



## ROLL CALL

**Dean Piller**, Cordova Bay Golf Course, Victoria, B.C., was named the winner of the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association 2010 Superintendent of the Year Award.

**Bob Reynolds**, CGCS, Newport Country Club, is retiring after 33 years at the facility.

**Mark Esoda**, the certified golf course superintendent at Atlanta Country Club in Marietta, was inducted into the Georgia Golf Hall of Fame.

Billy Casper Golf promoted **Nick Keefe** to vice president of information technology, **Anthony Scala** to vice president and controller, **Sandra Colareta** to director of contracts and risk management and **Joel Gohmann** to vice president of operations.

STIHL president **Fred J. Whyte** was elected chairman of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute board for 2011.

Enquatics, parent company of Aquamaster Fountains and Aerators, named **Dave E. Wasmer**, general manager of AquaMaster, as its new president. In addition, the company named **Gene P. Woelfel** chief financial officer/treasurer.

Stens added appointed **Dan Heeren**, vice president of sales and marketing; **Kevin Mair**, vice president of operations and supply chain management; and **Paul Hedinger**, senior product manager.

Dow AgroSciences has named **Jason Nelson** to the position of portfolio marketing leader for the Turf & Ornamental business division, and **Lee Conway** was named district sales manager responsible for overseeing the Eastern Turf & Ornamental sales district.

International Club Suppliers (ICS) named **Jill Wilde** its director of operations.

## Former GCSAA President Ted Woehrle dies

Woehrle was a longtime golf course superintendent at Oakland Hills Country Club and a member of the Michigan Golf Hall of Fame.

**Ted Woehrle**, a longtime golf course superintendent at Oakland Hills Country Club and a member of the Michigan Golf Hall of Fame, died last month morning of complications from lymphoma. He was 78.

At Oakland Hills, Woehrle prepared the South course for five major championships over 24 years. He served as GCSAA president in 1977.

He is survived by his wife, Mary, sons Ted Jr., Bruce and Chris, daughter, Mary Smith, and seven grandchildren.

## Professional Turf Products loses co-founder

**Jim Sanders**, co-founder of Professional Turf Products, passed away Sept. 7.

"He stood by me when my young company and I needed his help and support the most," said Joe Barney, founder, Professional Turf Products. "Together... we built this business with dedicated hard work, by promoting effective products at fair prices to the professionals of the green industry. I thank God for bringing this true gentleman into my life. As most of you know, Jim was a Christian man with wonderful human values and honesty."

## “QUOTABLES

“Ray Charles could have seen it was a bunker.”

— Pete Dye, to a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reporter, about Dustin Johnson's controversial two-stroke penalty at the PGA Championship.

# CONSUMER RESEARCH

A glimpse of how golfers' behavior affects the business of golf facility maintenance and management.

## Golf Travel Insights 2010

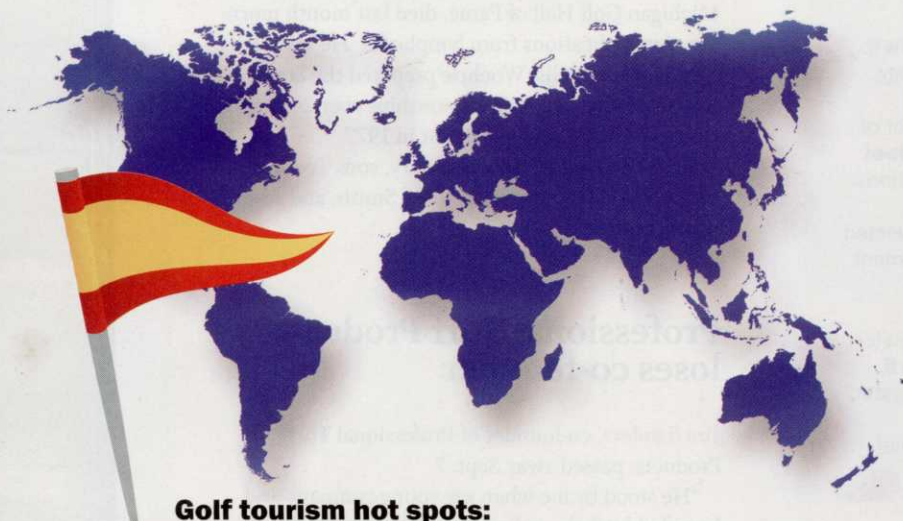
Whether as a primary motivation for a vacation or simply as a secondary activity, golf attracts millions of travelers worldwide.

However, while the recent economy is primarily to blame, 38% of golf tour operators surveyed by KPMG have experienced a fall in demand (up from 10% in the summer of 2008). While 8% reported demand to be stable, 54% still noticed an increase

in the number of golf tourists (albeit down from 73% in 2008).

Golf tourists are generally big spenders who are looking for quality services, but they expect great value for their money. Therefore, it is important to understand their needs and behaviors.

Here are some additional findings from KPMG's Golf Travel Insights 2010 study.



### Golf tourism hot spots:



Based on a scale of 1 (modest demand) to 5 (strong demand)

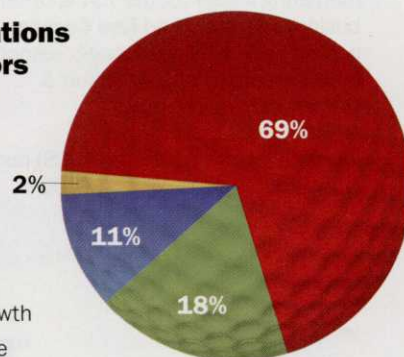
### Key factors when choosing a golf destination:



Based on a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (very important)

### Future expectations of tour operators regarding golf tourism growth:

- Steady Growth
- Stagnation
- Spectacular Growth
- Gradual Increase



Source: NGCOA, contact Mike Tinkey, mtinkey@ngcoa.org, with any questions.



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**Tim Moraghan**, Principal, ASPIRE Golf [tmoraghan@aspire-golf.com]. Follow Tim's blog, Golf Course Confidential at <http://www.aspire-golf.com/buzz.html> or on Twitter @TimMoraghan

## BALANCING THE GAME WITH THE BUSINESS

With six of seven golf courses reported to have lost money in 2009 and the NGF predicting that 500 to 1,000 courses will close in the next five years, this statistic caused me to pause and contemplate our industry.

I found myself centered around two questions: Where is the game going and how will we remain a viable industry?

J. J. Keegan is managing principal of Golf Convergence, a firm that specializes in the business of golf. Jim has ground-breaking methods, based on hard data and extensive field experience, and he recently published a book, "The Business of Golf – What Are You Thinking?" ([www.golfconvergence.com](http://www.golfconvergence.com)).

### IS THERE A FORMULA FOR SUCCESS AT A COURSE IN TODAY'S ENVIRONMENT?

There are eight key concepts that accurately predict the success of a golf course: The age, income, ethnicity and population density within 10 miles of the course; the number of playable days measured against the efficiency of management; the integration of software to create actionable information; financial benchmarking facility performance against peers; continual "appropriate" investment in the course infrastructure, equipment and labor; ensuring the "assembly line" of customer touch points matches the desired experience; understanding the golfers' habits and preferences; and evaluating and developing customer loyalty.

### IS THERE A COMMON THREAD YOU FOUND THAT IS THE SEED FOR FAILURE?

Golf courses often fail to crisply define their strategic vision. Are they trying to create a platinum, gold, silver,

bronze, or steel level experience for their customers? Many courses try to be all things to all customers – a sure formula for failure.

Golf courses are in the entertainment business, and golfers are value-driven. With green fees ranging from \$10 to over \$500,

### IN WHAT OTHER WAYS CAN THE SUPERINTENDENT INCREASE THE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AT A GOLF COURSE?

Most golfers don't fully comprehend that a golf course is a living organism that is constantly growing. They rarely understand the challenges superintendents face in creating a superior

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**"The key is that the experience must equal the capital investment made and the revenue generated."** –J.J. Keegan

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a golfer's expectations are set by the fees charged. To the extent the golfer's experience equals or exceeds the price, customer loyalty is created. To the extent that the experience is less than the price, customer attrition results. The key is that the experience must equal the capital investment made and the revenue generated.

### WHAT COMPRISES A GOLFER'S EXPERIENCE?

Creating a customer experience is similar to an "assembly line." From making the reservation to arriving at the course, to playing 18 holes, to the beverage at the end of the round, there are up to 13 opportunities to create a memorable experience for the golfer.

The most important opportunity is course conditions; hence, the incredible value role of a superintendent. In every customer survey we have undertaken in Europe, across America, to Asia, course conditions and price always rank as to the most important criteria in determining where a golfer plays.

playing surface. It is also unfortunate that the golf staff, management and owners often take for granted the superintendent's key role.

The superintendent is and should be a key member of the management team, one who participates in creating the annual budget, ensuring sufficient capital reserves are established, and clearly communicates the funds required for equipment and labor to fulfill the course's vision as to the entertainment experience desired.

### WHAT IS THE SOLUTION TO REVERSE A COURSE'S FINANCIAL WOES?

The Golf Convergence WIN formula taught in the book is an easy-to-follow method that has consistently increased the financial return of golf courses while enhancing the customer experience to the desired level. This book sheds light on virtually every aspect of golf course operations – strategic, tactical and operational. My goal was simple – to encourage each course to use best practices to adroitly balance the business of golf with the game of golf. GCI



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# SURVIVING THE SUMMER FROM HELL



## THE MOST **BRUTAL** CONDITIONS IN DECADES TESTED SUPERINTENDENTS – AND THEY PASSED WITH FLYING COLORS. HERE ARE SOME IDEAS ABOUT HOW THEY DID IT. By Frank Andorka

**F**or superintendents around the country, Summer 2010 will go down as the summer where they couldn't make a single mistake. A wet spring gave way to heat and humidity unseen in some parts of the country for nearly 40 years.

Summer tested most superintendents no matter where they were, but this was also a summer where superintendents proved their worth to golfers. Only through careful management were superintendents able to avoid losing turf on a grand scale.

"We had two sets of superintendents this summer," says Ty McClellan, agronomist for the USGA Green Section's Mid-Continent Region. "Everyone lost some grass at some point this summer, but there were those who didn't lose it on a grand scale and those who did. There are certainly other underlying factors at play that predispose some golf courses to damage every year, but one of the main differences between superintendents was the management practices they used – or didn't use. Knowing when to back off certain practices was key."

**ESTABLISH HEALTHY CONDITIONS.** McClellan says successful superintendents created healthy growing conditions for the turf long before this summer. In addition to greens being properly designed and constructed with excellent drainage, he ticks off a list of three practices he considers crucial to achieving the goal:

- Good thatch management;
- Ensuring proper sunlight exposure throughout the day; and
- Providing sufficient airflow.

Eric Bickel, superintendent of Hallbrook Golf Course in Leawood, Kan., who labels 2010 as the most difficult summer he's seen in his 15 years at the course, lost turf in high traffic areas, but nothing catastrophic. He attributes his success in managing the turf to the decisions made by his membership and the dedication of his crew. "Thanks to understanding members, we've been able to do pretty intensive aerification on the greens," he says. "We had 33 inches of rain from April to July – the most since 1893 – and then we had the heat. You weren't going to be able to grow turf unless you got significant air into the root zones."

Bickel changed his normal maintenance practices from wetting agents to soil penetrants to battle hydrophobic soils. The course also invested heavily in fans to get the water off the greens more efficiently. "We were afraid that wetting agents would have kept the surface too wet, and the penetrants ended up working well," he says.

Mother Nature had set up Kansas golf courses for failure this year by giving them two incredibly mild years in 2008 and 2009, which encouraged *Poa annua* and *Poa trivialis* growth in the roughs. When the heat came back with a vengeance this year, the *Poas* couldn't handle it.

The hollow, rotted trunk of a tree as seen after limb removal.

Like Bickel, Matt Shaffer, superintendent at Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pa., works at a facility where golfers understand better what it takes to grow turf in tough conditions. But even he says superintendents are always at the mercy of the weather, and that clubs have to understand what they can do to help.



Bickel

“Give your superintendent good drainage for his greens, and regrass the greens before methyl bromide is taken away by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA),” he says. “Even if you give them perfect support, there’s a chance things will go badly. So much of this job is the luck of the draw.”

“We’re a big club with lots of resources, but for some smaller clubs where it’s just the superintendent and his assistant, these were killer conditions,” he says. “Hand-watering under these conditions is a must.”

**PHYSICAL MANAGEMENT.** Chris Thuer, CGCS, of Bear Slide Golf Course in Cicero, Ind., was more than prepared for the summer because of changes he’d been making over the past several years. “We came through the summer really well,” he says. “We’d backed down our mowing a couple of years ago on areas other than greens, so we could mow normally this year.”

He watered more often than others because Bear Slide pulls its water from a well, which means the water is cooler than the ambient air. Using well water helped keep the turf at ideal temperatures for growth. Thuer also maintained his fungicide applications every two weeks, which worked perfectly under the exceedingly rainy conditions this year.

Solid-tine aeration played an important role in helping Dan Dinelli, CGCS of North Shore Country Club in Glenview, Ill., nurse his turf through the 18th hottest and wettest summer the Chicago area had ever had. The conditions compromised root growth and

*(continued on page 20)*

## ON THE LEFT COAST

Pat Gross, director of the USGA’s Southwest Region, says superintendents in California, the primary area for which he is responsible, had it easier than superintendents in the rest of the country because cooler temperatures made it a good season for growing turf.



Gross

But the summer wasn’t devoid of challenges. Water restrictions plagued California superintendents, although if Los Angeles-area courses that were customers of the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power made voluntary 20 percent cuts in water use, then the state let those golf courses water when they needed. With the new irrigation systems and good management, those cuts weren’t difficult to achieve, Gross says.

In contrast with the rest of the country, California didn’t get the expected heat in May and June, which affected courses that overseeded fairways and rough. The lack of heat delayed the transition to Bermudagrass, Gross says.

Lastly, the bad economic conditions also forced superintendents to look more at using generic products with an eye on the bottom-line, Gross says. But given the challenges that faced superintendents in other parts of the country, California superintendents have little to decry.

“We didn’t get any 9-1-1 calls this summer, and the phone didn’t ring off the hook,” Gross says. “By and large, we had a pretty quiet year.”

## FIRST-YEAR FRETTING

The heat and humidity experienced across the country stressed out superintendents as they tried to keep their turf alive under unfavorable conditions. You probably had that experience yourself. Bet it kept you up at night.

Now imagine you’re a first-year superintendent at one of the most prestigious golf courses in your area. Not only are you a first-year superintendent, but you’re a first-year superintendent who is replacing a literal living legend who had tended your turf for more than 40 years. Think you might worry a bit more than most?

“It was a brutal summer – there were a lot of sleepless nights,” says Edward Smith, superintendent of Canterbury Golf Club in Shaker Heights, Ohio. “I woke up every morning – and I mean seven days a week – wondering what new challenge the day would bring.”

Smith took over Canterbury, one of the Cleveland area’s most storied courses, from turf legend superintendent Terry Bonar last year. He can laugh about it now, sitting in his modest office on the course grounds. But when the spring started off wet and then the brutal heat and humidity of this year’s Cleveland summer set in, Smith had his days where he wondered what else could possibly go wrong.

“If you can think of a challenge – disease, insect or just plain turf stress – I’m pretty sure I dealt with it this summer,” Smith says. “We had to spray for pythium five times in July and four times in August, which is highly unusual. We had to hand-water like crazy to keep the turf from burning up, but not too much. We had to manage this turf more this year than I’ve ever had to do before in my 20 years here.”

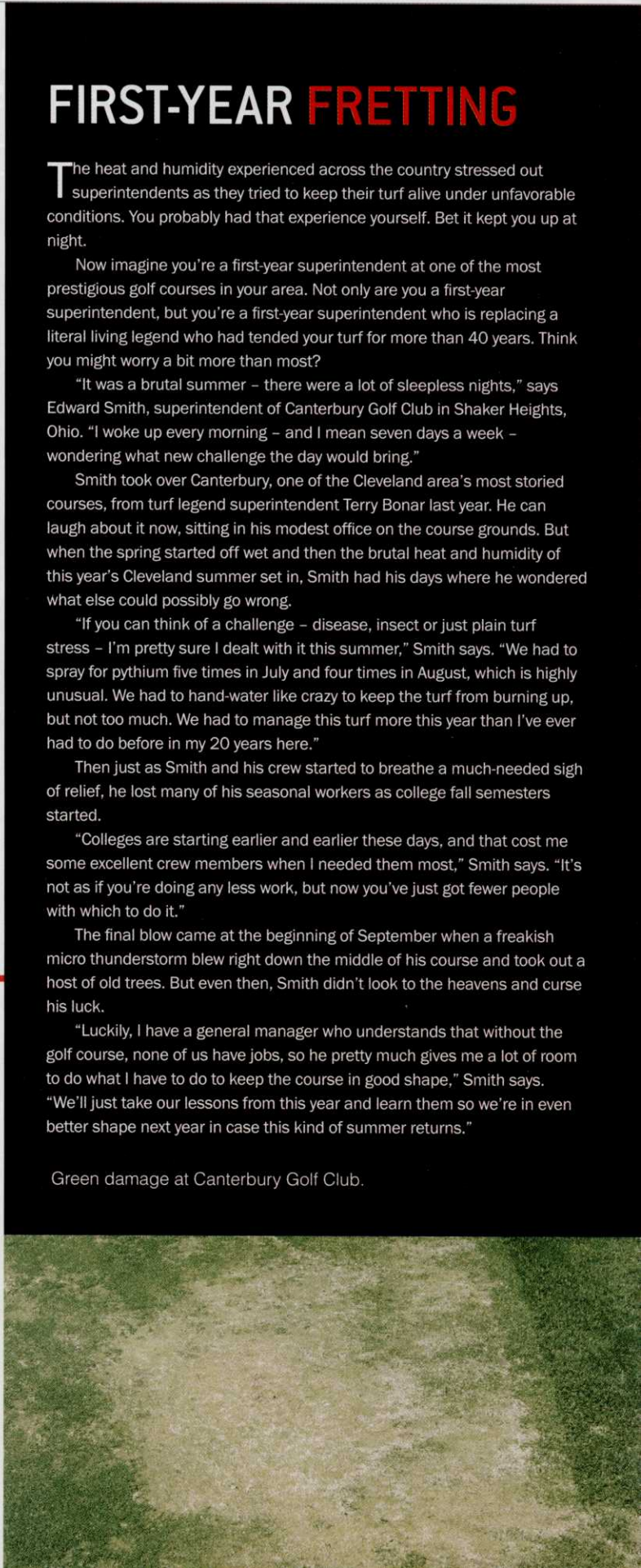
Then just as Smith and his crew started to breathe a much-needed sigh of relief, he lost many of his seasonal workers as college fall semesters started.

“Colleges are starting earlier and earlier these days, and that cost me some excellent crew members when I needed them most,” Smith says. “It’s not as if you’re doing any less work, but now you’ve just got fewer people with which to do it.”

The final blow came at the beginning of September when a freakish micro thunderstorm blew right down the middle of his course and took out a host of old trees. But even then, Smith didn’t look to the heavens and curse his luck.

“Luckily, I have a general manager who understands that without the golf course, none of us have jobs, so he pretty much gives me a lot of room to do what I have to do to keep the course in good shape,” Smith says. “We’ll just take our lessons from this year and learn them so we’re in even better shape next year in case this kind of summer returns.”

Green damage at Canterbury Golf Club.







## COOPERATIVE COMMUNICATION

When the heat is on from the weather, the best superintendents must communicate effectively with their golfers.

Eric Bickel, superintendent of Hallbrook Golf Course in Leawood, Kan., put together a special presentation for the green committee and went into detail about how the weather conditions were having an impact on the way he managed the turf – and how that would affect conditions.

“I had to communicate more intensely with the golfers than I ever have before,” Bickel says. “You have to look at it from the golfers’ perspective – they’re paying to play golf with certain conditions. You have to explain to him what that may be nearly impossible. They are usually understanding if you take the time to explain it.”

Dan Dinelli, CGCS of North Shore Country Club in Northbrook, Ill., took his golfer communication to a new level of sophistication this year. In the past, he had done text-based email communications, but he found golfers didn’t pay them much attention. Last year, he decided to take pictures and email them with captions explaining what he was showing. This elicited positive feedback.

This year, Dinelli bought himself a flip video camera and sent hotlinks to people of video showing exactly what his team was doing and explaining why.

“That was incredibly successful,” Dinelli says. “There’s nothing like face-to-face communications, but using video is an incredibly effective tool. I highly recommend it.”



TOP: Spring rains made many courses look like duck ponds – literally. ABOVE: Dan Dinelli, CGCS of North Shore Country Club in Northbrook, Ill. had his crew use pumps and fans to help dry the surfaces. Anything to help get the water off the turf as quickly as possible because NSCC is very flat with poorly drained clay soils.

favored high disease pressure.

Dinelli solid-tined his greens three times per month and twice on fairways to encourage healthy gas exchanges within the soil. "No one got much time off this summer," he says. "Fortunately, I have a seasoned team that looks on being challenged as energizing."

**PEOPLE POWER.** For many, it became a bal-

ancing act to keep his crew from getting overworked. Dinelli recommends superintendents hire complementary personalities – and lead by example. "It's taxing, and it's a round-the-clock job," Dinelli says. "Every morning we were addressing situations, and no one could allow his guard down. I'm fortunate to work with some amazing people, including my cousin Jerry who basically grew

up here with me."

Thuer's people started at 5:30 a.m. and voluntarily didn't take lunch so they could leave the course before the heat of the day really hit. He also encouraged his team to take more frequent water breaks, and to get to the shade so they didn't succumb to the heat.

No matter how you survived the summer, every superintendent should gather their team together and do a final audit of the year. "It's the perfect opportunity to review what worked and what didn't," McClellan says. "Deficiencies are revealed in summers like 2010, so earmark areas for improvement. If you take time to do this step, you will be able to improve long-term maintenance plans for the course – and be better prepared no matter what the seasons throw at you." **GCI**

*Frank Andorka is a freelance writer based out of South Euclid, Ohio.*

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## USGA LAUNCHES A FULL-SCALE RESCUE

**T**y McClellan, agronomist in the USGA Green Section's Mid-Continent Region, says this summer's conditions challenged superintendents from across most regions of the country.



McClellan

It was so bad, in fact, that many of the Green Section's agronomists collaborated on a series of email alert pieces for superintendents to use with golfers to educate them on what this summer's heat and humidity meant for the art of golf course maintenance.

"It's not often that we all collaborate with similar issues facing our respective regions at the same time," McClellan wrote in an email. "In the case of Summer 2010, however, many regions and most of our weekly updates have been dedicated to summer survival strategies."

The USGA used all of the latest technologies in their arsenal to communicate with superintendents and golfers – podcasts from agronomists in each region, a timely note from Jim Snow, National Director of the USGA Green Section, and photo and video collections to show superintendents the different kinds of damage their colleagues were experiencing around the country.

For a full list of USGA Green Section Record articles, regional updates and webcasts to see the innovative collaboration of the country's top agronomists, go to [turfweb.lib.msu.edu/starweb/USGAS/servlet.starweb](http://turfweb.lib.msu.edu/starweb/USGAS/servlet.starweb).