

Life for many golf course superintendents earlier this month was the Big Easy, that is if they attended the Golf Industry Show in New Orleans. But now that they're back on Main Street, far removed from Bourbon Street, superintendents must deal with the ongoing economic and environmental pressures on the performance of their duties and the health and appearance of their courses. The economy and the environment are so interconnected that making sure you pay attention to both is critical for success — and survival.

As the sluggish economy forces cutbacks in budgets resulting in less labor and possibly fewer purchases of equipment, fertilizer and chemicals, superintendents are challenged to revise old practices and develop new strategies for course management.

Mowing and edging/trimming schedules can be tweaked to reduce energy (fuel costs) and equipment wear. Turning out the lights in vacant locker rooms, bathrooms and offices saves money and energy, as does modifying the irrigation schedule to reduce pump run time. Irrigating during electric utility off-peak hours can net even more savings.

If planned construction projects go on as scheduled, then take the opportunity to innovate while you renovate. Environmental stewardship has been moving to the front burner on community stovetops. It's a perfect time to finally consider and implement the reduction of maintained turf acreage. That in itself is a win-win situation as you reduce inputs of labor, fuel, water, pesticides and fertilizers.

Installation of native plants and grasses can be done on a gradual, in-house basis to save contractor fees and simultaneously reduce maintenance costs while continually reducing overall costs of course maintenance. Once or twice a year the native areas need to be mowed or pruned versus previous weekly maintenance on turf areas.

These native areas reduce the course's water-use footprint. Water availability is becoming a dominant issue across the country. We demonstrate our proactive stewardship of the community's resources by converting out-of-play areas.

By using less potable groundwater and re-

The Economy And the Environment

BY JOEL JACKSON



THEY ARE SO
INTERCONNECTED
THAT MAKING SURE
YOU PAY ATTENTION
TO BOTH IS CRITICAL
FOR SUCCESS — AND
SURVIVAL

ducing the amount of reclaimed water needed or pumped, we can potentially make more effluent water available for other golf course or landscape irrigation systems to join the purple pipeline.

Recycling and composting programs for organic debris can reduce costs and be used as fertilizer in plant beds and deep roughs. One Florida club recently estimated it could cut trash hauling fees (nearly \$120,000 per year) in half by recycling grass clippings, landscape trimmings, cardboard boxes and food waste from the clubhouse on site.

Water-quality issues are also facing communities with fertilizer use on turfgrass being targeted as an area of concern. Even though the science says proper turf nutrient applications should not be a major concern for runoff or leaching, perception is reality and the media loves controversy.

A newly patented process of using floating mats of aquatic plants to sequester dissolved nutrients in water bodies is another example of a sustainable system that golf courses can use to meet Clean Water Act requirements. Eventually, the plants can be harvested and composted, and the nutrients can be reused as an organic nutrient source for the roughs.

For sure, you have much on your plate these days. There's the economy and its immediate pressures with environmental stewardship looming as a constant challenge to do better.

To deal with both, you must display a persistent pursuit of education and excellence in both areas to produce the most effective and efficient golf courses possible.

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