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Permit Denial May Be Omen For Florida Golf Courses

By JAMES CALLAGHAN

The St. Johns River Water Management District has rejected the City of Sebastian's request to pump water from the Floridian Aquifer into a lake used to irrigate the city's municipal golf course. The district's main concern was that the high salt content of the Floridian water could have an adverse effect as it percolates into the shallow aquifer — the source of drinking water for many north Indian River County residents.

County Commissioner, Grover Fletcher, objected to the city's request because it was not in the public interest, nor was it a reasonable use. He further cited that the use of irrigation should not be used to foster the image of green vegetation for its own sake, be it elaborate landscaping or a golf course fairway. He said that *the game of golf should not have priority over human consumption.*

Mr. Fletcher has a valid point. And as more public officials become aware of today's water use requirements of Florida's golf courses, more water use permits may be denied. The State's denial for Sebastian's permit may indeed be an omen for golf course superintendents throughout Florida. We may have to bite the bullet and accept the fact that golf is played on grass and not the lush greenery that has become commonplace during the last two decades. And we will be responsible to educate our club's officials to this new fact of life.

The SJRWMD also noted that the city did not file a surface water management plan that shows how the golf course can be designed to trap rainwater for use in irrigation which may eliminate the need for wells. Now the newly built golf course may need to be restructured to channel surface water more effectively into irrigation lakes.

After the fallout from the recent drought, the days of high water use for golf courses in Florida may become a practice of the past. The action that the State took with the City of Sebastian could bring that day sooner than we realize. ■

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