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WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM CANADA

No matter what happens on a golf course, no matter how many precautions we take, much of the public perceives golf courses as places of danger, spreading pesticides and other chemicals into our food and water and unfairly using water for a sport that only benefits an elite few.

This is not a problem unique to the U.S., which is why I spoke with Teri Yamada, executive director of Integrated Pest Management of Canada, a group teaching turf grass, landscape and vegetation managers how to properly use and apply pesticides.

Based on her experience in Canada, Teri has great ideas about dealing with public misconceptions. Everyone needs to be on the lookout for the following actions that can severely affect our ability to do our jobs:

- Whether local, regional or statewide, cosmetic pesticide bans include pesticide management codes, which then can limit lawn pesticides, concentrates, weed and feed and non-essential pesticide prohibitions.

- Legislation begins at a local level then moves up the ladder. If local groups propose bans on pesticides, then explain the importance of pesticides throughout our communities – not just to golf.

- These usually result in the removal of products from store shelves or stringent requirements for application with lowered dosages for less environmental impact.

- Water is the next gold, so be alert for efforts to limit course irrigation, as well as lawns and private property.

Golf superintendents must become the leaders at the grass-roots level in educating politicians and voters. If we're unable to explain who we are and what we do, then these issues will be debated and decided at state capi-

tals and in Washington D.C. If it gets to that point, we will lose all control and should expect increased government oversight and bans. When dealing at local and state levels, keep in mind:

“Environmental groups deal in emotions, not facts, starting with the notion that they are trying to save the planet. We must convince people that we are trying to do the same.”

- It's about the bottom line. Laws are made and changed when someone's livelihood is affected.

- Environmental groups deal in emotions, not facts, starting with the notion they're saving the planet. Convince people you're doing the same.

- More citizens are in activist roles than ever before, especially women and young people, two groups who, while golf friendly, have not been good advocates.

- Superintendents must change the perception of how agronomics are managed. Stay on top of your community's environmental issues, from land preservation and water use in parks and ball fields to fertilizer runoff into local streams.

WATER. There is no more controversial subject and in the public's emotional way of thinking, golf is a big offender. Expect local groups to ask for closer monitoring of your water use. As with other environmental issues, get involved at the local level because this is where decisions will affect your ability to do your job.

- Document exactly how much water is used and when.
- Provide an accurate irrigation

audit prepared by accredited irrigation auditors. They should detail system improvements, upgrades and modification and reinforce the fact that water is not wasted. Note how water use changes during wide

climatic swings, not only on golf courses but everywhere.

PESTICIDES. The issues are similar, but not identical, to water. Whereas everyone expects ready access to clean water, they want to be free of pesticides; something we must teach is impractical and potentially harmful. The following should help:

- Learn to read public opinion and know what the local population believes about the environment. Watch for trends.

- Marshall the forces within the industry to make your case. There are plenty of resources available.

- Change golfer expectations. This will be difficult and take time.

- Produce conditions that are reasonable and safe. If you're not preparing a tournament course then don't make it look like one.

- Communicate with those who disagree and offer to educate them that standard golf practices are environmentally safe and produce a helpful, green resource.

- Bring accredited environmental decision makers to meetings, but be sure they speak plainly and can handle negative reactions. **GCI**