

At our recent fall board meeting I asked by a show of hands how many of our 12 chapter executives did not experience hurricane damage at their home courses. Not surprisingly, only one person raised his hand. This further substantiated how widespread this bout with Mother Nature's destructive forces has taken place. In the near future I am sure we will all look at the storm season in a different light.

The end of the hurricane season coincides with the return of our members to our clubs. Hopefully, they have seen a snapshot of the events that transpired last fall and are being

patient with our efforts to get back to some sort of normalcy. I hope everyone is beginning to put all of this behind them and enjoy this holiday season, which has quickly sneaked up on us. Spending time with family and friends is a sure way to help heal wounds and begin to look toward a strong beginning for year 2005.

The next time we will all be together is in Orlando at the 2005 Golf Industry Show in early February. This should be an exciting event with so much available to us in one short week; whether it be the wonderful educational opportunities, the world-class trade show or the networking with other turf professionals and our peers. We

hope you take advantage of this unparalleled opportunity right in our own backyard. I personally look forward to seeing all of you at our FGCSA Reception at the Rosen Centre Hotel on Thursday, Feb. 10. Located just next door to the Convention Center, this event should be very convenient for all to attend. With the show being so large, it sure is nice to know that we can all be together for a short time in one room. It is always one of the highlights of the week for me, and I hope to see many of you there!

With the beginning of a new year comes the excitement of the pursuit of new goals and challenges. One of our biggest goals is to increase funds to be used for turf research. As many of you know, most of the turf research funding is generated from within our own profession. Many chapters have their own fundraisers, set aside funds from their chapter's operating budgets or receive donations from turf supplier companies for much-needed research projects. While these are greatly appreciated and I hope they continue, we have been trying to look "outside the box" to take turf-research funding to an uncharted level. The time is now. We all know that water use is currently a hot topic for the future. The elimination of chemicals, such as Namacur and methyl bromide with no proven alternative products available, and the tightening of governmental regulations on our industry have caused us to think responsibly about future advancements in turfgrass research and breeding.

Coincidentally, the University of Florida is nearing completion of a new turf research station at Pine Acres, just south of Gainesville. More than 25 acres of this site have been dedicated to turf. This site can be a huge help in pursuit of our research goals provided we can supply adequate funds for new turf breeder, Dr. Kevin Kenworthy, as well as other much-needed research projects that will

help us in the future.

We have two exciting opportunities to greatly enhance our current turf research funding. With the assistance of our lobbyist, Mike Goldie, and his legislative relationships in Tallahassee and throughout the state, we are ready to unveil a Matching Fund Challenge Grant Program. When approved, the state government will match each dollar generated for turf research. We are thrilled about this program and have solidified our desire to remain in close contact with our local and state political leaders on all golf and turf related

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issues. Thanks to Mike Goldie for all he has done for us, and we look forward to the approval of this program soon.

Another wonderful concept to strengthen our turf research funding was unanimously approved recently by your board of directors. One of our fellow superintendents, Tim Hiers, brought a novel idea to the table. We have worked our tails off trying to raise funds and have overburdened ourselves and our turf suppliers for monies in the past. Why not tax ourselves? Other industries have done it very successfully and we feel we can, too. Our initial thinking is to charge ourselves \$1.50 for each ton of fertilizer purchased throughout the state. In this way, we apportion only a small amount but, spread out over a large area, this can add up quickly. Coupled with the proposed matching-grant program, this could take turf research funding to much deserved and needed levels.

While there are many details yet to be worked out, this wonderful concept is just what we need to kick start the research goals we desire. Should this program take off as we expect there are many other spin-off ideas that can follow closely behind to further turf research in Florida.

While turf research is an important goal of ours for this year and beyond, there are many other exciting challenges we will pursue. Enhancing and organizing our educational opportunities throughout the year, working closely with all related organizations, and strategically planning for the future are only some of the additional pursuits we have targeted for our continued strength and growth. I look forward to a productive 2005 and hope you all do, too.

Looking Forward to 2005

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Joe Pantaleo
FGCSA President