



Mandated Water Restrictions For South Florida

By John Foy, regional director, Southeast Region

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The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has made it official – effective March 26th Phase 1 water use restrictions are mandated for all of the counties under its jurisdiction. For golf courses in the district, the Phase 1 restriction requires a 15% reduction in water use/irrigation based on their consumptive use permits. The only exceptions are golf courses with 100% of the irrigation water coming from an effluent or reverse osmosis source. The Phase 1



A record-setting rainfall deficit from October through March has resulted in the South Florida Water Management District mandating Phase 1 water use restrictions. Other water management districts could also follow suit, and all could go to Phase 2 or 3 restrictions before the rainy season arrives.

restriction requires all courses to submit a weekly report to the district on the total number of gallons pumped.

During the last week of March, widespread thunderstorm activity rolled through the state with the resulting rainfall easing localized dry spot concerns in fairway and rough areas. However, this had no impact on the rainfall deficit, and only temporarily postponed implementation of district-wide Phase 1 water use restrictions.

For most golf courses, Phase 1 water use restrictions will result in a little increase in the incidence of localized dry spots and off-color turf, especially in perimeter areas, but should not have a major impact on the health and quality of bermudagrass or seashore paspalum putting greens, tees, and

fairways. Anything that can be done to alleviate the normal buildup of winter season soil compaction in high traffic areas, and wetting agent treatments will aide in increasing irrigation infiltration and reducing the incidence of localized dry spots.

The bigger concern is the possible implementation of Phase 2 (30%), or even possibly Phase 3 (45%) water use restrictions. Given the possibility of increased restrictions being mandated before the onset of the rainy season in late May to early June, everyone should be more proactive at this time and educate golfers on the possible impacts and the need to employ measures such as aggressive cart traffic control in order to avoid turf damage and loss.



A bumper crop of winter weeds are being encountered on courses throughout the Florida Region.

An additional concern is increasing weed pressure. Winter annual broadleaf weeds and *Poa annua* have been growing rapidly over the past several weeks and can be very detracting to overall course presentation. This is especially true in locations where fall and winter pre-emergent herbicide treatments were not conducted, or skips in application coverage occurred. The combination of more frequent mowing and spot post-emergent herbicide treatments are the most common strategies used to maintain an acceptable level of control and good course presentation until the winter annual weeds naturally begin to decline and die in response to hot temperatures and high humidity. However, because many of these weeds, and in particular *Poa annua*, are very prolific seed producers, now is the time to map out problem infestation areas to make sure they are addressed in the fall and early winter weed management program.

The GCSAA is now awarding education points for Turf Advisory Service (TAS) visits. Golf course superintendents and assistants who subscribe and participate in a USGA TAS visit at their golf course will earn 0.3 points for ½-day visits and 0.6 for full-day visits. For more information about a Turf Advisory Service visit, contact either of the Florida regional offices: John Foy at jfoy@usga.org, 772-546-2620 or Todd Lowe, tlowe@usga.org, 941-828-2625.

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