

# TURFGRASS MATTERS

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## Stewards of the Chesapeake



Lakewood Country Club Team  
Jorge Massa, Chris Ayers, CGCS, Doug McPherson, Bill Karpa

The second annual *Stewards of the Chesapeake* golf tournament was held August 27, at Queenstown Harbor Golf Links. A field of 124 players, or 31 teams, competed over the challenging and wonderfully

conditioned Lakes course. The team from Lakewood Country Club, comprised of Chris Ayers, CGCS, Jorge Massa, Doug McPherson and Bill Karpa took first place, aided by a rare double eagle on the par five fifteenth hole, by Doug McPherson.

The *Stewards of the Chesapeake* was initiated to replace the Superintendent Club Official tournament. While superintendents are still encouraged to bring general managers, green chairpersons, and other club officials, the tournament also affords the opportunity for our turfgrass industry partners to participate and compete. Proceeds from the event help to support the

MAAGCS' education, scholarship, and research efforts. The tournament's name, *Stewards of the Chesapeake*, symbolizes the environmentally conscientious manner in which superintendents and other professionals in the turfgrass industry manage their facilities in one of the most diverse, yet fragile ecosystems in the world, the Chesapeake Bay.

Since its inception, Queenstown Harbor Golf Links has exemplified the concept of environmental stewardship. Our thanks to Lex and Charlie Birney, Bill Shirk, CGCS, Tom Tokarski, Scot Forbis, and everyone at Atlantic Golf for hosting us in such fine fashion. Thanks, also, to all of the participants and sponsors who helped to make the 2001 *Stewards of the Chesapeake* a big success. Please mark the last Monday in August on your calendar for the 2002 event!

### Superintendents and the Politics of Nutrient Management

Robert C. Collins, CGCS

Golf course superintendents have many and varied responsibilities. When asked to list them, an informed golfer might list management of maintenance machinery, pesticide and fertilizer applications, running an efficient and professional staff. But participation in the realm of politics and regulation?

In 1998, litigation in federal court between a coalition of "environmental groups" and the United States Environmental Protection Agency was settled. The coalition of the Delaware Sierra Club, Delaware River Keepers and others sued the EPA over en-

forcement of the Clean Water Act, in which a pollution control strategy was to be formed and implemented in waters deemed impaired. The waters in question were two out of three of Delaware's Inland Bays, Rehoboth and Indian River Bays. The pollutants to be managed were nitrogen and phosphorus. According to the agreement, Total Maximum Daily Loads of these nutrients were to be established, and "large-scale" generators and users were to be regulated. In 1999, the State of Delaware passed a nutrient management law.

Among its provisions, the nutrient management law requires that any entity within the state that applies nitrogen or phosphorus to ten or more acres of land develop and enact a nutrient management plan. Obviously, the provisions of the law apply to the state's 40 or so golf courses. Also, a nutri-

ent management commission was to be formed, and its duties were to execute the provisions of the law.

*continued on page 4*

### Inside Matters

President's Message	2
Bullets from the Boardroom	3
Editor's Letter	3
Thatch and Mat	5
IAC Report	9
Golf Notes	10
Chesapeake Sponsors	10
News & Notes	11



## Politics, *continued from page 1*

Delaware, though small, is an agricultural state. Its agricultural community wields considerable political power. When the law was written, the formation of the commission specified that farm interests were to be included on the commission. However, there was a concern within the state's golf community that, in order to protect against having strict and inappropriate laws affect them, there needed to be representation. Unfortunately, there was no statewide organization representing golf courses. Through the efforts of a number of individuals, and some help by the Delaware State Golf Association, Ed Brown, CGCS, was named to the commission.

In the ensuing two years, Ed has spent a considerable amount of time in this endeavor. Until fall of 2000, most of that effort involved promulgation of regulations for the poultry and grain crop sectors of agriculture. Last winter, though, the commission turned its attention to other "large" nutrient users; a group of golf course su-

perintendents were invited to Dover to draft our regulations.

In the meantime, a group of superintendents began the formation of an advocacy group within the state under the auspices of the Delaware State Golf Association. The DSGA Green Section was formed to monitor governmental actions on the state, county and local levels for actions that impact the golf industry and to participate with those governmental entities so that any regulatory or statutory actions do not negatively impact golf courses. This allowed for superintendents to stand in the forefront of the issue, and give the commission a reliable industry partner in which to draft regulation. A series of forums was held at the Department of Agriculture building in Dover between key commissioners, the program administrator, and as many as ten superintendents.

Through the various meetings, it became apparent that the commission (other than Ed) and the Department of Agriculture knew very little about our nutrient management practices. The assumption was that superintendents dump fertilizer on golf courses in order to achieve optimal aesthetic quality. But

other misconceptions, and down right ignorance were very tough to confront. For instance, some commissioners were shocked at the minute quantities of phosphorus used on golf courses, and spoon feeding of nitrogen seemed to be a foreign concept to some of the grain farmers. It has taken a concerted effort to convince the commission, and indeed the media and the public, of the very specialized application methods and techniques used on golf courses today.

During the series of meetings, a number of topics pertaining to golf course fertility were discussed. Rates and timing of applications, in the end, did not become a major topic. This is mainly because the commission became convinced of the relatively small mounts of nitrogen and phosphorus that golf courses use. In fact, most of the document that will be required was easy to agree upon. The model that was formulated for farmers was quite appropriate. The soil-testing requirement seemed to be well within what most golf courses now do as a matter

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Available Phosphate (P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> ) . . . . .	3.0%
Calcium (Ca) . . . . .	1.0%
Total Magnesium (Mg) . . . . .	0.20%
Water Soluble Magnesium . . . . .	0.0%
Combined Sulfur (S) . . . . .	2.0%
Total Copper (Cu) . . . . .	0.04%
Total Iron (Fe) . . . . .	4.0%
Total Manganese (Mn) . . . . .	0.06%
Molybdenum (Mo) . . . . .	0.0005%
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**Thatch**, *continued from page 5*

imum playing conditions. It is very important to keep turf as dry as possible during the summer. Deep and infrequent irrigation improves the environmental stress tolerance of turf, helps to discourage pests, minimizes problems associated with large divots and deep ball marks, and enables creeping bentgrass (*Agrostis stolonifera*) to compete more effectively with annual bluegrass.

Fertilizer management, also, is important in minimizing thatch. Most of the annual nitrogen used on cool-season grasses should be applied during the autumn months. During the summer, light applications of nitrogen (0.1 - 0.2 lb N/1000ft<sup>2</sup>; 5-10 kg N ha<sup>-1</sup>), known as spoon-feeding or foliar feeding, should be applied every 2 to 3 weeks. Spoon-feeding promotes vigor, particularly in creeping bentgrass, thus enabling the turf to more effectively compete with annual bluegrass and to more rapidly recover from divots, ball marks and mechanical damage. Spoon-feeding with water soluble N-sources, such as urea and ammonium sulfate, is preferred. Use of the aforementioned N-sources has been shown to provide as much as 30% suppression of dollar spot. Natural organic fertilizers are good N-sources and they are safe. Natural organic N-sources, however, are generally not superior to low rate applications of water soluble N-sources in promoting summertime vigor. Research conducted at the University of Maryland does not provide strong evidence that natural organic N-sources are better at promoting thatch degradation, promoting soil microbial activity or reducing diseases, when compared to synthetic slow release fertilizers or urea. Indeed, some composted sewage sludges that contain large wood chips and some dehydrated manures can promote thatch and dollar spot.



of practice. So the application rates and reporting seemed to be resolved with little contention. At this writing, the final "Nutrient Management Plan Policy Checklist" is awaiting approval by the full commission.

However, "cost-share" has been a dividing issue, not only among the commission, but also among the superintendents who have worked on the nutrient management plan. Most agricultural operations will be eligible for some cost-share, but it is too easy to claim that "the rich country clubs" should not be entitled to any financial assistance. In fact, some superintendents have stated outright that their clubs do not intend to seek reimbursement for the program if available. However, commissioner Brown has fought hard for some assistance, particularly for some of the smaller golf operations in the state. Indeed, one of the premises of the law is financial assistance for those who demonstrate financial need to comply with the law. At present, this is the largest outstanding issue that has not been settled. In what has turned out to be a tight budget year for Delaware, this promises to be a dogfight.

The Nutrient Management Commission should conclude its work with golf courses soon and have the final version ready for implementation by 2003. It does plan on using the same process on other groups, such as container nurseries and lawn care companies. Compliance with the plan should not be difficult; in fact, most golf facilities already perform the soil-testing requirement.

Three of the superintendents that have been at the forefront of this issue will be featured in GCSAA's "Golf and Grassroots" government relations forum at the conference and show in Orlando this February. "Buddy" O'Neill, CGCS, (Wild Quail G&CC) and Paul Stead, CGCS (Deerfield G&TC) will join Ed Brown, CGCS (Rehoboth Beach CC) in the session, discussing the formulation of the nutrient management plan.

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