” Either way you say it, your association leaders are taking steps to protect your viability as a golf and employment destination. However, to assure your club's success, you have to become involved and begin thinking outside the box for solutions to very difficult challenges.