

On the water front

One USGA agronomist puts reclaimed water debate front and center.

Brian Whitlark, agronomist with the USGA Green Section Southwest Region, took the stage at the 2013 USGA Education Conference in San Diego, Calif., to talk about alternative water sources for golf course irrigation. And he shined the spotlight most on recycled water.

"Recycled water is a seriously underutilized resource in the golf industry," Whitlark said, citing a 2009 GCSAA survey that found 12 percent of U.S. golf courses are using recycled water for irrigation. "Clearly, there's a huge potential for us to embrace the use of recycled water and reduce our demand on potable water sources."

Formerly known as effluent water, recycled water is treated and cleaned at a sewage treatment plant then pumped through a pipeline to a golf course, where it's used for irrigation.

There are a few reasons why courses don't use recycled water, some of which are viable and some of which aren't, Whitlark said. He rebuffed those who don't use it just because they already have an available water source.

"I'm afraid that doesn't fly," he said. "That's too short-term thinking. We need to be forward thinking. We have to assume that 10, 20, 30 years from now that drinking water source is not going to be available at our golf course."

Even the saline content of reclaimed water is a surmountable hurdle, Whitlark said, and one he's seen courses in his Southwest territory overcome.

But that doesn't mean reclaimed water isn't problematic. It can be expensive, Whitlark acknowledged, and some courses — especially older ones — simply don't have access to a recycled water source.

"In many cases it may cost millions of dollars to get that plumbing to their golf course," Whitlark said. "This is a significant hurdle and one I think state legislators need to address if they really want golf courses to reduce their demand on potable water sources."

Whatever the challenges, it's quite possible for courses to have green, firm conditions while reducing their water use, Whitlark asserted. "I'm of the mindset that we can have our cake and eat it too."

Brian Whitlark says act now to save water for the future.



Toro and Rounds 4 Research get exclusive

The Toro Company presented the Environmental Institute for Golf with a check for \$50,000 at the GIS, creating an exclusive partnership with the program. Rounds 4 Research is an industry initiative specifically aimed at increasing funding for turfgrass research.

"Research is the lifeblood of both environmental and economic advancements in turf management," says Darren Redetzke, vice president for Toro's Commercial Business. "Toro's commitment to Rounds 4 Research will complement our past and current support for the EIFG and GCSAA, and aligns with our philosophy that investing in research ultimately improves the customer experience. This is a vital program for all sectors of the golf industry."

Rounds 4 Research allows GCSAA chapters to participate as fundraising partners on a national level. Golf facilities can support the effort by donating rounds of golf that will be auctioned online to generate funds.

As the exclusive partner for Rounds 4 Research, Toro's commitment will allow the EIFG to bolster its research efforts. Since 1988, Toro has invested well over \$1 million to support scientific research, advancement in education, and scholarships for future turfgrass professionals.

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