

The Green Pages

A compendium of news and opinions about government, golf and the environment

Politicos propose 'market-based' environmental incentives

Some politicians and environmental groups are calling for a new approach to solving environmental problems. "Market-based environmental incentives" would operate by making those companies that create environmental problems bear the total cost to society through higher product costs.

Costs for waste generation by companies and individuals would be geared to the amount they produce. In the same respect, if a company produced a chemical that contaminated groundwater supplies, that company or companies that manufactured that product would pay for the total cost of cleanup.

Keep a close eye on state legislators for market-based approaches that apply to golf courses and development.

Who's wasting it?

Water Fact: Approximately 42 percent of household water is used for landscaping, and landscapes are typically overwatered by 20 to 40 percent.

Curb chemophobia

The Natural Resources Defense Council has called for an 80 percent reduction in agricultural pesticide use.

The organization cited the recently completed EPA well water study as a source for proposing such drastic cuts.

Although the cuts are aimed at agricultural uses, superintendents should brace themselves for future demands by such organizations concerning turf and ornamental products as well.

Public information — and lots of it — is the only way to curb chemophobia.

Traces of herbicides found in rainwater

Traces of herbicides were found in rainwater samples from 23 states in a study recently completed by the U.S. Geological Survey.

The herbicides detected included atrazine, alachlor, metalachlor and a degradation product of atrazine. The main source of the herbicide pollution is believed to be agricul-

tural pesticide use.

This is the first major study to confirm that pesticides can be transported through vaporization into the atmosphere.

Although turf applications were not believed to have contributed to the pesticides found in the rainwater samples, superintendents should be prepared to answer questions from concerned citizens and members.

More restricted pesticides likely

The Environmental Protection Agency has proposed new criteria for determining which additional chemicals should be classified as "restricted-use" pesticides.

The additional criteria, which are designed to protect groundwater supplies, use data from persistence and mobility research and actual detection in groundwater.

These additional criteria are expected to move several turf pesticides now classified for general use to the restricted-use list within three to five years.

Chemical firms face ad charges

Chemical companies as well as lawn-care providers are coming under fire for false or misleading advertising.

This scrutiny focuses on claims that products or services are "non-toxic" or "completely safe."

While FIFRA does not regulate lawn-care company advertising, it does prohibit advertisers of chemical products from making claims as part of a pesticide's distribution and sale that differ substantially from claims made on the label.

Superintendents should be knowledgeable and candid about the toxicity of golf course

chemicals when talking to the media about the uses of those chemicals.

High Court OKs local pesticide laws

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled unanimously that a local government may enact pesticide rules more stringent than federal requirements.

The June 21 decision overturned the Wisconsin Supreme Court's ruling that an ordinance adopted by the town of Casey, Wis., was illegal because it pre-empted the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act.

The 1985 ordinance requires a town permit to use pesticides on public lands or to perform aerial pesticide applications on private lands.

Forum examines wetlands classification

In an environmental forum sponsored by GCSAA, John Meagher, director of EPA's wetlands office; John Studt, chief of enforcement for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and Rep. Jimmy Hayes (D-La.) discussed how wetlands should be classified.

Hayes, who has introduced a bill that would classify wetlands for protection according to their ecological value, said that the current policy violates the rights of landowners.

"The Fifth Amendment to the constitution states that the landowner has the right to determine what is allowable and that government intrusion is the exception rather than the rule," he said. "If the government does intrude then it is only done under circumstances in which (1) the landowner's rights are protected and (2) if land is taken, the landowner

should receive compensation or mitigation.”

His bill would strip the EPA of its veto power over wetland development and vest greater administrative responsibility in the Army Corps of Engineers.

Under HR1330, wetlands judged to have the highest ecological value would be classified as Type A wetlands. Permits for activities in these wetlands would be tightly regulated, and owners would be compensated for the value of their property.

The bill would allow permits to be issued for activities in Type B wetlands — those judged to have significant but not necessarily critical functions — if mitigation measures were undertaken.

Type C wetlands — those determined to have little ecological value — could be altered without a federal permit.

The current definition of wetlands brought millions of acres under federal protection — prompting some landowners to claim federal infringement on their fundamental property ownership rights.

Studt explained the Corps of Engineers' and EPA's efforts to simplify and streamline the wetlands permitting process.

Both Studt and Meagher commended the February issue of *Golf Course Management*, which was sent to them prior to the forum, and referred to articles while giving their presentations.

“You folks (in the golf industry) have an increasingly positive story to tell, and you should do so,” Studt said.

Bill aims to expand simplified pensions

Reducing the cost and red tape involved in small business pensions is the goal of a crop of

Many fail to see the humor in Ringer commercial

Perhaps you've seen this commercial... a pitchman, standing in front of a series of drawings, delivering a lecture:

“These are the chemicals that go into the lawn that go into the rainwater that goes into the streams that go into the lakes that go into the fish that go into the people who put the chemicals in the lawn in the first place.”

Those are the words from a recent TV spot produced by Ringer Corp., a lawn-care products company based in Minneapolis. The spot, intended to be light and humorous, publicizes Ringer's “all-natural” Restore fertilizer.

Controversy surrounds the commercial not only because of the anti-chemical stance it implies, but because some believe the claims it makes are without scientific support. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* article, ChemLawn Services Corp., O.M. Scott & Sons Co., and other competitors attacked the ad, calling it “false” and “misleading.”

Although the commercial is for a home lawn-care product, some superintendents have reacted to what they describe as unfair criticism in the ad's message. A number of GCSAA members have called headquarters after see-

ing the ad. GCSAA's voice has been added to the number of corporations and organizations that contacted Ringer.

Ringer responded by saying the company's “main motivation is to anticipate the market trends and to provide effective products,” said Scott E. Boutilier, commercial marketing director. “This objective coexists with the debate over chemical restriction but did not cause it.”

With home lawn-care products and services increasingly under the microscope, the golf/turf industry often finds itself under similar scrutiny.

In light of the harsh anti-chemical rhetoric, superintendents need to do their best to make sure that all the facts about turf chemicals and practices are made known to the public.

“Now is the time for GCSAA members to get in touch with their club members, civic groups, media and other public organizations to educate them that professional golf course superintendents are responsible individuals who respect the environment,” says Charles T. Passios, CGCS, the association's government relations liaison.

new U.S. Senate bills and a Department of Labor plan.

The simplification of pensions is targeted for businesses with fewer than 100 employees.

Currently, only eight percent of such businesses have pension plans. The proposed Simplified Employee Pension plans (SEPs) would be managed similarly to individual retirement accounts.

Only businesses with fewer than 25 employees are now able to take advantage of SEPs.

There are several different proposals from both the Democrats and Republicans, as well as one from the Department of Labor.

The proposals vary on the maximum contribution per year and employee/employer

shares of contributions.

Of course, any retirement plan must include all full-time employees of the business.

EPA: Groundwater protection is states' job

In a task force report and in a speech to a group of governors, the EPA has been saying that it is largely the responsibility of the states to protect groundwater from pesticide contamination. The Groundwater Task Force, which was formed in July 1989 to review the agency's groundwater protection program and develop policies, released its report in early May.

The report noted the importance of the state role in managing and protecting ground-

water, and said that such management could require decisions on groundwater allocation, land use, and pesticide restrictions.

EPA is encouraging the states to develop “generic” management plans, according to Susan H. Wayland, deputy director of the EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs. Wayland addressed the National Governors Association's Conference on Comprehensive Groundwater Protection Programs in March.

Given the economic crises many states are experiencing, it is unclear how these plans will be financed, managed and enforced. Superintendents will need to keep abreast of changing regulations as states develop their own groundwater protection programs.