

From the Back Tees

■ OPINION

I shuddered as I read the recent news from Canada where Quebec province and some cities are in the process of banning pesticide use for “aesthetic” purposes. I wonder how golf courses will be affected.

The do-gooders just can't see applying pesticides to control weeds, fungus and insects that destroy turfgrass in public areas. I guess dirt and weeds are OK for public consumption, but it doesn't take a rocket scientist or certified superintendent to know weeds and bare dirt patches just won't hack it on a putting green and keep the golf industry in business. In this case, it's performance and appearance that matters and why pesticides are used.

Too bad the anti-crowd can't appreciate the performance of turfgrass as it provides erosion control, temperature abatement, dust removal, oxygen production, noise reduction and glare reduction — all while it's aesthetically pleasing.

New York is making noises about banning pesticides as well. When these notions get traction, the emotional and political rhetoric drowns out the science almost every time. So what can you do about it?

It's past time to get off your collective duffs and make a genuine effort to document exactly what it is you do on your golf course and all the ways you really are environmental stewards. The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America conducted several baseline surveys to get a real-world look at how golf courses operate instead of fighting the battle on hearsay. How many of you participated? That's what I thought! It's way past time to stop letting a handful of dedicated men and women go up against city hall when it comes to water restrictions, fertilizer ordinances and pesticide use.

Those brave few who do put themselves on the line to represent our industry do so in the belief that most superintendents really do the right thing. But where's the proof? Only 55 percent of the nation's superintendents belong to an association.

And out of the 15,000 golf courses in the United States, just over 2,000 belong to the

Will You Be On the Bus or Under It?

BY JOEL JACKSON



MISPLACED ENVIRONMENTALISM IS CHALLENGING THE CONTINUED SUCCESS OF OUR INDUSTRY. HOW CAN YOU STAND IDLY BY AND LET THAT HAPPEN?

Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program and less than half of those are certified. This doesn't mean the latter golf courses are dangerous cesspools of pollution. It just means there's a serious lack of documentation of environmental responsibility that can be demonstrated to make our case.

More state and regional associations are trying to generate best management practices to show how responsible golf courses really are, but it won't do any good if you don't go through the checklists and tick off what you're doing. It won't do any good if you don't write an environmental plan for your course and document the changes you make in reducing out-of-play turfgrass areas and reductions in chemical, fertilizer and water use. You don't have to do it all at once, but you do need to develop an attitude of change and participation and work on it every year.

We have great stories to tell, and we belong to a game of a lifetime as evidenced by the Tom Watson saga at the British Open. But misplaced and uninformed environmentalism is challenging the vitality and continued success of our industry and our profession. How can you stand idly by any longer and let that happen?

We've always known environmental issues were a big deal. So far we have dealt with them one water crisis and one fertilizer ordinance at a time. Now the rubber is meeting the road. It's time for us to either all get on the bus together for the preservation of golf, or get thrown under the bus by people who also have a mission and are willing to work at it harder than we have been up until now.

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