

Necessity is the mother of invention

I first met superintendent John Farley in 1998, when he was working at Fairways and Bluewater Resort and Golf Club on the island of Boracay in the Philippines. Being on an island in a developing country made certain resources scarce (including water), so Farley had to use his creativity to make things work.

He recycled anything that would decompose to make his own compost, carved notches into the wooden tee markers so they would double as cigar holders and made trash cans out of sections of PVC with poured concrete bottoms that were wrapped in seamless wicker. He also showed me a prototype of his hand-held spot herbicide applicator he called "Clappy the Weed Killer."

Farley, who now works at Teal Bend Golf Club in Sacramento, Calif. (see story page 9), was just the first of many innovative superintendents I would meet.

In this month's issue, *Golf Course News* showcases several superintendents who have used their inventive smarts to stay



Andrew Overbeck, editor

ahead of the game. Frank Dobie, superintendent at The Sharon Club in Sharon Center, Ohio, uses the latest in plumbing technology to take a look underground and find blocked drain tiles in his greens. While you can rent a "See Snake" from your local plumber, Dobie plunked down eight large and bought one for his club. He said the unit has saved the club time and money and has improved the quality of its greens – which he added also leads to increased job security (see story page 9).

Job security was one of the things on superintendent Paul White's mind when he took over the superintendent's position at Olde Mill Golf Club in Portage, Michigan.

After looking at the fungicide budget and noticing no improvement in the quality of the greens, he decided that he needed to discover something that would help strengthen his turfgrass. "The place was going downhill," White

recalled (see story page 9).

White decided to see what biostimulants could do to im-

prove turf quality. He set up 45 different 1,000-square-foot test plots in a fairway to test various products. While the tests are still ongoing, he now uses an enzyme-based product called Vital Reactions on all of his greens and has experienced better turf conditions while also using fewer chemicals.



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Former superintendent David Mihailides has taken his devotion to his invention one step

tries as a sale representative (see story page 24).

Having invested a lot of time and much of his life savings in the development of the product, Mihailides eventually realized he had no choice but to make the innovative product sell. "I am enjoying the success of my invention," he said. "It is exciting."

Who knows, "Clappy the Weed Killer" may have a future yet.

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POINT

Audubon program is losing its appeal

By KEVIN J. ROSS, CGCS

No one can debate that Audubon International's establishment of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) for golf courses in 1991 was a great idea. However, the program hasn't exploded like some thought it would. Over the past few years, the program has started to lose the appeal it once enjoyed.

With approximately 17,000 golf courses in the United States, a mere 13 percent (about 2,000) have joined the program to some degree. These are certainly not very big numbers for a 12-year period. As far as ACSP certified golf courses, slightly less than two percent (about 300) of the total golf courses in the United States have reached that status. Yet Audubon International has a goal of signing up 50 percent of the courses in the U.S. within the next five years. I certainly wish them luck, but how do they expect to add another 6,500 courses over the next five years?

Why is the ACSP for golf courses losing its appeal? In today's depressed economy the \$150 annual membership fee is a lot of money for some clubs – especially if they have no intention of working toward ACSP certification. Maybe if the membership fee drops to \$25 per year, they might have success in obtaining more members.

Then what about becoming certified? Most clubs cannot justify the man-hours spent on the work needed to become certified. The main focus of a golf course operation is the condition of the course. Few superintendents can say, "Everything is perfect on my course, so let's work on ACSP certification."



Kevin J. Ross, CGCS

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COUNTERPOINT

Audubon program makes good business sense

By KEVIN A. FLETCHER

The golf industry is going through an environmental adolescence of sorts. Like many industries, golf has accomplished much when it comes to protecting the environment, but many opportunities for improvement remain. While a growing number of superintendents are embracing their role as environmental stewards, the percentage of those making this commitment remains small. More than 2,000 golf courses have committed to environmental leadership through either the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) or the Signature Program. Yet, this represents only 13 percent of all the courses in the United States.

Part of the problem may stem from a misperception that the ACSP takes too much money, time or labor. This is simply not true. In fact, it can save you all three.

The ACSP has a \$150 per year membership fee – which, as one superintendent stated, is easily covered by recycling bottles and cans on your course. Likewise, while some members elect to invest money in ACSP projects, the return on this initial investment can be significant.

For instance, Village Links of Glen Ellyn in Illinois watched an initial investment of \$5,000 toward ACSP projects yield \$30,000 in savings. For most members, however, it takes very little money to accomplish the goals of the program and earn certification, yet the return on investment remains. Finally, the program is designed to dovetail seamlessly with many of the day-to-day activities of golf



Kevin A. Fletcher

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