



A Silty Solution

By Bob Vavrek, regional director, Central Region

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In the St. Louis area, a deluge of holiday rainfall caused record-breaking flooding to start the New Year. Several golf courses were submerged for days while waiting for high water to recede from the banks of the Meramec and Mississippi rivers.

Severe flooding can cause myriad problems at a golf facility. Heavy silt deposits that smother putting greens can be particularly troublesome when floods occur during January because many courses have winterized their irrigation systems to prevent frost damage to sprinkler heads and underground pipe connections. The inability to use quick-coupler hose connections makes washing a blanket of silt off a putting surface considerably challenging.

One option to consider if you need to wash away silt and your irrigation system has already been winterized is a trash pump.

Most golf courses have one or more trash pumps in their inventory of maintenance equipment to remove standing water in bunkers following heavy rainfall. If your course does not own a trash pump, it's a good bet that a nearby course will have one to lend.



A trash pump is a versatile tool that can be modified to wash silt from flooded turf. (Photo courtesy of Greg Parkinson, Tapawingo National Golf Club)

The best time to remove silt from a putting surface is when flood water is just beginning to recede. Moving mud across a putting surface is a difficult task – the trick is to keep the silt particles in solution with plenty of water. Place the intake of the trash pump in standing water as close to the green as possible and use the discharge water to hose off the putting surface. Generally, the volume of water moving across the turf being washed is more important than high water pressure.

Keep in mind that flood water is a potential health hazard, so check with the local health department to determine if staff will require any immunizations or booster shots for tetanus, hepatitis or other diseases before they spend time in flood water. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention publishes recommendations for the cleanup of [Flood Water After a Disaster or Emergency](#).

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