

Water, Water, Water...

Chuck Anfield

This is the second in a series of articles by members of the MAGCS Environmental Committee.

Water—it's what comprises the majority of living organisms. I think if I remember back to seventh grade science, the human body is 98% water! It's also what our planet is known for throughout the galaxy. Water—it seems so common to us, but in actuality it's quite rare. Perhaps water is the most valuable commodity on the planet. Remarkable!

Water, so what of it? What's it to me, to you, to them? It's certainly an issue for everyone. Maybe here in the Great Lakes area, water is a different kind of issue than perhaps somewhere out west in the desert. But regardless of location, the two key points of consideration about water are quantity and quality. Golf courses are large users of water. As environmental stewards, we have to be more aware of all the issues than anyone. We are responsible for how much we use, where we use it, when we use it, and why we use it. Another key point is, where does the water go when we are done using it and in what kind of condition is it?

Turfgrass, with its extensive and fibrous root system (we hope), is well known as an excellent filter to trap and hold fertilizers and plant protectants. These facts have been gathered by test plot lysimeters; university

studies have proven this to be so. But what about other areas of the golf course, where water is used for other purposes besides irrigation? The two chief areas of concern for us would be pesticide rinse areas and equipment wash areas.

Currently, interest in watershed management is high. Sources of concern are point and nonpoint pollution. Point pollution would

Golf courses are large users of water. As environmental stewards, we have to be more aware of all the issues than anyone. We are responsible for how much we use, where we use it, when we use it, and why we use it. Another key point is, where does the water go when we are done using it and in what kind of condition is it?

be the actual spill or dump at the particular site. Nonpoint pollution would be where the pollutants wind up as they make their way through the watershed. These issues are going to intensify as our urban environment continues to grow. At present, California, Massachusetts and Florida have equipment wash containment policies; Illinois does not have any.

Industrial equipment wash areas have generated some complaints. The major concerns are petroleum distillate residues and pesticide residues washed from equipment. Many golf courses located near sensitive bodies of water have installed self-contained, recycling, gray water equipment wash systems. I suspect this trend will continue. These products have been around for at least the last 10 years and they have been able to resolve some of the related problems associated with grass clippings.

As far as the pesticide pads go, this issue seems to be following a similar course. Most of the permitting problems have been related to proper protection of the water supply through the water distribution system. I have heard reports of inspections downstate and in the Chicago area. The statewide enforcement effort is really geared more as an outreach program right now. If anyone needs help in the permitting process, the agencies are there to help.

As we head for the new millennium and the next fiscal year, this is a good time to critically examine your operation. It's always a good idea to develop plans to continually upgrade existing facilities. If you don't have a pesticide pad, building a storage unit and a pesticide mixing/loading pad together works very well. More EPA/environmental information can be found at www.epa.gov.surf/. 