

News on the environmental front usually means bad news for the golf industry.

Dr. Frank Rossi's excellent article, "Environmental Complacency," which appeared in the last issue of *The Florida Green*, corroborates my long-held belief that the general public seems to prefer "gloom and doom"

## The Skeptical Environmentalist

stories as dished out by the media. Valid scientific research is summarily dismissed or attacked as so much industry propaganda. Superintendents are often left alone to fight the battles that owners and golfers should be fighting, not to mention dealing with the squeeze on their budgets as costs for environmental compliance and sensitivity increase.

But you've heard all this before, and my purpose today is to pass along what I hope will be good news and ammunition for the future. By the time this article is published, a new book, *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, will be available, and, hopefully, make an impact on society's environmental philosophy. The fanatics and those whose livelihood depends on environmental anxieties will just cry "sellout," but there's a chance those whom I see as "mainstream environmentalists" will begin to see the light if they read this book.

*The Skeptical Environmentalist* was written by Dr. Bjorn Lomborg, a 36-year-old political scientist and professor of statistics at the University of Aarhus in Denmark. What makes Dr. Lomborg unique and why I think his book may be so important, is that he was a member of Greenpeace for four years, and actually began the work that became the body of this book to debunk certain "simple American right-wing propaganda," such as Dr. Julian Simon's population hypotheses and others that questioned the environmental agenda. As Dr. Lomborg and his statistics students began researching information from such agencies as the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, The

International Panel on Climate Change, and others, he came to the realization that his long-held beliefs were actually getting debunked.

Thus was born *The Skeptical Environmentalist*. Dr. Lomborg's meticulous investigation produced almost 3,000 footnotes to substantiate his new position that statements and tenets of environmental organizations like Greenpeace, the Worldwatch Institute, and the World Wildlife Fund are exaggerations or outright myths. He has labeled this persistently gloomy environmental holocaust doctrine "The Litany."

To quote Dr. Lomborg, "The Litany has pervaded the debate so deeply and so long that blatantly false claims can be made again and again, without any references, and yet still be believed. This is not the fault of academic environmental research, which is balanced and competent, but rather of the communication of environmental knowledge, which taps deeply into our doomsday beliefs." He is also critical of journalists who continue to spread "The Litany" without question or criticism.

In his book, Dr. Lomborg asserts that agriculture is sustainable, pollution is declining, the rate of human population increase is past its peak, forests are not disappearing, that there is no wholesale destruction of plant and animal species, acid rain does little damage to forests but does damage lakes, and that even global warming is not as serious as commonly portrayed.

He warns that the internationally approved Kyoto objectives for reducing carbon dioxide emissions will have minimal impact but enormous costs for implementation, as currently-used computer models stress greenhouse gases over the other three factors—clouds, aerosols, and the sunspot cycle—without supporting data.

Dr. Lomborg believes that the environment must be protected and that regulation is necessary, but exaggerating the problems distorts society's priorities and makes it difficult to decide on proper strategies. His motive is to simply tell the facts and present a brighter and more balanced view than "The Litany."

How refreshing.

This article is based on a book review I stumbled across while online, but I couldn't wait to actually obtain and read the book to share such a positive environmental development with my peers.

### MARK MY WORDS



Mark Jarrell, CGCS

Since our last issue, several items have bubbled up from around the state. While many federal and state laws are pre-emptive in nature, counties and municipalities can enact laws which are more stringent than the federal or state law. Here's what's going on.

## Golf Course Ordinances

Hernando, Lake and Marion counties have drafted ordinances that seek to govern and regulate golf course operations from design and construction to routine maintenance.

I have not seen the Hernando or Marion county ordinances, but a panel of golf industry people did get to offer input into the final draft of the Lake County ordinance this past July.

Word on the Marion County ordinance is they are making the Audubon Signature Sanctuary program mandatory for any new development.

Lake County took a broader view and will accept a recognized program of best management practices that addresses their concerns of water conservation, water quality and environmental impacts. The FGCSA is working on revisions to the UF/IFAS BMP Manual for Florida Golf Courses that will hopefully address those concerns for any county or local government and provide a blueprint for golf course managers to follow. The bottom line will be more documentation of water, fertilizer and pesticide use plans and applications. A copy of the workable Lake County ordinance was sent to each FGCSA chapter for review.

It isn't hard to imagine that we will see more of this type of lawmaking at the county and maybe even municipal level. It would be wise for all superintendents and golf course owners to familiarize themselves with the Lake County ordinance and see how it might affect their operations or what may be expected of them in the future. There is a section for existing golf courses, so it's not all aimed at new construction.

## Water

The rains are falling but the water restrictions are not lifting. In fact I received a copy of an agenda for the Board of County Commissioners in Hillsborough County relating to Potable Water Demand Management Actions and I quote item number 7:

"Development of water use restrictions for golf courses that are more stringent than those enacted by Southwest Florida Water Management District."

That is plainly a political move when you consider that the green industries — and especially golf — use considerably fewer total gallons of water than residential, municipal, industrial and agricultural users. They keep strangling the golf industry, trying to squeeze drops of water out of us, while ignoring the major users and wasters of water. It is not politically expedient to increase residential utility rates or impose tighter conservation measures on the general public.

Golf is the easy target, but the industry will not yield any major water conservation since we are a small overall user. It's high time for golf course owners to get engaged in the battle for common sense.

## Pesticides and Fumigants

Orthene reregistration: Valent U.S.A. Corporation reports that it is optimistic that most acephate (Orthene) uses will remain intact. Based on current discussions with EPA, Valent expects no food uses to be lost and that acephate will remain available for its important non-ag uses, e.g., golf course and sod insect control, PCO crack-and-crevice use, and nurseries and greenhouses, as well as homeowner use.

You can expect some reductions in some maximum rate applications and changes in personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements for mixers, loaders and applicators.

Valent also stated that stakeholder participation and input at EPA briefing sessions and conference calls continues to pay dividends as EPA cannot ignore the real world information and how it affects their assumptions and data collection. It pays to be involved.

Methyl Bromide (MeBr): While the methyl bromide phase-out mandate is still in effect, an industry source called recently to remind superintendents, sod producers and golf course builders that there will be plenty of material available until 2005 and beyond.

EPA has had to acknowledge that there is no effective or economical alternative at the present time. Since methyl bromide is a byproduct of the manufacture of a flame-retardant material, it will continue to be produced in the future. Soil fumigation is a beneficial way to dispose of it. If that use goes away entirely, then it will still have to be disposed of as a waste product.

Since we seen many products taken away recently and methyl bromide is on the hit list, it is easy to write it off prematurely. Research continues in an effort to find out scientifically if MeBr is really a factor in ozone depletion. Right now EPA is relying on computer modeling.

# Local Rules Keep Bubbling Up

## GREEN SIDE UP



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