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**OPINION**

# Water Woes Building

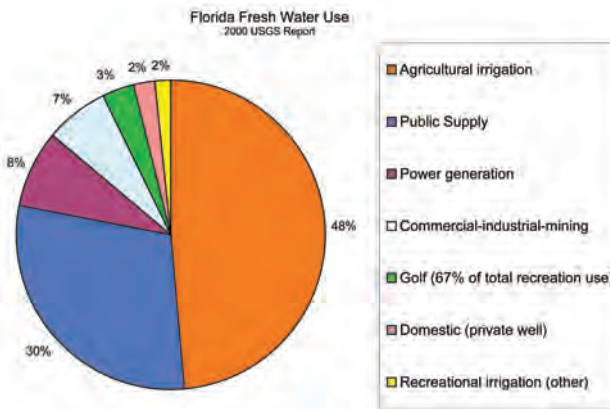
By Joel Jackson

Water restrictions are the hot topic throughout the state. In the South Florida Water Management District, the entire region was on Phase 2 - 30 percent since the spring.

As of Jan. 15, 2008, Consumptive Use Permit holders will go to Phase 3 - 45 percent restrictions because of the continuing drought conditions and the traditional winter dry season. Currently the district is conducting a five-meeting Water Conservation Summit to talk about future water resource management.

Meanwhile in parts of the Southwest Florida Water Management District, golf courses have been restricted to watering two days per week on fairways and roughs and three days per week on greens and tees, according to Bill Kistler and Tampa Palms G&CC. I thought we had gotten away

from the day-of-the-week method so professional turf managers could apply water when and where it was needed. Locking businesses like golf courses



**2000 USGS Florida Water Use Report**

*Golf course irrigation has remained around 3 percent since the 2000 US Geological Survey report on consumption by six major consumer groups.*

into some inflexible system may force some users to just crank up the run times and really not save any water. By instituting a common-sense percentage

reduction of overall usage, the superintendent can keep his turfgrass healthy and save measurable amounts of water.

Farther north, the word is that the Suwannee and Northwest districts don't even have a water shortage plan on the books and looking to Georgia and Alabama to see what they are doing. Even back during the 1988-2000 drought, I researched all the district web sites and true enough, they didn't have any restriction guidelines posted. I guess it haadn't been a problem until now.

Over in the St. Johns River Water Management District, they are discussing going to the one-day-per-week watering for home lawns as South Florida and Tampa Water Authority have done. I haven't seen specific hard numbers for golf courses. As of my last Web search, they call for golf courses to stay within permits and use Best Management Practices.

I wouldn't be surprised if that changed sooner than later. The North

## Florida Golf Industry Economic & Water Facts

**FROM 2000 GOLF ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY**

Florida leads the nation in the number of golf courses. A recent economic study listed more than 1,300. The National Golf Foundation reports around 1,097 courses, but may not be counting some of the small 9-hole operations.

**Total annual revenues:** \$4.44 billion.

**Annual expenses:** \$3.7 billion.

**Golf industry employment:** 73,000 persons.

**Book value of assets owned by golf courses:** \$10.8 billion.

**Charitable contributions:** \$12 million in cash and \$25 million "in-kind" donations.

**Rounds of golf in 2000:** 58.6 million. 33 percent by out-of-state visitors.

**Travel expenses** in Florida by golf-playing visitors were estimated at \$22.9 billion, of which \$5.4 billion may be attributed directly to golf. These expenditures had an impact to the Florida economy of \$9.2 billion in personal and business net income (value added) and 226,000 jobs.

**Area owned by golf courses :** 205,000 acres, with 147,000

acres in maintained turf and 140,000 acres under irrigation. (Compare to 800,000 acres of citrus and 4-5 million acres of home lawns.)

**Total county property taxes generated by golf courses,** based on average county millage rates in 1999, and were estimated at \$214 million.

**Water use:** 49 percent of the surveyed courses in 2000 use reclaimed water for their irrigation source. 29 percent used surface water. Only 21 percent used deep-well sources from the aquifer. The use of reclaimed water for irrigation on golf courses provides an efficient way to re-use our water resources and dispose of treated water that is not immediately suitable for human use.

**Compared to five years ago,** water-use per acre decreased on 42 percent of the surveyed golf courses. 94 percent of the courses surveyed used automatic or computer controlled irrigation systems.

**For more information see:** University of Florida publication EIR 02-4 at <http://Economicimpact.ifas.ufl.edu>

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Florida, Central Florida, Seven Rivers and Treasure Coast chapters need to get involved with their district contacts to make sure no restrictions are imposed without real-world input about common-sense, progressive, percentage cutbacks for various shortage phases.

One thing for everyone to remember – and tell anyone who will listen – that statewide, the golf industry (that's right golf is a \$5-billion-a-year business) uses only about 3 percent of water consumed every day.

Drastic cutbacks to our industry's water use don't really conserve that much water, but can cripple local and statewide tax revenues. Remind them that we know we are highly visible, but we are also highly responsible water users, particularly compared to some others.

Recently I got this

note from Rich Marella who works for the U. S. Geological Survey and who has been collecting water-use data for Florida and issuing reports on Florida water use every five years. Here's what Marella had to say:

*Joel, I posted the 2005 data on the USGS Web page (see new link below). For 2005 total water used for recreational irrigation was 330 million gallons per day. This is a decrease of 82 million gallons or 20 percent from 2000 value of 412 million gallons per day.*

*Of the 330 million gallons per day used in 2005, 68 percent (226 million gallons per day) was for golf course irrigation. The decline between 2000 and 2005 was primarily from weather conditions, as 2000 was very dry and*

*2005 received a more normal rainfall coupled with many new courses and several older courses using reclaimed wastewater as their water source (the 330 or the 412 do not include reclaimed wastewater used for golf course irrigation).*

**(Editor's Note:** This is fair since reclaimed water is usually not subject to restrictions and certainly is not a public potable water source)

*Overall, total freshwater use for 2005 was 6,841 million gallons per day, which golf course use was 3.3 percent in 2005, and golf course acreage was about the same in 2005 as it was in 2000. I will add the water management district tables for 2005 to the Web site sometime in December. I am still waiting on*

*some data from some sources to finish up my estimates. I hope this answers your question, please call if you have any other questions.*

Here are the links Marella referred to. They don't have the whole state by water management District but they do contain county-by-county data on water use:

Florida USGS WEB Page: <http://fl.water.usgs.gov>

Water-Use WEB Page: <http://fl.water.usgs.gov/infodata/wateruse.html>

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*Members and guests enjoy the annual golf course “Bird Walk” hosted by the Grand Harbor Audubon Society in the winter of 2006. Photo by Bobby Wallace.*

## ***Communication Can Be a Beautiful Thing***

*By Shelly Foy*

I have been thinking a lot lately about the importance of being able to communicate effectively with others. It seems to be the crux of most problems in the world today and, quite honestly, very few of us do it well. Good communication is difficult at best, and yet it is so very important in everything we do. I encourage each of you to speak out more, write more, reach out more and force yourselves to become better communicators.

The reality is that you can’t just do your job solely on your golf course anymore. Your job has come to be about communicating effectively to those outside of your property about what you do on your golf course and why you do it.

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In my opinion, Bobby Wallace has hit the mother lode.

Wallace is the golf course superintendent at Grand Harbor Golf & Beach Club in Vero Beach. The property comprises 900 acres, with

140 acres of wetlands, 20 water bodies, 50 acres of surface water, 205 acres of turfgrass and a 45-hole golf course with 800 members. Wallace has been at the club for two and a half years. He came from Hilton Head Island, S.C., where he was the superintendent at Indigo Run Country Club for 18 years.

Grand Harbor was already a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary when Wallace joined the management team. Instead of being satisfied with its status, his love of nature and being outside compelled him to do more. Not too long after he came to Grand Harbor, Wallace had a conversation with a member who mentioned that she knew they were a Certified Audubon Sanctuary, but she felt like they could do so much more. Bobby agreed and they set up a meeting to discuss ideas.

Pretty soon, there were so many people showing up at meetings that they were running out of room. The next thing you know, the members at Grand Harbor had decided to form their own Audubon Society chapter, and the Grand Harbor Audubon Society was born. The group currently has 85 members and their goal – which

they believe will be reached soon – is 200 members.

On Nov. 20, they hosted their annual Audubon Open, and raised \$3,800, which they already are putting to use. Wallace and several members, with the help of the Pelican Island Audubon Society, are in the process of installing seven purple martin houses, two osprey platforms, four screech owl boxes, four wood duck boxes, and four boxes for woodpeckers.

One of the first projects they began was naturalizing an area around holes 6, 7, 9, 13 and 14 of the Harbor Course. They have stopped mowing and spraying out-of-play areas along this corridor (allowing Wallace to re-allocate those resources to other areas of the golf course), and members of their Audubon Society have convinced many of the adjoining homeowners to stop mowing and spraying their areas around this corridor as well.

When I visited Grand Harbor, it was 95 degrees at 3:30 p.m. and the area was teeming with dragonflies, butterflies and too many bird species to count. I can only imagine what this area will be like during the actual birding season.

Wallace and the members of the

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*Grand Harbor Audubon Committee: From left: Robert Wallace (director of golf), Virginia Tulluch and Jim Bercaw (in charge of lakes and buffer zones), Deb Fletcher (original organizer) and Neil Stalter (resident bird expert).*

Grand Harbor Audubon Society continually seek new ideas for ways to enhance habitat on the golf courses. Several members made a point of traveling and playing golf on other Certified Audubon Sanctuaries across the country and brought back pictures and ideas of things they wanted to do at Grand Harbor.

Wallace has a shared goal with his membership of enhancing and protecting habitat on their 900 acres. They share e-mails and photos and spend time together making plans and discussing ideas. He is an active member of their Audubon Society, and I am quite sure he is getting more satisfaction from his job now than ever before. Two of his Green Committee members are also members of the Grand Harbor Audubon Society, and this helps garner support for projects on the golf courses. Wallace is quick to give most of the credit for their environmental efforts to his members,

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and they have developed quite a kinship in Vero Beach.

During my visit we were stopped by a couple of his members who wanted to talk about the Egyptian Swans that are now living on the golf course, and where they were last seen. We toured the corridor area they are currently enhancing, and we talked about the plans they have for creating educational signs around several areas of the courses. He even shared his favorite spot along No. 14 on the River Course, which runs parallel to the Intracoastal Waterway. This is where he sometimes escapes to have a few minutes of quiet time to gather his thoughts before he heads off to a meeting.

We talked about the Bald Eagles that nested close by this past year and who raised a fledgling around hole No. 4 of the Harbor Course. Wallace recently told me that the eagles are already back this year. We talked about the manatees and the dolphins and even the bull sharks that have been seen around the property. We came around corners where rabbits were munching on grass and did not seem bothered by our presence. They have even installed an escape ramp for turtles to use when the water levels are too low in the effluent irrigation pond.

If you have ever spoken to Wallace you know immediately that he is a good communicator. You hear the tone in his voice, the excitement about programs, and the mention of all of the people helping him to spread his message. As I left Grand Harbor late that afternoon, I couldn't help but think, "How can I bottle some of this up and share it with the rest of the world?"

Wallace has used the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program as an effective communication tool and it has worked beautifully for him and for the Grand Harbor membership. I encourage everyone who has not yet made the decision to enroll their golf course in this program to take the time to do so. You can enroll online at [www.auduboninternational.org](http://www.auduboninternational.org).



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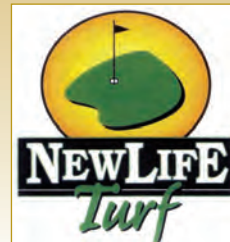
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# It's All About the Water

## Less Irrigation is Better for Golf, the Turf, and the Environment

By Matt Nelson

**Editors Note:** As the various Florida Water Management Districts implement tighter water restrictions on golf courses and discuss future water conservation measures this article might just as well have been written today as it was four years ago. Clip and post in the clubhouse for your customers because we are now entering our traditional dry season and our courses likely won't be as green as usual.

As an agronomist in the golf industry, it often amazes me how obsessed American golfers are with the color green. Preparing good golf conditions sometimes seems secondary to prepping the course for a beauty pageant. Players commonly react with worry, disdain, and disapproval at the first signs of any off-color turf. Panic develops when the dreaded “brown spot” occurs. What gives within the ranks of our great game?

National drought surveys indicate that nearly half of the U.S. is currently experiencing drought, and water restrictions have been mandated at golf courses across the United States. The fairways may get a little firm and lose some color, but with traffic control and prudent cultural programs, much of the turf can survive without water for extended periods. Every lie might not be perfect, but isn't this part of what makes golf such a great game? When the course gets dry during the summer months, then use those conditions for more roll and to play different types



Panic often develops when the dreaded brown spot occurs. Photo courtesy of the USGA.

of golf shots. More bounce and roll presents risk and reward at some holes, different shots into greens throughout the year, and a greater premium on accuracy.

The golf industry has invested millions of dollars over the past two decades investigating the environmental impacts of golf course management. Our greatest challenge, however, will likely rest with irrigation. Water availability and quality will become the greatest issue facing golf courses throughout much of the country, if it isn't already.

Players may have no choice but to tolerate changing golf course conditions throughout the year, and they may even

learn to appreciate the many wonderful shades of brown.

But will it have to take water-use mandates to change current golfer attitudes? Sadly, this is probably true. In drought-stricken states this season, where both voluntary and mandatory water restrictions were in force, I observed golf shop staff manually turning on sprinkler heads after the maintenance department had left for the day, resort managers demanding that golf course superintendents increase the watering, and an adamant group of golfers complaining directly to the mayor about the lack of watering at their municipal golf course. The golf shop staff killed most of a green, play at