SOUTHWEST REGION UPDATE

by Patrick Gross

Water availability – Limited rainfall earlier in the year coupled with recent high temperatures have many courses concerned about water availability through the end of the year. Facilities that rely on surface water, on-site reservoirs and wells are reporting critically low levels, and many of these courses are purchasing potable water at a very high cost to meet basic irrigation needs. Some courses in Colorado and Southern California that do not have access to supplemental water have resorted to spot irrigation of greens, tees, and fairway landing zones.

Colorado River water allocations – Michael Gardner from Copley News Service reported in a July 28th column that the clock is ticking on a December 31st deadline for California to submit a plan for reducing its draw of Colorado River water. If an agreement is not reached by the deadline, Interior Secretary Gale Norton is under court order to quit sending California 800,000 acre feet of Colorado River Water – enough for 1.6 million households. Under federal law, the Metropolitan Water District’s right to nearly 600,000-acre feet of the water could be the first to be diverted to Phoenix and Las Vegas instead of San Diego and Los Angeles. The central issue is the San Diego Water Authority’s bid to buy water from Imperial Valley farmers. This would allow San Diego to reduce the amount of water it gets from the Colorado River and Metropolitan Water District, which accounts for 90% of their water supply. A variety of proposals are under discussion, but the threatened cuts are a clear signal that Southern California needs to get its act together.

Anthracnose – Infections of anthracnose have been showing up on many courses throughout the Southwest Region. Fortunately, damage seems to be limited to small areas. Some superintendent’s are worried about possible resistant strains of the pathogen. Information from Dr. Larry Stowell of PACE Research Institute and Dr. Frank Wong at UC Riverside indicates that no resistant strains have been identified. Dr. Wong stressed the importance of rotating fungicides to avoid the possibility of resistance. Other important practices are to closely monitor irrigation to avoid moisture stress, and minimized leaf wetness during the night by scheduling irrigation just before sunrise. This is also a good time to back off intensive management programs including low mowing, sand topdressing, and vertical mowing.

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