

**W**ater restrictions remain contentious in Florida as summer rains and Tropical Storm Gabrielle failed to raise aquifer and reservoir levels enough to lift the ridiculous day-of-the-week watering schedules set by many counties.

Politicians and bureaucrats fail to grasp that managing living organisms isn't a matter of calendars but of proper soil moisture. Superintendents can accept water-use restrictions, but they need more flexibility in watering times than most politicians will allow.

As we approached overseeding season, Florida GCSA President Geoff Coggan called his local water management district to find out how much flexibility the district might allow golf courses under its "new sprigging and seeding" allowances. He was told by a clerk that the district wouldn't make broad accommodations, but that each course could file for a variance at \$50 a pop.

Then the clerk made a big mistake. He told Geoff, "You know some people don't even think golf courses should exist!" It's not that he told Geoff anything he didn't know, but I wouldn't want to hear that attitude expressed by someone who gets paid with my tax dollars.

The clerk's attitude is not, I fear, isolated. A recent exchange between a county water department, a water management district and our association made that clear.

The county commissioners instructed their local water service to impose an additional 5-percent reduction in irrigation allowances for 22 golf courses in the unincorporated area in the county. The county water department said the commissioners were responding to the public outcry over the "apparent" (the quotes are from the county staff) continued overuse of water by golf courses.

There are no facts supporting the charges forthcoming. No violations by golf courses were reported to the district. No inspections or flow-meter checks revealed golf courses hogging the water. You know what the most damning evidence was? People complained that the golf courses were green while their yards were brown, "so the golf courses must be breaking

## Restrictions Defy Common Sense

BY JOEL JACKSON



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the regulations." The water management district didn't fall for these false charges and asked the county for proof of overuse.

The county staff readily admits that superintendents are some of the most capable water resource managers, but they admit it to the district and to the superintendents. They don't say it to the commissioners or to the press. As a result, the old stereotypes and perceptions live on in the narrow minds of a vocal few.

We know the public sector is where the most water is consumed and wasted than any other group. They are voters, however, and they seem to be immune from tough regulations. We know homeowners, weekly lawn-care services and municipalities tend to set their irrigation systems to regular schedules no matter what conditions exist. At the same time, superintendents manage water resources daily to maintain good playing conditions.

A simple check of the water management district's Web site indicates that recreational water use is only 3 percent to 5 percent of the total water consumed in the district. Golf courses are a subset in that category, so it's clear golf courses aren't using much water.

All this ranting by residents about golf courses wasting water really focuses on a small slice of the pie. Politicians can try and squeeze more water out of golf courses so consumers don't have to pay the price for their waste. But the real-world numbers show they are not going to get very many gallons for all their politically expedient but totally misdirected efforts.

Of course, the truth is, they're not looking to save water. They're just trying to save face by cooling off the squeaky wheels with phony water restrictions.

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