

ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION UPDATE - 1992**Frank S. Rossi****Department of Crop and Soil Sciences
Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI**

It is no mystery to professionals in the turfgrass industry that public sentiment is at a fever pitch regarding concern for environmental quality. As we progress as a society and an industry, we come to understand our responsibility to minimize any negative effects on the environment. Turfgrass managers are adopting alternative practices and becoming educated on compliance with legislation.

This past year was filled with exciting challenges regarding the legislative arena, nationally, in the state, and even locally. The big story of the year was the Supreme Court decision in July which interpreted FIFRA to allow local governments to enact their own laws regarding pesticide use. This sent a *wake-up call* to all pesticide users, and since July, action is being taken on both sides of the issue. Local governments in Michigan are already enacting legislation to restrict pesticide use and require applicator licensing fees. In response to these developments, pesticide users (including the turfgrass industry) in Michigan are rallying support for preemption legislation, which is working its way through the legislature.

The consequences of potential local rule of pesticide use is intensified as we brace for the impact of Regulations 636 and 637. Turfgrass managers must prepare management priorities; having all their workers Certified or Registered to apply pesticides, increase their pesticide recordkeeping, develop pesticide notification and posting procedures, and formulate logistics and specifications for pesticide handling facilities (mixing and loading), as well as many other details addressed in new state pesticide regulations.

National directives from the Environmental Protection Agency include a crackdown on "misleading" advertisements, i.e., claims of absolute safety, EPA approved, organic and natural programs. Specifically, the agency is planning 10 visits to each state to inspect lawn care company advertisements.

Wetland classification became a more prominent issue in 1991 as a result of the promulgation of a new federal wetland delineation manual--new methods for defining a wetland. Additionally, the Michigan legislature is working on a bill similar to the pesticide preemption issue, which would prohibit local governments from classifying areas as wetlands.

Other general environmental issues include: the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative, which is designed to bring federal dollars into the 22 counties in the watershed to ensure environmental quality and provide education about the watershed; underground storage tanks continue to be a major concern

for groundwater protection strategists; upgrading tanks and financial assurance in case of a leak must be in place by 1994; although many of us do not fall under the new state Bulk Storage Rules for fertilizers and pesticides, if you are planning construction of any pesticide handling facility, the bulk rules include a section from the Dept. of Public Health regarding siting of these facilities in proximity of various types of public water supplies and surface water.

It has been an exciting year, full of challenges and opportunities. As an industry, we can expect the legislation and regulation to continue for many years. We will be required to be vigilant with regard to the impact of turfgrass management practices on the environment. I believe as an industry we are up to the challenges and committed to preserving environmental quality, but ultimately, it is up to you as individuals to care for what we are "borrowing from our children."