

CARLSBAD, Calif. — California's two leading companies in the turf equipment and irrigation business have merged to create a statewide company, Turf Star. California Turf Products and West Star Distribution have united operations to cover the entire state of California and the Baja Peninsula.

California Turf, founded in 1987, focused its operation in the Southern California market, while West

Leading California distributors merge to create Turf Star

Star, founded in 1978, operated in Northern California.

"The merger confirms our commitment to be the leading statewide resource for specialized equipment and irrigation systems for landscape and large turf areas," said Leonard Gregory, president of Turf Star and previous

owner of California Turf.

The company will operate from its five existing service locations: Hayward, Rancho Cordova, Brea, Vista, and Bermuda Dunes.

Turf Star is the distributor for Toro's golf irrigation, commercial equipment, landscape contractor equipment, siteworks systems and

consumer products divisions and is the statewide dealer for Club Car's Carryall utility vehicles. The company also represents Cushman, Kawasaki, Ty-Crop, Express Dual, Foley, and Verti Drain.

"Because we stock products at all locations, our customers will have access to faster turnaround and better logistics," said Gregory. "Our expanded size will also give us the purchasing power we need to deliver value in the marketplace."

Walter Q&A

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problems that we recognized with the Dimension EC formulation is that it is solvent-based, and periodically we would get complaints that applicators did not like the odor of the product. Also, because of the volatility of the formulation, we had to apply more active agent per acre. So we worked to develop a formulation that didn't have solvent odor, didn't stain and that had higher unit activity to reduce volatility.

We came up with two new formulations. Dimension Ultra WSP is coming to market this year and is a wettable formulation of *dithiopyr*. There is no odor and it is easy to handle. The second generation product came from the paint industry. We came up with a micro-encapsulated formulation of *dithiopyr*, which eliminates solvents and gives high activity per acre. We can also program the micro-encapsulated formula to extend the residual activity of the product.

GCN: How will you combine your research background with your new marketing responsibilities?

Walter: We are always looking for needs and problems in the marketplace and finding ways to meet and solve them. We have a distribution approach to end users and I talk to distributors and customers and have round tables to learn what their problems are. With the Dimension Ultra, we ran demonstration programs through distributors and customers to let them use the product and get feedback from them. We do the same thing with academic researchers to get hard and fast data to support use of our products.

GCN: Going forward, what is your marketing strategy?

Walter: With consolidation and a lot of the major companies getting even bigger, a lot of them are taking a strategy of selling directly to customers. We are committed to distribution because we think our distributors add value to our products and service. We have 62 distributors nationwide and more than 1,000 sale people out there to keep in touch with. We meet with distributors on a yearly basis to get feedback and do training.

GCN: Amid all of the consolidation, where does Rohm and Haas fit in?

Walter: We think consolidation will give us an advantage because larger companies will be forced to ignore smaller opportunities in the marketplace. And that is what Rohm and Haas does very well. With our ability to be creative in problem solving, we think we can do very well going after the smaller opportunities and niches within the turf and ornamental marketplace. ■



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