

TURFGRASS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM 1997 UPDATE

Gregory T. Lyman
Turfgrass Environmental Education Specialist
Department of Crop and Soil Sciences
Michigan State University

The mission of the Turfgrass Environmental Education program is to advance the environmental stewardship of Michigan's turf industry through education and proactive involvement in current issues including the laws and regulations that affect the industry. This program is funded by industry support through seminar fees and grant-in-aid projects. Through your support in 1997 the mission of the Turfgrass Environmental Education Program along with the turfgrass industry continues to prosper.

The Michigan Turfgrass Foundation provided funding to continue the water monitoring project for golf course sites. The effort this season focused on continued support of those involved in nutrient testing of streams and expanded into applying the Michigan Department of Natural Resources stream quality testing procedures to golf course sites. This involved the physical evaluation of the water course and the collection of macroinvertebrate stream insects to determine water quality. Individuals from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council cooperated in this project. The week-long "School of Turfgrass Management" was again conducted in November of 1997. It continues to be a popular choice for turf and allied industry managers and sales representatives. Thanks for your continued support of this event. The two-day "Advanced Golf Turf Management School" was held in December 1996 and the topic this year was the soil physical properties. The speakers were Drs. Paul Rieke and Jim Crum of MSU and Dr. Bob Carrow of the University of Georgia. The advanced school will be held again next year and a new topic will be chosen.

A significant advance was made in 1997 to create an environmental program for Michigan golf course properties and will be called the Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program (ESP). It is intended to organize efforts of the turfgrass industry, regulatory agencies, MSU, and citizen groups to advance the environmental stewardship of the turfgrass industry and to recognize environmental achievements. The concept for the Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship program began with an understanding of the effectiveness of the Farm-A-Syst program and other environmental awareness programs available to the golf turf industry on a national basis, namely the Audubon International Cooperative Sanctuary Program. With these programs in mind, a group of MSU, MDS, MTF, and golf industry representatives met to conceptualize a program that would be productive for Michigan's golf turf industry. From those early meetings, an agreement was forged between the state agencies of MDEQ, MDA, and MDNR, the Michigan Turfgrass Foundation, and the Michigan Golf Course Owners Association to cooperate in a proactive program to advance the environmental stewardship of the golf industry.

The program will be delivered through a series of education, self-assessment, and partnership activities in 1998. There will be two distinct program areas - pollution prevention and environmental enhancement. The pollution prevention area will be initially directed toward evaluation and protection of point sources of pollution. Materials have been recently developed to provide managers with a self-assessment tool to gauge the level of protection and regulatory compliance in key areas. This section is expected to be launched in 1998. The environmental enhancement area will focus on enhancing wildlife habitat, surface water areas (streams, ponds, wetlands), and native vegetation on golf courses in Michigan. This section is expected to be developed in 1998 in cooperation with several organizations that are leaders in Michigan in those areas.