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## WHERE'S MY WATER?

Irrigation systems are said to be the heartbeat of the golf course. In reality, it's the water in them that's so important, and in some areas of the country we have been expecting future limitations on that water.

In Texas, the future may be now. The Ft. Worth Division of the Army Corps of Engineers is the first regional Corps office to implement a national directive to eliminate submersible pumps in "Waters of the U.S." Most lakes, streams and even intermittent streams fall under the definition of "Waters of the U.S." and thus, control of the Corps.

In June, the Ft. Worth Division sent letters to permitted water users stating that "utilization of submersible pumps in marine environments where swimmers and waders could be present is a safety hazard and therefore these types of pumps must be removed immediately," adding that, "Our overall goal is to reduce the potential for accidents at our area lakes." Pumps can remain if they are be rated at 220 volts or less, Underwriters Laboratory (UL) certified for boaters and swimmers, installed and wired in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations and the National Electrical Code for wet locations. They also noted that water intake lines can remain.

The new regulation prompted questions and concerns. Negative reaction stems more from the ruling's timing and the "immediate" pump removal requirement than its intent. The immediate enforcement forced many golf courses, municipal water supplies, homeowners and others to re-evaluate their pump systems to avoid losing their existing water sources. The problem lay in the need

to work quickly in the heat of Texas summer and the lack of flexibility in what solutions were initially considered acceptable.

Some who are generally critical of the Federal government (Texas has its share) wondered why the Corps picked an economically distressed time to implement a policy that is a reaction to the 1993 drowning of an Oklahoma man which may have resulted from contacting an underwater pump while swimming. Others wonder if the safety issue is really a guise, with the real intent of more Federal control of water re-

ently none is UL certified or meets the stringent Corps safety goals. It is possible – but not economically feasible – for individual users to pay for the UL studies to gain certification. One golf course prepared five water withdrawal options. The only one meeting the strict criteria will cost over \$400,000, which could put them out of business.

Initially, representatives of the Corps seemed untroubled by closed or dead golf courses. Having worked with the Ft. Worth Division of the ACOE in obtaining construction permits, I know they are reasonable

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sources, and if the cost-benefit ratio of this regulation has been carefully considered.

While the number of golf courses (and municipalities, businesses and homeowners) taking water directly from regulated water bodies may be relatively small, many courses will be affected by this ruling as other divisions of the Army Corps begin enforcing it. Depending on elevation changes and other aspects of the existing pumps, some users will find alternative ways to pump water easily, others will not.

The problem is, while safer underwater pumps do exist, appar-

people, and they did schedule a town meeting with affected users to hear their concerns. The result of that meeting was to allow more time to study options that are more acceptable to water users legally permitted to draw water out of lakes.

However, these regulations will eventually be enforced in some form across the country, to better ensure the safety of boaters and swimmers. If you access water from a Corps of Engineers body of water then you more than likely will be affected by this policy. If you are in that situation, it might pay to begin studying your alternatives now. **GCI**