



When the soil is as saturated, projects are often relegated to areas near cart paths to minimize the damage that heavy equipment can create.

THE PERILS OF SATURATED GROUND

BY ELLIOTT DOWLING | AGRONOMIST, NORTHEAST REGION

One of the most common topics during the 2018 season was excessive rain and the negative impacts it had on turfgrass. Unfortunately, excessive rain is still a major obstacle for superintendents in the Northeast Region. Rain, snow and severe temperature fluctuations have resulted in saturated conditions at many facilities. Construction projects are delayed, and some projects have been postponed. It is just too wet.

Following such a rainy year, many superintendents were looking forward to winter where there is time to install drainage, improve growing environments or continue to sod damaged areas. Unfortunately, saturated soils are forcing maintenance staffs to focus on indoor projects or work on areas adjacent to cart paths to avoid causing damage with heavy equipment.

Some courses have been able to continue with winter work as planned, but others are being forced to

wait until spring to complete various projects. If you need to delay projects, create a priority list so that the most important ones are completed once the soils dry. When spring arrives and golfers return to the course, there is less time to complete projects because the focus shifts to course preparations, so having a prioritize list will be helpful.

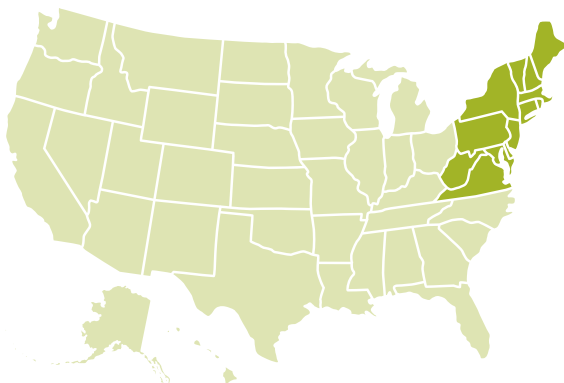
Winter projects aren't the only thing affected by the weather. Managing winter play is challenging, especially when the soil becomes thawed in the top inch of the profile. Zach Nicoludis, agronomist in the Central Region, describes some of dangers of winter play on partially frozen soil in the article "[Proven Putting Green Protection](#)." The USGA article "[Managing Winter Play – When to Go and When to Say No](#)" is another helpful resource on the subject.

Patience is the name of the game this winter. There is still time for the ground to refreeze and allow for the completion of projects around the course. However, if the weather doesn't cooperate, it is better to postpone projects rather than force the situation and create more work in the spring to fix something that wasn't broken before winter.



For information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service Contact the Green Section Staff.

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