

Required Reading

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Recently, I read the book Tapped Out—The Coming World Crisis in Water and What We Can Do About It, authored by former Illinois Senator Paul Simon. The book discusses current and future problems that we face with water shortages, not only in the West but also in other parts of the country and the rest of the world.

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According to Mr. Simon, there is not a region of the United States (or the world for that matter) that will not face serious water shortages within the next 20 years—with or without a drought occurrence! The problem stems from a combination of things, including worldwide population growth, increasing living standards that consume more water per person and a finite supply of fresh water. In short, we are using our potable-quality water sources faster than nature can replenish them.

Other issues highlighted include the influence that global warming could have on coastal water supplies as rising ocean levels result in greater seawater intrusion. Another concern is the effects of ongoing irrigation in arid climates contributing to salinization of both soils and groundwater. (Anyone familiar with the problems on the western side of California's San Joaquin Valley realizes this potential.) The former senator paints a rather bleak but (I feel) realistic picture of where we are heading with regards to water. He warns that the next war in the Middle Eastern nations will more likely take place over water, not oil. To be honest, it opened my eyes as to how serious a problem we all could face very soon.

Mr. Simon recommends various strategies to address the problem, the first being funding research for more efficient desalinization techniques. In his opinion, this is the only realistic long-term solution. Pollution management is also mentioned, linking water quality to water quantity. Finally, a "short-term" solution recommended is conservation. Most in the golf business, and particularly those located in drier climates, understand this concept and can predict that the use of reclaimed or other alternative water sources will soon be the norm in our industry no matter where we are located.

The point of this entire discussion is that very few politically influential people in the world appear to recognize that we are headed toward a worldwide water crisis. In a water-dependent industry such as golf, we need to educate ourselves on this issue and plan ahead. With this in mind, I encourage each and every one of you to get a copy of this book and read it. In fact, get several copies and encourage your general manager, golf professional, green committee and board of directors to read it before it is too late and your irrigation supply is "Tapped Out!" 