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## IT'S ALL ABOUT WATER

Every one in the golf industry is talking about water – superintendents, managers, builders, designers and even architects. Go to a golf conference and there is usually a talk or a panel on water. But golf is not alone, everyone is talking about water.

This tells us that water is important, and there is money to be made in water. What is also tells us is that large water users, like golf courses, will come under increasing scrutiny in the future.

In the general public the discussion is for the most part taken in the context of potable (drinking) water and since a small percentage of golf courses use municipal water, many superintendents don't give it much thought. But water is water and new standards and codes are defining potable water in a much broader context than in the past.

Potable water these days refers to drinking water (municipal), groundwater (wells) and surface water (ponds, lakes, streams and rivers). So unless your course is using effluent water, then water needs to be gaining a lot of your attention.

Here is but one example. The American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) have developed a standard – ASHRAE 189.1: Standard for the Design of High-Performance Green Buildings. Section 6.4.1 of the standard states:

*“For golf courses and driving ranges, only municipally reclaimed water and/or alternate on-site sources of water shall be used to irrigate the landscape.”*

It's a bit scary that a commercial building standard is dictating golf course water use.

New entities have entered the water

discussion, and in some cases they are framing revised and new regulations regarding water resources, water use, allotment and quality. Without a doubt, his will affect your ability to irrigate in the future.

Many of these new codes in the landscape sector dictate the irrigation system performance; requiring minimum DU's, assigning crop coefficients and limiting precipitation rates.

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So what can a superintendent do about it? Most, golf course superintendents are good stewards of water, but few do a good job of promoting it. That will need to change in the future.

So where do you start?

As I have stated before, know how much water you use. If you are not measuring your water use, start. Actual use versus estimated use is easier to defend.

Your central control database is not a good indicator. The flow meter on your pump system is.

If you have a variety of sources of water; wells, lakes, ponds, rivers or streams, meter those, too.

If you don't know how much water you use, then how do you manage it let alone prove you need it.

Also know your water quality – what's good about it and what isn't. If your water sources flows through your golf course, then test the water quality at the in point and the out point.

Many golf courses improve, not degrade, the quality of the water flowing through them, does your?

Have a written and detailed water conversation plan in place, much like your integrated pest management (IPM) plan. This plan should indicate what you have done to save water and the steps you will take when there is a drought.

As the saying goes, “knowledge is power,” so know everything about your water source. And at the very minimum, educate yourself about your water quantity and quality.

Remember, the science and numbers provide true, factual information about what's happen at your facility. Estimating and guess work are hard to back up and convince people of their validity.

Keep in mind that the opposition's “numbers” are most likely guesses and estimates, too. However, they will carry the same weight – if not more – than yours depending on who is presenting them.

Familiarize yourself with the water issues in your market and your region as all water issues are local. Get involved in the local discussion and be prepared to prove what a good steward of water you and your facility are.

Remember, GCSAA has materials and resources that can help you with dealing with the local media on water issues.

Water window is important to comprehend when operating an irrigation system. This is something I've addressed in past columns. Knowing your water window helps you understand the relationship between your irrigation system and pump station, which makes you a more efficient irrigator. **GCI**