Director's Column

by Timothy Kelly
Secretary-Treasurer, MAGCS

So far the 1991 golfing season has been real interesting at Village Links. I have been dealt a very interesting hand for this season. A lot of my plans, and my focus had to be drastically altered so far for this season. It all started last winter. When I went out early this spring some turf on certain greens and fairways was DEAD. I believe that this winter kill at my golf course was the worst I have ever seen.

Dr. Randy Kane wrote an article on the winter kill in the greater Chicagoland area. He did a very thorough job of explaining the causes of the winter kill and the impact upon the turf and playing surfaces. The article appeared in the Chicago District Golfer Magazine. I thought that it was a well written article, it was done timely, and I think it was very helpful to any Superintendent who suffered winter kill on his course. I want to thank Randy for providing this information to golfers throughout the Chicago District.

My main focus so far has been to gain turf from where it was lost on greens and fairways. I was really upset about the turf lost on the greens. This has never happened to me except when the C-15 turf was lost to the bacteria wilt back in 1982. Instead of lamenting over the lost turf, my superintendent instincts had me taking a proactive approach involving many different techniques and approaches. This involved many seedings, topdressings, some supplemental fertilization, and even some sodding. I have had some successes yet still have some work to be done. What about the future? Well, I certainly don't want to have this problem again. What will I do? This is a problem where I will utilize my years of continuing education, to help develop a new strategy for the greens. This education is a real strength, where our profession has done an excellent job, providing us with: new information, research, and technology. I feel that there is a wealth of opportunity for myself and other superintendents. All I need to do is to take advantage of it! The spring of 1992 and beyond will continue to offer challenges and interest to all superintendents. One of our best resources is our sharing of information and our development of continuing education within our profession.

Please Support Our Advertisers

Architects' corner

Robert Trent Jones Jr. has this to say:

"Wetlands are the key to golf course development in the 90's."

Wetlands!

The very word throws fear into the hearts of developers, architects and builders. On the other hand, it sets off red lights and sirens with governmental offices and regulatory agencies.

With today's satellite photography, the government has been able to obtain pictures of every acre of land in the country and every body of water. Even the smallest puddle remaining after a heavy rain seems to qualify as wetlands under today's definitions.

If golf is to prosper in the '90's, and satisfy the pent-up demand for new courses, golf is going to have to reach a reasonable, working relationship with governmental authorities.

Environmental hurdles

Nearly every golf course project today faces a series of environmental hurdles from sometimes conflicting authorities — national, state and local. Each project is dealt with as an individual case and there are few standards that are interpreted uniformly across the country.

The policy of most offices of the Corps of Engineers and the EPA is "no net loss", which means that developers must restore or create wetlands equal in size to any that they destroy in the course of construction. In actuality, however, many governmental agencies have called for restoring or rebuilding two to three times as much wetlands as used for the golf course.

This, of course, can greatly increase the cost of the golf course, and in some cases, actually kill the project. Often developers become discouraged during this permit process and decide to look for another site. Or, the project can be approved on a 1-to-1 basis and then field inspectors (usually from another agency) call for 2:1 or 3:1 mitigation once construction begins.

Interesting Pilot Project

Lake County, Illinois, is planning a $10.2 million renovation of a 450-acre marshy parcel to study how wetlands relieve flooding, support plants and animals and purify water. A combination of state grants, funds from the EPA and private donations have paid for the initial work, but an additional $2.2 million is needed to build more experimental wetlands.

This is the type of research project that is desperately needed because those of us in the golf business genuinely believe that rebuilt wetlands, designed to replace those used for a golf course, can be every bit as effective in preserving the environment as natural wetlands.

In the Lake County areas that went into operation earlier this year, water levels are controlled mechanically with sluices and pumps. The marshes planned in the next phase would be "passive" areas where water levels rise and fall naturally. By studying differences between the passive and mechanically controlled, areas, researchers hope to improve techniques for restoring or preserving the fragile habitats of swamps and marshes.

Recently, I have been actively involved in the regeneration of an existing wetland at the University of Wisconsin Golf Course in Madison, Wis. In this case, the wetland limits were clearly defined and staked in the field with strict erosion and construction damage protection measures applied. The par-3 third hole bisected an upland prairie directly adjacent to the established wetland. (continued page 4)