USGA Regional Conference
Woodholme Country Club

After the welcoming remarks, the USGA Regional Conference held at Woodholme Country Club began with Dr. Kimberly Erusha's review of Green Section history and the Environmental Research Program. The program, which began in 1990, has as its objectives: 1) to better identify the fate of pesticides; 2) alternatives to chemical use; and, 3) to better understand the relationship between chemicals and people as well as wildlife.

How turfgrass benefits the environment and the community was the topic discussed by Mr. Keith Happ, Agronomist for the Mid-Atlantic Region of the Green Section. The goal of the USGA is to provide facts to support the golf industry in dealing with this emotional issue. Mr. Happ provided some beneficial aspects of healthy turfgrass including: 1) the preservation of topsoil; 2) erosion control by strong rooting; 3) filtration of urban runoff; 4) reclamation of previously unusable areas such as landfills; 5) production of oxygen and cooling of temperatures. He also wanted to stress the point that 70% of golf course acreage is non-play area requiring little or no pesticides and fertilizer. These areas, such as wetlands, habitat enhancement projects and environmentally sensitive acreage have also created a need to modify the rules of golf with respect to marking the course. There is a need to standardize these areas to avoid rules conflicts.

Mr. Happ's final comment was that all good news pertaining to golf and the environment be shared with others especially outside the golf community.

Dr. Erusha's second discussion of the session dealt with pesticide fact and the effects of golf courses on people and wildlife. One aspect of concern is golfer contact with materials applied on the course. USGA research on dislodgeable residue, or how much product comes off the plant, shows that less than 1% could be detected on club grips, shoes or pants. This 1% could be reduced even further by irrigation. Another study, measuring pesticide fate due to volatilization range from 1 - 13% of material on the leaf surface being lost. This could be reduced by spraying when surface temperature and solar radiation are lower as in the evening or early morning.

Dr. Erusha also cited a study conducted by the Institute of Wildlife and Environmental Toxicology of Clemson University. This research done on Kiawah Island illustrated that the products Durshait and Turcam had very limited downward Movement in the native soil of this area.

Not all research on golf is performed by soil scientists and chemists. An interesting benefit of the game was found by the New Hampshire Institute of Health. It concluded that over a four month period, a person playing golf without a cart three times a week, lowered their cholesterol and actually lost 3 pounds. In the same period, without exercise, a person with similar habits without golf gained 3 and 1/2 pounds. Dr. Erusha's final comments reiterated what our profession has known for quite some time - that there are few negatives and a whole lot of positives about the game and the area it is played on. What other sport reduces your waist size and also supports wildlife habitat