Alternative Water Will be the Way

BY MICHAEL ROBERTS

As the world hovers on the verge of a water crisis, we all need to examine how much water we use in our daily lives and for what purposes. Golf course irrigation has undergone a great deal of scrutiny for this very reason.

In an effort to reduce potable water use, government agencies at federal, state and local levels have responded by developing new regulations and use standards. On a state level, California has taken by far the most progressive stance, mandating a 20-percent reduction in potable water use statewide by the year 2020. However, while researching our most recent white paper, Water Conservation and the Green Industry, we found that most water regulation is handled locally. A 2005 survey of U.S. cities with populations of 30,000 or more determined that 82 percent had formal water-conservation plans in place.

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It appears that additional water-use regulations and restrictions are imminent, particularly at a municipal level. While on average the United States still charges less for a gallon of water than nearly every other developed country, it's also very likely the price of potable water supplied by local agencies will rise over the next 10 years.

So, how can golf course superintendents maintain their courses while facing increased regulation and higher water prices? As more golf courses, sports fields and commercial sites are discovering, using harvested or effluent water for irrigation may be the answer.

Marvel Golf Club in Benton, Ky., is just one example of a course that's proactively using alternative water sources. Under golf course superintendent Christopher S. Gray's direction, the club collects wastewater from houses in a nearby subdivision and rainwater during storm events and uses it to irrigate its golf course. In addition to conserving water, Marvel Golf Club saves countless dollars in energy costs by not having to pump water from its ponds for irrigation purposes.

While using gray water for golf course irrigation could potentially save untold gallons of potable water, it comes with its own challenges. While some courses like Marvel Golf Club harvest their own water for irrigation, other courses may not have the opportunity or resources to do so. Courses that purchase effluent water from a local treatment plant must take into account that water's higher salinity and how it may affect their turf. Regardless of these considerations, using alternative water sources for golf course irrigation is not just a trend that will quickly disappear.

At Rain Bird, we're dedicated to producing rotors, control systems, pump stations, valves and accessories that use water wisely. Every new product or service we develop is assessed for its contribution to The Intelligent Use of Water™. We continue to make it easier than ever before to incorporate smart, water-saving practices into any irrigation system.

It's likely the world's water concerns will continue, making the efficient use of reclaimed water across the globe not a choice, but a necessity. Rain Bird is dedicated to providing golf course irrigation products and systems that make the most of every drop of water — regardless of its source. ■

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