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FACE REGULATION PROACTIVELY

I'm still surprised by how many new codes, standards, procedures and requirements are being imposed on golf by everyone from regulatory bodies to community organizations.

Water, power and trade are the most obvious parts of an irrigation system being analyzed by people who want to regulate our industry. At one level, the scrutiny highlights just how much science and precision is involved when designing and managing a large-scale irrigation system efficiently. But on another level, the mountain of research and paperwork related to that scrutiny can be suffocating. And this falls on a golf industry that doesn't need the challenge of additional operating costs imposed to meet new laws, restrictions or even taxes from regulatory bodies.

I learned early in my life it's better to be the delivering hammer than the receiving nail. Therefore, I broached this topic with two golf course superintendents who've learned to hammer out the challenges the industry faces instead of waiting for the hammer to fall. I wanted to know how they found a way to cope with legislative bodies, and others, for a successful outcome.

Various environmental and community groups have embraced the idea that our industry isn't an efficient user of our resources. There are instances where that's true, but unfortunately, these groups fear what they don't understand. Water use doesn't automatically equal water waste. Green space, habitat and recreation are important to cities and communities. Carbon scrubbing by turf and other plant material is real and beneficial. Unfortunately, in many cases, environmental groups have been successful dictating how we use our resources, which is problematic and can be costly to any golf operation, especially when it comes to water.

So, how do we build a level of communication that will help educate the public?

"You have to take a proactive approach,

and don't go it alone," says Ted Horton, CGCS, with the Foundation of the California Alliance for Golf. "Consider creating alliances with other organizations that have similar goals to help your organization build strength with numbers."

Ted always has been in front of aggressive restrictions with water and other resources. Recently, he's had to face the proposition of additional taxes on golf clubs in California. We can benefit from Ted's years of experience dealing with these threats to our livelihood. He developed a

sader who took the bull by the horns and created the Georgia Allied Golf Counsel to develop databases and best management practices to be used as tools to negotiate agreements with state officials.

Remember the Georgia drought of 2007? Anthony's hard work helped golf courses throughout the state go from watering greens only to retrieving water rights for the entire club. Anthony asserts he was successful because clubs throughout the region participated in a state best-management-practices memorandum, which required 75 percent of golf courses to have best management practices in place by May 2007.

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game plan and hired lobbyists to implement the following goals:

- Influence political action;
- Develop a water position by using proactive best management practices;
- Update the industry economic analysis that proves golf is a valuable business;
- Improve proactive environmental stewardship; and
- Enhance public relations for the game of golf.

These are a few of the goals the Foundation of the California Alliance for Golf put forward to educate the public about the facts of golf and refute rumors. Through targeted communication, the public is learning golf has economic, communal and environmental benefits. It provides jobs and generates health and fitness programs for all ages. Golf needs to be presented as an asset to the community, not singled out as the bad guy.

Anthony Williams, CGCS, at Stone Mountain (Ga.) Golf Club, is another cru-

"We even surpassed our goal," he says. "Clubs are at 97-percent participation."

With Anthony's best-management-practices database organized and in place, state officials had factual information about golf course water-use practices at their fingertips. State officials felt comfortable with the prescribed best management practices and no longer feared irrigation because they were presented data in a logical format.

These are telling tales. When our industry becomes proactive, we can get the message out and realize positive results. Perhaps our first step should be to organize our practices and gather data individually. Preparing yourself with information and a game plan will enable you to make a positive impact, not for only your livelihood, but the livelihoods of others who depend on our industry.

For more information, visit the following Web sites: cagolf.org, ggcsa.com and eifg.org. **GC**