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EDITOR: **Cathy Miles Ralston**

276 Lincoln Terrace

Buffalo Grove, IL 60089

Phone & Fax: 847-537-7883

E-mail: on_course@hotmail.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR: **John Gurke**

E-mail: Booming@aol.com

GRAPHIC ARTIST: **Mark Karczewski**

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FEATURES

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FRONT COVER

This watercolor of hole #15 at Seven Bridges Golf Club, home course of MAGCS President Don Ferreri, is the work of esteemed Aurora-based painter Tom Lynch. Tom's distinguished credentials include being elected to the illustrious Society of American Impressionists and Who's Who in American Art. His paintings figure prominently in private and corporate collections worldwide. In 1990, and again in 1991, Tom was selected as the featured artist for the U.S. Open Golf Championship. Testament to his talent in evoking the beauty of classic golf holes, a number of golf courses in the Chicago area have commissioned paintings by Tom. For more information, visit Tom's Web site at www.tomlynch.com, or contact him at 881 Shoreline Drive, Aurora, IL 60504. His phone number is 630-851-2652.

2 ON COURSE WITH THE PRESIDENT

Donald Ferreri

5 DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Brian Bossert

6 FEATURE ARTICLE: Information is the Key to Management Knowledge

Mark Schmidt

11 ASK THE "EXPERT": Pondering The Salary Issue and Claiming Time for Golf Course Maintenance, Sans Golfers

Fred Behnke

15 The Illinois Turfgrass Foundation Wants You!

Carl Hopphan

26 THE BULL SHEET

John Gurke

30 Treatments Save Crabapple Trees

Laura Smies

The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS), founded December 24, 1926, is a professional organization whose goals include preservation and dissemination of scientific and practical knowledge pertaining to golf turf maintenance.

We endeavor to increase efficiency and economic performance while improving and enhancing the individual and collective prestige of the members.

The MAGCS member is also an environmental steward. We strive to uphold and enhance our surroundings by promoting flora and fauna in every facet in a manner that is beneficial to the general public now and in the future.



Donald S. Ferreri
Seven Bridges G.C.

February of a new decade is upon us, and as I make final plans for the national GCSAA Conference in New Orleans I can't help but look at the big picture. This will be my fourteenth convention, and to be honest, they are all starting to blur together. They have all been very positive experiences; some have been more memorable than others. Like the time . . . well, maybe I should not mention names or get into any details. Trust me when I tell you my experiences have been fun and very educational. My point is that our profession and the golf industry in general offer to us many rewarding opportunities every day. Even more refreshing is that we as individuals are more than willing to share our ideas and help friends in need—we have a general willingness to get involved. This is what I find to be very enjoyable about our profession. It just does not seem as much like work when you enjoy what you do.

The golf course industry has more challenges now than ever. Changes to our jobs in the last ten years have been fast and furious. Many of these changes have been revolutionary to our daily tasks. The development of

new technology and equipment, our enhanced professional image, safer and more efficient pesticides, and an emphasis on more native planting at our golf courses—these, in my opinion, are some of the beneficial advances we have encountered and should be thankful for. On the flipside, we have seen less desirable intrusions in our profession: political interference, activist groups, competition,

There are approximately 20,000 golf courses in our country—it sounds like a lot, but we are really a small cog in many wheels. Some of the issues we face, we can't face alone.

increased pressure, job shortages and governmental regulations, to name a few. Unfortunately, these are not one person's opinions, but realities we need to address. Two current issues we must deal with are the Plumber's Law and Food Quality Protection Act. I feel these types of challenges to our professional environment will be forthcoming in a frequent manner.

There was a time, not too long ago, that we were content being ourselves, the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents. We were a

proudly self-sufficient foundation and needed no one else to support what we did. The GCSAA intervened, and to some degree, we rebelled against someone else telling us how to conduct our business. But we survived the "identity crisis" and in hindsight, have witnessed the success that our national association set out to be. Simply put, we are better in numbers. There are approximately 20,000 golf courses in our country—it sounds like a lot, but we are really a small cog in many wheels. Some of the issues we face, we can't face alone. We don't carry a big enough vote. There is a solution to this that I think we (the MAGCS) should explore: the Green Industry. The Green Industry is a coalition of associations that have banded together as allies to address specific issues as they come along. These are the numerous associations participating as of today. This list will give you a better idea of the numbers of individuals involved.

- American Society of Landscape Architects
- Illinois Landscape Contractors Association
- Illinois Nurserymen's Association
- Illinois Turfgrass Foundation
- Ornamental Growers Association of Illinois
- Association of Professional Landscape Designers
- Illinois Arborists Association
- Illinois Christmas Tree Growers
- Illinois Parks & Recreation Association
- Sports Turf Managers

(continued on page 4)

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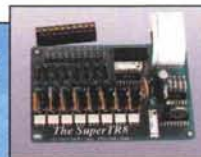
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On Course With the President


(continued from page 2)

- Illinois State Florists' Association
- Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents
- University of Illinois

You will notice that we are included in this association already, but as the representative for the Midwest, I can tell you that we are not very active. I have allocated a large portion of our responsibility to our partnership with the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation. While some of the issues concerning the Green Industry do not directly affect the golf course industry, others do and many in the future might. The industry currently is devoting its energy to producing a survey. The goal

is to find out the industry's economic impact for Illinois. We feel the findings will give us a bigger voice in Springfield (e.g., the Plumber's Law). I believe we, as an Association, should become active participants with the Green Industry. We are better in numbers. If we unite and support the causes of others, even if they may not have any impact on our day-to-day activities, we can expect the same from our allies in our time of need. There is no doubt, the best offense is a good defense. I would like to suggest that we support the efforts of the Green Industry, not only financially but with manpower as well. Currently the GCSAA is heading up a letter-writing campaign to the Environmental Protection Agency on how Dursban is used safely and why it is important to

golf course management. If you have not written a letter yet, you should. This is an example of the efforts needed from all of us in this day and age to protect what we have. Also, we must educate the decision-makers, who do listen to the numbers.

If you are interested in politics and preserving our right to do business in a safe and professional way, and would like to get involved with the Green Industry as an MAGCS representative, please call me. I hope you all have a safe and enjoyable trip to New Orleans. Don't forget to thank our commercial members for another outstanding hospitality room. See you at the national—God bless. 

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Brian A. Bossert, CGCS

I would like to begin by inviting everyone to the MAGCS Hospitality Suite in New Orleans. The fun can be found in the Marriott on Thursday and Friday nights, the 17th and 18th of February. Backed by the strong support of our vendor members, this should again be *the* social event of the conference. The MAGCS Board looks forward to seeing you there!

As I write this column a few days prior to Christmas, I am still cleaning up my secretarial shortcomings and stepping into my new duties as vice president. As our Association has grown, so have the secretary/treasurer's tasks. Apparently, the IRS takes a more interested look at our Association as our annual budget has grown in excess of \$250,000. To confirm our not-for-profit status, the IRS has recently asked for an annual certified audit of our books. I have been busy making sure all the Ts are crossed. This will take place after our books are closed for the year ending December 1999. Our current accountant does not offer the auditing services required, and Luke Strojny and I are investigating our options. Unfortunately, it appears this task may be fairly costly; one of those inevitable growing pains.

In addition to paying the bills this year, most of them on time, as secretary/treasurer I also

took the minutes for all of the business and Board meetings. It is important to have this documentation; completed reports are forwarded to George Minnis, our executive secretary. If Don's first board meeting as president is any indication, Luke is really going to have his hands full with this task.

For the purpose of letting our contingency funds go to work for us, we did reallocate some of

*Last summer,
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I was allowed
to look into
alternatives for the
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After all the
homework was done,
we redistributed
\$77,343.95 from the
existing CD and
money market accounts
into five different
mutual funds and
a higher-interest
money market.*

our cash reserve into higher-earning options. Last summer, with the support of the Board, I was allowed to look into alternatives for the purpose of growing our cash reserve. MAGCS member Larry Tomaszewski, who works with Equitable, was very helpful in evaluating our investment options. After all the homework was done, we redistributed \$77,343.95 from the existing CD and money market

accounts into five different mutual funds and a higher-interest money market. Specifically, \$20,000 was divided equally among the mutual funds, and we deposited \$60,000 into our new money market. At times of the year when our normal checking account has a higher balance (typically the winter months, when *On Course* ad payments and dues are being collected), we will transfer funds to the money market. Our current checking account (because of our not-for-profit status) does not pay interest. During the summer months, we will probably have to transfer money back from the money market to the checking account.

Obviously, our mutual fund investments entail some risks, but these moves should improve our cash reserve in the long term. Without a doubt, the new money market account and the extra effort to transfer funds back and forth will result in additional income from interest.

Now, as vice president, I will serve as Employment Committee chairman. The MAGCS offers an employment referral service to clubs or companies with a position to fill. Let's hope Mother Nature doesn't contribute to 2000 being a busy employment year. If any superintendents are looking for an assistant or equipment tech, please remember we will combine mailings if possible, thereby reducing your cost. However, we do not combine notices of superintendent positions with other job notices. The current cost of \$300 per mailing allows us to break even after covering postage and paper supplies.

Additionally, all employment information—and much, much more—is available to our mem-

(continued on page 31)

Information is the Key to Management Knowledge

by Mark Schmidt

Mark Schmidt is an agronomist and product manager with John Deere Golf Technologies in Alpharetta, Georgia.

If given a choice of making management decisions on the basis of average information, or on the basis of specific, detailed information, which option would you choose? It is a fairly safe bet that nearly all of us would choose the latter option, simply because it offers greater potential to make more knowledgeable and productive decisions.

Information is often stated to be the key to knowledge. This adage certainly holds true in golf course management, as many decisions are based around a complex system, containing many different variables. Such conditions make it imperative that a site manager have as much information as possible to characterize and understand the intricacies involved in managing a golf course.

Information and knowledge about a site are the most important weapons a site manager can have in formulating, and execut-

ing, management decisions. More knowledgeable decisions generally afford added efficiency and effectiveness—two ultimate goals of any management operation. Both are gained through experience and a systematic process of data collection, analysis, and the integration of data with knowledge.

SITE-SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT

A new management philosophy that centers on detailed site information and the systematic implementation of data collection, analysis, data in addition to knowledge, and data-founded applications, is site-specific man-

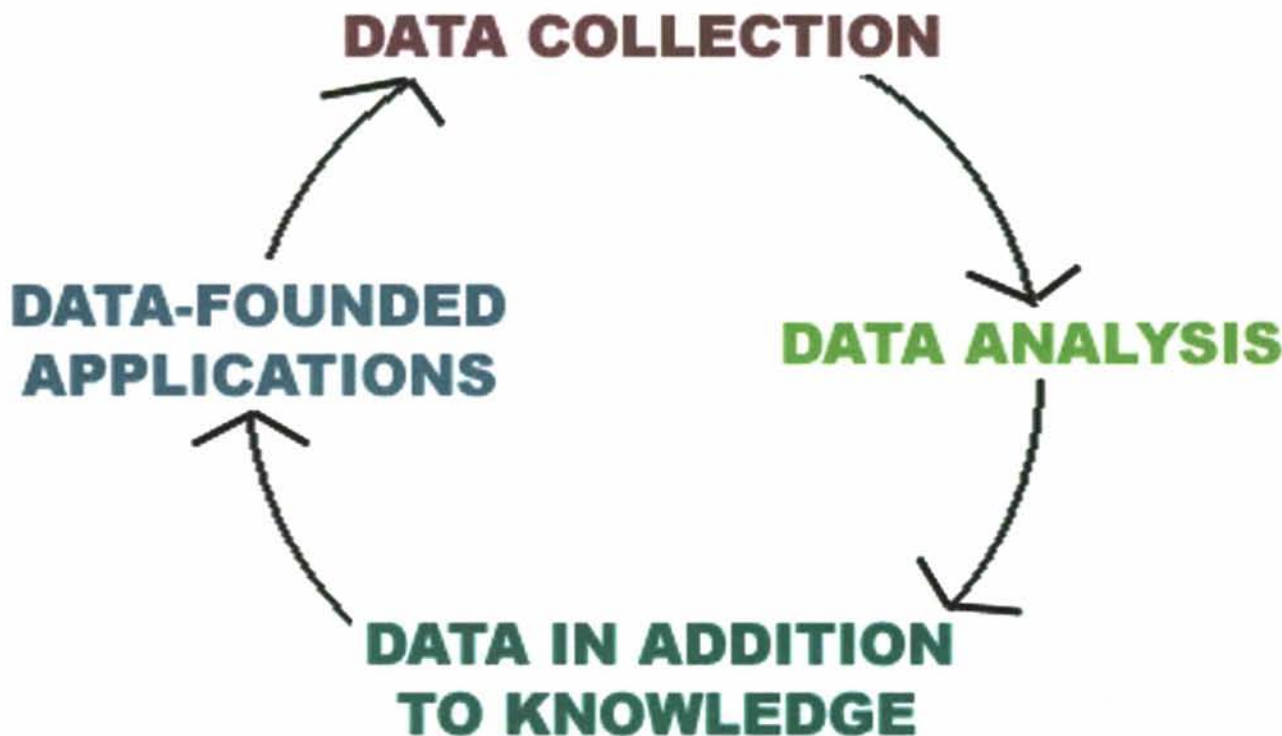


Figure 1. Systematic Site-Specific Management Process¹

agement (SSM). It promotes management decisions on the basis of specific knowledge about a site and is founded on the idea that every golf course contains variability, or differences in plant and soil characteristics. Such variances may exist in both horizontal and vertical dimensions.

Accordingly, site-specific management addresses the individual requirements of a site, produced by such 'spatial variances.' This is in contrast to conventional management techniques that derive treatments on the basis of a site's highest, lowest or average needs. In this manner, conventional management techniques do not account for specific spatial variances.

A key advantage in gaining specific knowledge about spatial variances is that it allows management decisions, and subsequent treatments, to account for the exact needs of a site. Managing specific needs allows matching inputs and treatments to specific site needs so that management efficiencies and effectiveness are maximized, from both economic and environmental standpoints. By collecting information about individual areas, and then continuously monitoring those sites, a superintendent may build a database focused on a site's responses to changes in its environment due to management treatments. A superintendent may then analyze the data and build a foundation of management decisions around those conditions.

Site-specific management relies heavily on technology as a means of implementing its concepts and strategies. Key technologies include global positioning systems (GPS), geographic information systems (GIS), electronic sensors, computers, machine control systems and others.

Site-specific management strategies promote proactive, instead of reactive, decision-making processes. Through proactive decisions, SSM works not only to increase management effectiveness and efficiency, but also to promote land stewardship and sustainability. It will undoubtedly play a key role in allowing golf courses to meet increasing economic and environmental pressures, without compromising site quality and conditions.

Managing specific needs allows matching inputs and treatments to specific site needs so that management efficiencies and effectiveness are maximized, from both economic and environmental standpoints.

Management System

Site-specific management strategies revolve around a systematic process of data collection, analysis, data in addition to knowledge and data-founded applications. The process is continuous and progressive. Because each step builds upon other steps, with no one step being all-inclusive, site-specific management is truly an integrated management system. Its systematic steps comprise its greatest advantage, in that the integration and practice of all steps work towards a common goal of increasing management efficiency and effectiveness.

Applications

If we characterize site-specific management as a true system, then we must also consider that it is not one-dimensional and that its principles may be applied in areas other than just agronomic management. It can be used to manage an equipment fleet, personnel, material inventory, irrigation and many other areas. With an underlying principle that, through the collection, analysis and application of detailed information, we can promote increased management efficiency and effectiveness, it holds a wide and diverse range of applications. Ultimately, site-specific management offers its greatest advantages to any operation when it is implemented across multiple applications as part of a comprehensive management system.

The range of application for site-specific management is substantial in that many superintendents already utilize site-specific management concepts in many aspects of their management operation, even though they may not classify such operations in that manner. The realization of site-specific management concepts may be as simple as gathering detailed information about a specific area of a site or as complex as working towards understanding inherent complexities in any management operation through historical data analysis or modeling. Despite the application, goals remain the same in working to promote management efficiency and effectiveness, from both economic and environmental standpoints.

DATA COLLECTION

Because site-specific management is based on advanced management concepts, and executed through various technologies, there is often a tendency to classify it as a tool that may only be used in

(continued on page 8)

Information Is The Key . . .

(continued from page 7)

the future once many different technologies have been assembled, integrated and developed. This idea is not accurate in that there are many ways that a golf course superintendent can presently implement site-specific management ideologies.

The most logical and practical method of implementing site-specific management starts with data collection. Collecting specific data about a site allows the ability to log and characterize existing conditions both as a means of managing current conditions as well as predicting future conditions. In this manner, data may be used to make instantaneous management decisions or to build a site history and determine management trends and site responses.

The most logical and practical method of implementing site-specific management starts with data collection.

Collecting specific data about a site allows the ability to log and characterize existing conditions both as a means of managing current conditions as well as predicting future conditions.

A site history allows the identification of trends, site responses to given treatments and the ability to characterize the complexities of management operations. Characterization allows decision-making capabilities. Through historical records, a site manager can better understand the effectiveness and efficiency of past management operations in the context of present and future site responses.

Methods

Several methods exist through which data may be collected. In its simplest form, data can be collected through visual identification and manual record-keeping. More advanced methods of data collection are accomplished through the use of global positioning systems (GPS), electronic sensors and other automated tools. One might consider the ultimate means of data

(continued on page 18)

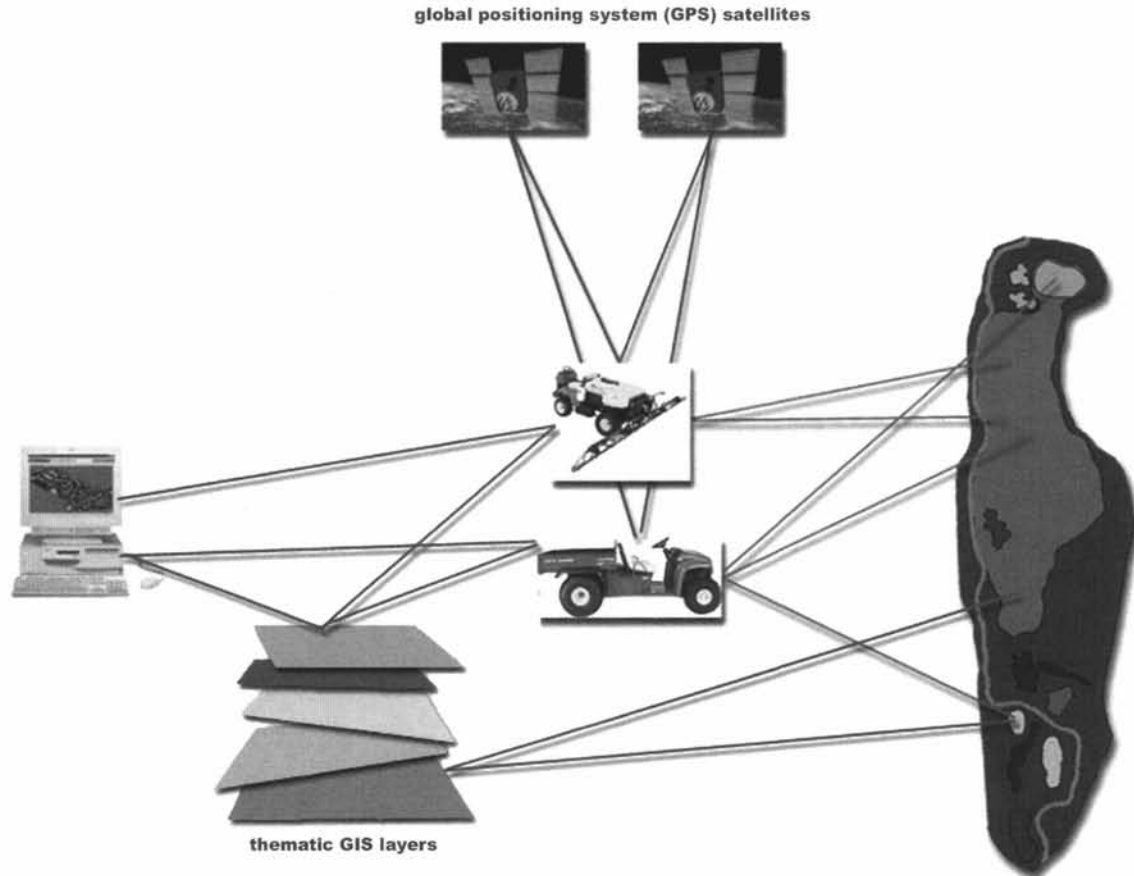


Figure 2. Interrelationships Between Site Data, Technology and Equipment

Size Does Matter



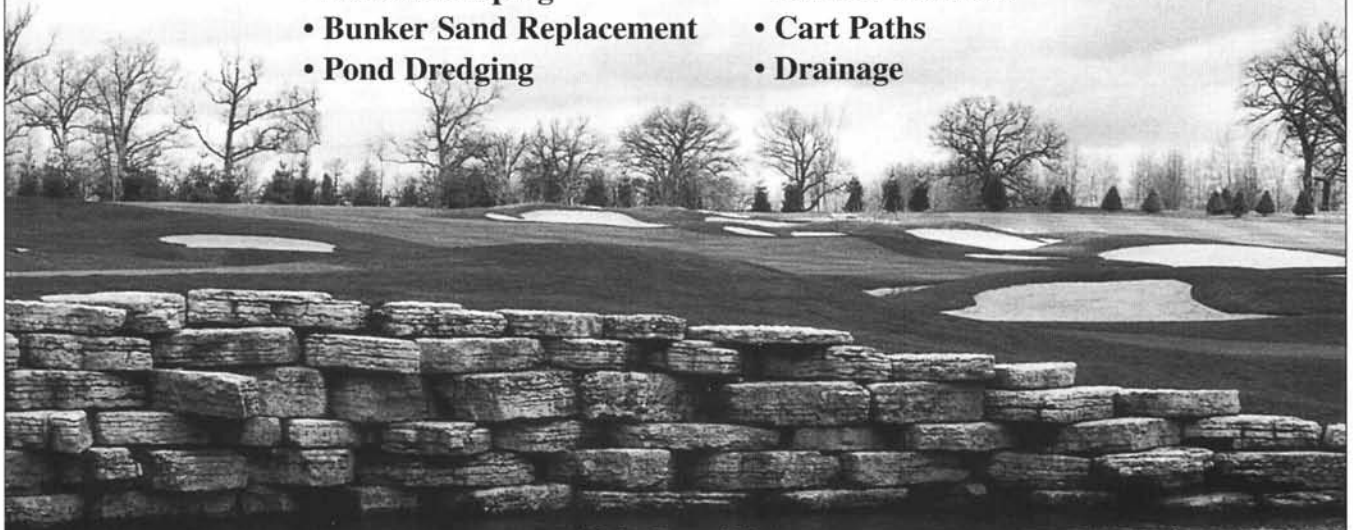
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