



**"You might have to get off your duff and get involved."**

**JOEL JACKSON**, *Contributing Editor*

## The ABCs of advocacy

**I**f you are not an active advocate for the golf industry in general and of your own golf course as a small business and community asset, you are giving regulators, politicians and activists an open door to trample all over your livelihood.

You don't have to storm City Hall with signs and chanting mobs, but you do need to have a plan of action. The easiest way is to participate with your local superintendent chapter, so you might have to get off your duff and and get involved. That is, if you think it's important to have the water, chemicals and fertilizers needed to keep your course competitive and yourself employed.

And I've got the ABCs to get you started.

**A is for awareness.** You have to know what's going on. On the GCSAA website you can go to the Government Relations link and find out what's hot or on the horizon in your state and local regions. Regardless of the issue,

the first step is to make your club management and members aware of the possible effects.

Next, talk to city, county or state environmental department staff; they are the fact finders and make recommendations to the politicians for legislation. Make sure they have the latest scientific research data from your land grant universities. Hopefully your chapter is already supporting turf research.

**B is for best management practices.** A steady growth of proactive best management or environmental monitoring and planning programs are coming along, from Florida to Oregon and up around the Chesapeake Bay area. That includes the GCSAA's Environmental Institute for Golf, another resource that will bring you up to speed on what's being done for Golf's Drive Toward Sustainability.

A toolkit of information is being developed to help all members become better advocates and environmental stewards in general.

**C is for communication.** Perhaps this is the most important tool of all. Communication starts with your crew, then club management, right down to members. If you are walking the talk, the talking will be easy, no matter whom your audience may be.

It would also be good to form a state alliance of golf associations (PGA, CMAA, GCSAA members) to unite and advocate for golf on all issues facing the industry. A lot of chapters are beginning to have "Golf Days" in state capitals, like the national We Are Golf effort.

Conduct an annual maintenance facility tour for

members so they get what you're doing and why. Also lead several member tours of the course. Point out the wildlife and show hands-on examples of what and why you do things that are environmentally responsible and beneficial to your turf, the course's physical and financial health and your watershed's viability. You can also host school tours and Audubon bird counts.

In conjunction with your local or state chapter, host regulator tours as well to show them what you are doing. We do this annually in Florida every March, partnering with the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association's weeklong spring regulator tour for EPA, state and local DEPs, and state water management district personnel. The Old Collier GC is the first stop on their tour. They want to know about pesticide use, safety, storage and water quality protection.

Tours provide regulators and other groups a real-world view of what's going on and how careful and professional you are. Folks get to see the areas you treat are not as vast as imagined when they see your green, tee, fairway and naturalized areas. You often get to showcase the wildlife on the course during these outings.

Won't you personally resolve to communicate, educate and advocate for golf — and therefore yourself?

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