



"We are very fortunate to have this opportunity to enrich our own lives and share our bounty with our families and our friends."

JOEL JACKSON, *Senior Contributing Editor*

The wild, wacky, wonderful world of golf maintenance

As the new year unfolds and my travels line up on the calendar, I'm reminded what a great career I've had as a superintendent and still being associated with the profession.

The exposure to human nature and Mother Nature is a constant learning experience that keeps one physically and intellectually engaged. If you're getting bored, then maybe it is time you make a career change to find something that will get your juices flowing again. For those who enjoy what you are doing, here is a look at the wild, wacky and wonderful world we inhabit in the golf industry.

Wild

More natural areas are being incorporated into new golf course designs as the "target golf" concept lessens maintained turf acreage, which reduces water use, labor, fertilizer and chemical inputs, which in turn, lowers budget expenses.

On older courses the trend to convert formerly main-

tained turfgrass, but otherwise "out-of-play" sections of the course, into natural areas grows annually. These changes are mainly in response to economic pressures and fallout from a flat national golf participation rate. However they are also positive environmentally.

For those of us on the course at sunrise, the encounters with wildlife are priceless. Why not have some eco-tours on your course this year to educate your members or public about the great wildlife habitats on our courses?

Wacky

The constant refrain we hear, "Golf is a Big Water User" is so off-key it hurts my ears. Anyone can Google "Water Use Reports," key in a state and do a little searching on use by water consumer groups

(agriculture, public supply, business/industry, power generation, recreation and private wells). You'll find out pretty darn quickly that "recreational use," which usually includes a golf portion along with sports fields, parks and recreation, etc., is usually one of smallest slices of the water-use pie chart.

You have to do a little math, but in Florida, golf water use has been running about 3-3.5 percent of the total since 1995. Nationally, the GCSAA figure is one-half of one percent. Considering that Florida has more courses than any other state, perhaps that's not so surprising. Outdoor water use (lawn irrigation), in the public supply sector, runs about 15 percent. I'll just "set and forget" that factoid.

Also wacky is the push by activists to ban fertilizer use

during the summer "rainy" season for fear of runoff and leaching nutrient pollution of Florida's waterways. Banning plant nutrition during the summer "growing" season is really wacky. Don't feed the turf when it can take it up most efficiently. Feed it in the spring or fall when roots are just coming back or are just shutting down. Duh!

Wonderful

Last is the wonderful category. All of the above occur in all walks of life. To me, golf combines business, sport, camaraderie, health, nature, hard work, leadership, skill, imagination, communication and perseverance.

Our profession offers so much diversity. We are exposed to so many people, places and possibilities. We are very fortunate to have this opportunity to enrich our own lives and share our bounty with our families and our friends. One sure-fire way to enhance your life is to join, support and volunteer with your local superintendent's chapter.

I hope I get to meet and see many of you at the Golf Industry Show or in my travels. It seems to me that many of us have wild, wacky and wonderful stories about this profession.

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