Enter Sandman—A Nightmare For Hawaii!

By Larry Gilhuly, agronomist, West Region

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As the prices for oil continue to seemingly rise on a daily basis, golf courses all over the Northwest Region are feeling it with budgetary overruns not only in fuel costs, but in virtually every area that deals with any aspect of the oil industry (fertilizer and chemicals) and the transportation of supplies. While those on the Mainland have seen dramatic price increases in the past few months, it is nothing compared to what is happening in Hawaii where electricity and water costs have added to an increased load on golf course budgets of every size. However, none of these increased costs is even close to what has happened to the cost of sand (both bunker and green) since the end of last year.

With virtually all sand being imported from China, Australia, the Far East and U.S. Mainland the cost of this essential supply has risen from $80/ton to more than $160/ton, and it is expected to rise to nearly $200/ton by year's end! What can be done when this type of massive increase occurs? Here are what some have already started on their golf courses or are contemplating for the future:

- **Recycling sand onto greens, tees and aprons.** With the cost of sand reaching prices that are prohibitive many will continue to drag or destroy cores back into the greens to recycle their sand that has been applied over the years. Light sand topdressing has not stopped (nor should it), but the high cost of topdressing following aeration is greatly minimized using this approach.
- **Recycling sand from greens to aprons.** For those who still want to fill aeration holes with sand and have the same type of grass on the greens and aprons (usually seashore paspalum or older bermudagrass), the cores can be moved to the aprons in front of the greens. The sand is separated from the cores with organic debris blown or swept from these locations.

While this method is not as effective as aeration and sand topdressing, at least the sand from the greens is being recycled to an area where firmness is still needed.

- **Increased deep, solid tine aeration.** Due to the high cost of water, the value of using solid tines to greater depths than standard putting green aeration units is being applied for aprons and tees, as well as the fairways. The simplicity of a deep aeration unit equipped in this manner makes this one person operation a very good way to generate greater rooting depth for potentially less water and fertilizer usage.

The color green in golf is now associated with those with the most "green" in their budget. The current cost increases that have hit Hawaii and the rest of the Northwest Region will hopefully offer a focal point to golfers that we must begin to maintain golf courses more as playing surfaces instead of parks. Green is great from a visual standpoint; however it is not great when you are trying to keep within a budget at a time when soaring costs are giving you less "green" to work with.

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