

Shades Of Green

■ OPINION

As *Golfdom* celebrates its 10th year, it occurs to me that I have written 112 columns, including this one.

“Shades of Green” is more than just a title. It is a symbol of the many variables in the golf industry. Issues affect us on different levels, yet there is always a common denominator that binds us together — producing playable and profitable golf courses. Playing golf might be a game, but owning and operating a golf course is a business.

The color green has environmental, economic, agronomic and political connotations. The shade of green changes depending on the issue: drought conditions and water restrictions, flat golf rounds, local ordinances on fertilizers, pesticide use and recent EPA decisions on pesticide products.

Balancing environmental responsibility with economic viability takes cooperation and commitment between superintendents, owners, managers and golfers. Like a Muppet’s mantra, “It’s not easy being green.” But your future depends upon it.

I’ve tried to paint the issues with humor and insight, sometimes presented in the fictional life and times of Duffy McDuffy, superintendent of the Lake Omigosh Golf Club. The idea for the Lake Omigosh Club and characters grew out of my admiration and enjoyment of the humor and writings of certified golf course superintendent Monroe Miller in his “Tales From the Back Nine” in the Wisconsin GC-SA’s *Grass Roots* magazine. I’ve also borrowed some things from humorist Garrison Keillor and his ongoing Lake Wobegon adventures.

So every month for the past decade, I’ve cobbled together 625 words on a topic that was either on the radar screen or in the headlines so readers can appreciate where the profession has been and think about where it is heading.

Not all the humor has been appreciated, and not all the feedback has been positive. But I do appreciate the comments some of you have given me at GIS and at other venues.

So much for nostalgia; it’s time to look ahead. It doesn’t take a clairvoyant to see that water availability and conservation will be the most

Environment Still No. 1 Concern for Golf

BY JOEL JACKSON



SUPERINTENDENTS

MUST DOCUMENT

WATER USE,

SUSTAINABILITY

AND IMPACT STUDIES

important issues facing the golf and turfgrass-related industries during the next few years.

Superintendent associations at the national, state and local levels need to develop alliances with other golf and green industry groups to leverage communications and political effectiveness on issues such as water conservation. They must maximize working relationships with the staffs of all regulatory agencies.

Superintendents must also utilize best management practices (BMPs) — drafted by cooperative panels of researchers, regulators and industry members — as a useful tool to temper the emotions surrounding the trend of local ordinances to regulate fertilizers and pesticides. By citing BMPs supported by peer-reviewed science, local governments have a way to approve agronomically sound practices as the basis for local ordinances. Comprehensive BMP manuals can be used to address a variety of issues from water to pesticide and nutrient management.

Besides the environmental impacts, state golf and green industries should have current economic impact studies done to show the value of those industries to the local economy and why they need access to key resources on an equitable basis. Golf courses must participate in these surveys to help make our case.

There will be continuing technological advances in turf-care products and equipment that will allow superintendents to decrease inputs into the environment while still providing excellent playing conditions. The challenge is to make feasible, practical, affordable changes to current programs while documenting water and chemical use to show our commitment to living acceptable shades of green for our communities.

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