

Oregon burning compromise means big change

By Bob Spiwak

The fate of turfgrass burning, and possibly the industry in Oregon, is being deliberated in the state Legislature at Salem.

As of mid-March, no laws had been established but, according to Dennis Hays of the Oregon Seed Trade Association, "Something's coming, we don't know what."

After a 37-car pileup that left seven dead three years ago, and apparently was caused by a shifting wind obscuring a major highway with smoke, the long-smouldering war against field burning itself erupted into flame. Environmental and citizen groups, as in Idaho, have sought legislation restricting or eliminating field burning.

Leah Nelson of the Oregon Seed Council said the industry plans to introduce its own bill to the Legislature

this session.

The scenario is like international diplomacy. Nelson said she could divulge no information on the bill's contents because "we don't want to tip off the opposition to our plans."

She added that even the turfgrass growers, other than those on the legislative committee, are unaware of the bill's contents.

Hays said the industry was working with legislative leaders in preparation of a law. The seed business is an essential component of the Oregon's economy.

According to Don Jacklin of Jacklin Seed Co. in Post Falls, Idaho, some 350,000 acres in Oregon are devoted to production of rye, bentgrass and fescue grasses.

Hays said that he is unaware of anything happening in the Legislature at this time, but apparently there is behind-the-scenes maneuvering by industry representatives. With Nelson's reticence to divulge information and the Seed Trade Association's lobbyist unavailable, the industry appears to be working hard and keeping quiet.

Thus far, there has been no ban on burning, according to Hays. He noted that about 140,000 of a scheduled 200,000-plus acres have been burned. He said many growers are not burning at all, and most are piling up the straw rather than burning it.

With research funds from the state and the state university along with the industry, alternative uses for the smoke-producing material when burnt are being examined. These include animal feed, mulch, paper products and use where, traditionally, wood products have been used.

Hays said there are straws in the wind that the Legislature is considering raising burning fees "tremendously." Currently, he observed, the cost to register for burning is 50 cents per acre, and \$3.50 per acre for the actual burning.

"They're talking about taking that fee way up," he said.

Nelson feels the Legislature will have a law passed in April. "We would have a better idea then," she said. "We killed an environmental bill, but it was nip-and-tuck. Now we are engaged in a strategic battle."

AGC leases Detroit courses

American Golf Corporation has leased and will operate four City of Detroit golf courses.

Over the next few years American Golf will spend \$2.5 million on improvements and new equipment at Chandler Park, Palmer Park, Rackham and Rouge Park golf courses. Weed eradication and new cart acquisition programs are also planned.

"We have \$875,000 set aside for immediate purchase of new mowers, golf cars and pull carts at the four courses," said Rackham General Manager Dana Cimorell. "We're setting up our vendor relationships now."

Renovations are planned to all four clubhouses, particularly at Rackham, a Donald Ross-designed course built in 1925, Cimorell said. Rackham and Rouge are 6,400-yard layouts. Chandler and Palmer are closer to 5,900 yards.

The 10-year lease with a 10-year option is similar to the arrangement American Golf recently signed to operate six New York City courses, Cimorell said. "With the budget constraints they are facing these days, many cities are looking into deals like this," he added.

Ken James, senior vice president of AGC's Mid-America region, will oversee the Detroit courses. James is also responsible for facilities in Texas, Colorado, Illinois, Missouri and Ohio.

American Golf leases or manages 125 courses nationwide.

URI names Skogley successor

Dr. Bridget Ruummele, a post-doctoral researcher at Texas A&M University and a graduate of the University of Minnesota, has been named assistant professor in the URI Department of Plant Science. She will take over the turf grass improvement duties of the retired Dr. Richard Skogley.

Most Re Start Uno

You already know that aeration is a must for healthy greens.

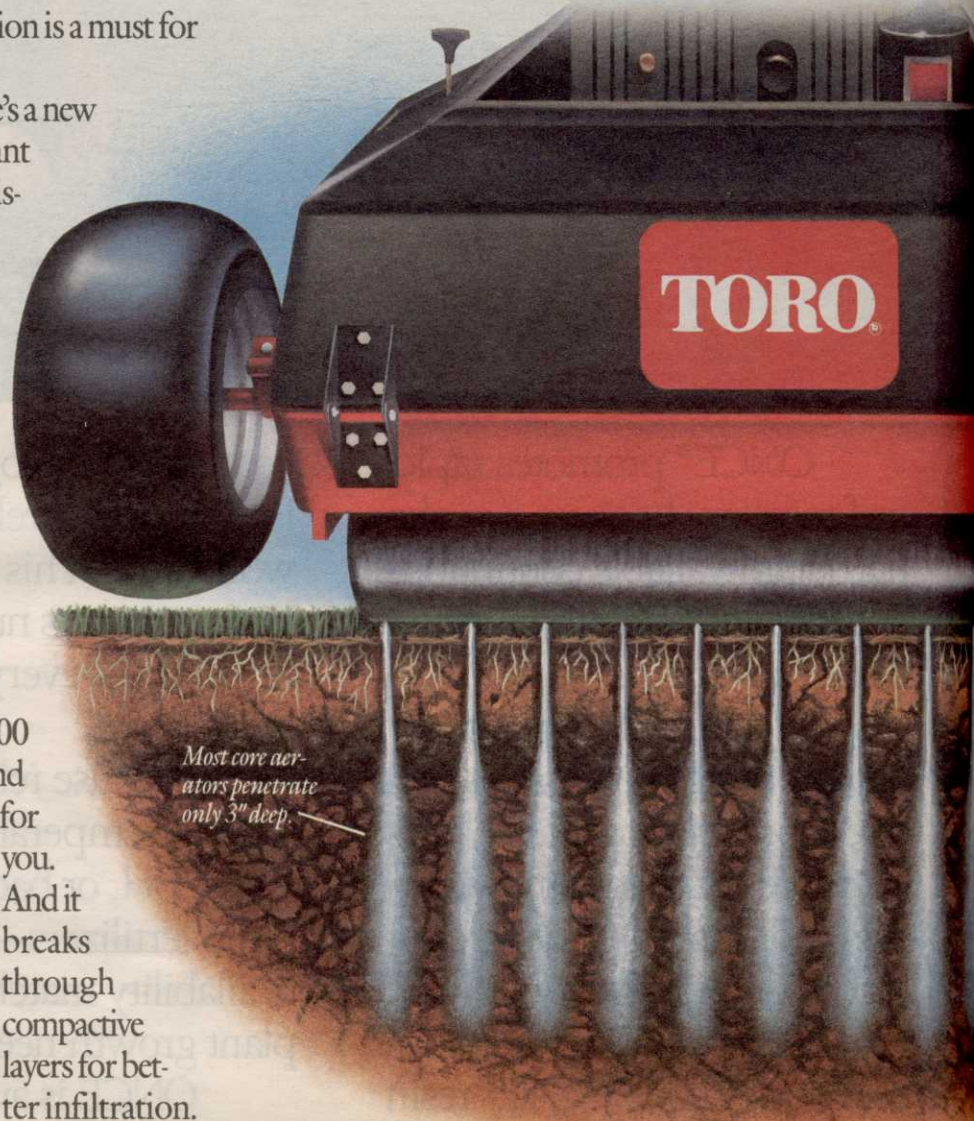
But you may not know there's a new aerator that provides significant agronomic benefits without disturbing the surface. Or even disrupting play.

Meet Toro's revolutionary HydroJect™ 3000. The only aerator that injects water at high velocity to penetrate compacted soils.

Like most revolutions, this one started underground. With a need for deeper penetration than the normal 3" by conventional core aerators. We designed the HydroJect 3000 to penetrate 4" to 6", and beyond 20" if needed. A decided coup for



No disturbed turf. No disrupted play.



Most core aerators penetrate only 3" deep.

you. And it breaks through compactive layers for better infiltration.