



## On The Road With The USGA—August 2009

By Bob Brame, regional director, Central Region

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What an interesting summer! While the economy has been an ongoing theme/concern, the weather pattern is always on the minds of golf course superintendents. Nothing impacts golf turf maintenance more than the weather. So far, this year's weather pattern has been mild, and overall, no real problem for golf turf maintenance – quite the opposite. Some areas have been wetter than others, but none in the North Central has had any significant heat. In fact, July 2009 will go into the record book as the coolest ever for some, like Indianapolis. So much for 'global warming,' some would argue, but 'climate change' is the more accurate label – a pattern of relative extremes. A tough economy and harsh weather would not be a good combination. Fortunately, we've only had to deal with one.

Regarding the challenging economy, it's essential to continue adjustments as needed. Cutting back on the aeration of greens, for example, is not sustainable. Without such adjustments, play volume will decline. Conversely, when improved cash flow allows, adjustments can be applied that can then be easily reversed, without any major agronomic pitfalls. If your course hasn't signed up for a site visit to review the maintenance operation at your course, there is still plenty of time. The cost of a visit is very small compared to the savings that will be realized when following our site-specific recommendations.

Our event highlight in July was the Senior Open Championship at Crooked Stick Golf Club in Carmel, IN. Kirk Richmond, course superintendent, and his staff, as well as the many volunteers, did a super job of preparing for the world's best senior players. While the weather pattern was mild, with spaced light rainfall, it takes a solid maintenance program to capitalize on good weather. Good water management is essential to presenting healthy, dependable golf turf that challenges the best players. Water management involves a matrix of factors,

with site-specific knowledge about the course and weather patterns being important components. Hand watering/syringing is vital to the process of pushing toward the dry end of the continuum. Sprinklers should never be used exclusively. Equally, it must be remembered that it's not about green, but rather the sustainable play of the game. Thanks to the staff at Crooked Stick for all their hard work and water management in particular. The bottom line message continues to be that quality golf turf management hinges on water management, whether it be for a championship or day-to-day maintenance.

Call or e-mail anytime – we're always available to help with economic challenges, water management or any other aspect of golf course maintenance.

Source: Bob Brame

**Central Region Agronomists:**

Bob Vavrek, regional director – [bvavrek@usga.org](mailto:bvavrek@usga.org)

John Daniels, agronomist – [jdaniels@usga.org](mailto:jdaniels@usga.org)

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