

## Watschke calls for involvement

By MARK LESLIE

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia, Canada — Declaring that scientific studies show the cleansing effects of turfgrass on chemical applications, Dr. Thomas Watschke told Canadian superintendents to be



Year Thom Charters during the 44th Canadian Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show here.

Watschke, a Pennsylvania State University professor, quoted findings from runoff and leachate studies which illustrate that even under major flood conditions,

chemicals applied to mature turfgrass don't reach drinking water in amounts even close to public drinking water standard.

Yet, Watschke said the public has many misconceptions; and Charters later added that "politicians react to perceptions."

"It's amazing the calls I get regarding phosphorus getting in water from turfgrass applications," Watschke said. "Never have we detected any phosphorus above the 10 parts per billion drinking water standard."

He said phosphorus simply does not move in the soil.

In fact, Watschke suggested that

a major practical application of the Penn State findings is managing stormwater runoff.

"We have an opportunity to get together with the designers and engineers of the entire [golf development] complex, and the course architects," he said, "and ask how to make the course not only the focal point for recreational and property values but for ecological and environmental stability.

"Can we take the stormwater ... coming off of the parking lot at the clubhouse and down the entrance road — which is a polluter — and get it on the course where there is

*A golf course is 'part of the solution. Be its ambassador.'*



— Dr. Tom Watschke

an opportunity for biological interaction?"

This is a strong case for the golf industry in obtaining development permits, he said, adding: "A golf course is a wetland itself, a grass buffer strip itself, an infiltrating conveyance itself. It's not part of the problem. It's part of the solution. Be its ambassador."

### CHARTERS: TAKE THE CHALLENGE

The superintendent at Weston Golf and Country Club in Toronto and a director of Green Care Horticultural Association, Charters recommended aggressive planning groundskeeping chores ranging from recycling to water use.

"The gloves are off when it comes to environmental impact," he said.

Saying that instead of simply believing their clubs won't spend the necessary money to make environmental changes, Charters said one thing should change superintendents' minds about asking — liability. Directors may be swayed by laws that hold officials of companies liable for wrongful practices of their businesses, he said.

"We have to delegate which employee is responsible for what, document it and cover ourselves... The payback? First and foremost, you cover yourself from lawsuits," Charters said

He suggested superintendents tell their boards "they can't handle a huge cleanup bill," and recommend they spend a smaller amount now to avoid the far greater expense in the future.

Some Charters-isms:

- "It's not the environmental issues that scare us. It's change."
- "There's been a 'woe-is-me attitude' [among superintendents] regarding environmental issues."
- "The same pressures of big business apply to us. Our [club] members are seeing this in their workplaces. We should not expect to be immune."
- "Calling environmentalists 'whackos' or absurdly downplaying pesticide use will not pacify the environmentalists."
- "Don't be flippant. Yes, chemicals are safe. But, yes, there are risks. There are risks with using salt. Toxicity is related to dosage."
- "We have to focus strongly on cultural practices. Many different tools are available. It costs money up front for capital purchase, but it saves money in better, healthier turf down the road."
- "Irrigation technology has advanced in leaps and bounds. We can deliver water a lot more cheaply. My directors OK'd a new irrigation system (by a 72-percent vote) because of the idea water may not be available in the future."

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