

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's ancient Mariner bemoaned his lack of drinkable water, despite the fact that his ship was surrounded by the sea. Many superintendents will find themselves in the same position if they don't take stock of how much water they use and find alternative sources.

As always happens when a crisis approaches, the government is about to get involved. The momentum in favor of Total Maximum Daily Load legislation builds daily at the EPA, and local water management districts frantically search for new sources of water. Meanwhile, those of us on the front lines search for solutions when it comes to water availability and the quality of that water.

Yet, more courses open every day. Even if the marketing initiatives work to get more players, that doesn't solve the problem of finding water to irrigate them.

The recent GCSAA Leadership Survey found that 31 percent of superintendents use less water than 10 years ago. These folks are preparing for the future. Then there were 33 percent who reported using more water than a decade ago. These folks are in for a rude awakening. Sixteen percent said they were using the same amount, and they hope they won't have to change their practices.

Finally, there are the clueless 10 percent who have no idea how much they use. If you don't know how much water you use now, you'd better figure it out because you're going to have even less to use in the near future.

When we reach drought conditions as we did in 1999, water districts scramble to conserve water by issuing water-use restrictions. They seem content to force professional turf managers to pick a day of the week to water, instead of constructing an irrigation plan based on common sense.

The problem is the government's over-regulation of how much water a course can use. If a course is slated to water the front-nine fairways on Tuesday, it's easy for a nosy neighbor to play water police and call in an assumed violation.

Water Will Soon Not Be Everywhere

BY JOEL JACKSON



IF YOU DON'T KNOW
HOW MUCH WATER
YOU USE, FIGURE IT
OUT BECAUSE
YOU'RE GOING
TO HAVE EVEN LESS
TO USE IN THE
NEAR FUTURE

Both Stuart Bozeman, superintendent at the Seven Rivers Golf & CC in Beverly Hills, Fla., and the Southwest Florida Water Management District deserve a big "atta boy" for their recent efforts to revise the water restrictions together. Bozeman and his fellow superintendents are lobbying for a percentage reduction in the daily average of the amount of water they can use rather than the arbitrary day-of-the-week method.

The good news is that the water district is listening. This approach requires a certain level of trust on the district's part, but verification is possible through meter readings. If a course is suspected of violating the agreed-upon reduction, the district could check the meter and log books.

Expanded use of reclaimed water, of course, is the most logical source of relief, but it has its limits. Municipalities should look at courses as a partner in solving wastewater disposal problems and not as a financial opportunity to gouge courses with high connection and use fees. Cost sharing might be an equitable solution to the problem.

Finally, coastal communities and golf courses are going to have to bite the bullet and quit sucking water from inland sources. They must build those reverse osmosis plants and tap the sea water they have around them. There's a few courses already doing that, and they are ahead of the game.

Golf course owners and architects must reduce the amount of turf on the new courses and superintendents should start budgeting water tighter than dollars. Remember, the ancient Mariner's crew died for lack of water. Don't let it happen to you.

Joel Jackson, CGCS, retired from Disney's golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.