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“The work here is endless – it’s a big place. But that’s what I love about it.”

– CRAIG CURRIER

Catalano and Currier don’t view their jobs at Bethpage as work. Both men live on the Bethpage property — Catalano on the Black Course’s 14th hole, and Currier near the Green Course.

“This isn’t a job — it’s a way of life,” says Catalano, who sports a black sleeveless U.S. Open sweater over his white polo shirt. “And it’s a great way of life. This place is in my blood.”

Says Currier: “The work here is endless — it’s a big place. But that’s what I love about it.”

It’s clear to others who know them how much Catalano and Currier value working at Bethpage.

“If it was just a job, Craig would have gone someplace else and made more money, and Dave would have retired,” Robson says. “It’s more than a job for these guys. They’re committed to seeing this place be the best public golf course facility in the world.”

*Continued from page 26*

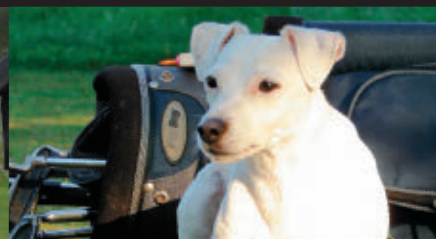
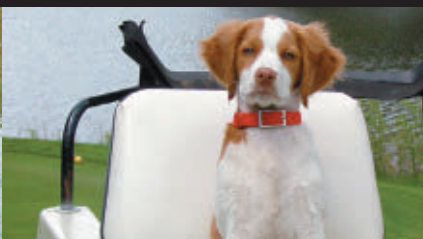
Catalano was promoted to superintendent of Bethpage’s Green Course in 1976. He left the Green Course in 1978 to become superintendent of New York’s Caleb Smith State Park Preserve in Smithtown, N.Y., about 20 minutes from Bethpage.

Catalano left Caleb Smith in 1981 to

be superintendent of Sunken Meadow State Park in Kings Park on Long Island. He was promoted to the state parks’ regional headquarters in 1982. He stayed there 13 years and was promoted to director of operations. “I had the opportunity to come back to Bethpage in ’95, and I’ve been here since,” says Catalano, who grew up four miles from the park.

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## 2009 U.S. OPEN PREVIEW

Because they spend a lot of time together and share many ideals about their profession, Catalano and Currier have grown close personally. Sometimes Catalano, who has two daughters, views Currier as a son or a younger brother. "That's how strongly I feel about him," Catalano says.

The feeling is mutual. "He has been like a father figure to me," says Currier, who lost his dad when he was 22.

Sure, Catalano and Currier might argue on occasion. And they're constantly ribbing each other.

"Craig brings a smile to my face 99.9 percent of the time," Catalano says. "The other one one-hundredth part of the time I'd like to give him a pop on the head."

**EVEN THOUGH** he loves his work as few do, Catalano is pondering retirement after 43 years of working for the

state's park district. But he's not thinking about retirement because he doesn't want to work anymore; he just knows he's slowing down. "I would argue that I'm a little less sharp," Catalano says. "Does that mean I'm doing a poor job? No. And it doesn't mean I need to be replaced. It's just reality."

Catalano could retire now and make almost as much money from his pension as he does his current salary. "So why am I still working?" Catalano asks. "Because I love it."

Catalano also admits it's the people at Bethpage who keep him going. "I'm not ready to retire because I'd miss Craig," he says.

The remark sounds like a wisecrack, but it's not. "I'd miss the people I work with too much," Catalano says softly.

Currier knows Catalano is contemplat-

ing retirement. While he won't try and talk him out of it, Currier laments the day his boss and confidant calls it a career.

Currier's peers keep asking him when he plans to leave Bethpage. They figure he can write his own ticket and go anywhere he wants and make more money after hosting two U.S. Opens.

"I have no desire to leave," Currier says, adding he looks forward to a possible third U.S. Open at Bethpage.

Davis, who has come to know Catalano and Currier well over the years, says he cringes to think about Bethpage without Catalano, Currier or both.

"Not that anybody isn't replaceable, but there's a part of me that says I would hate to go back to Bethpage if there's no Craig or Dave there," Davis says. "It just wouldn't be the same."

Catalano and Currier will someday be engraved in Bethpage's storybook history.

In fact, they already are. ■



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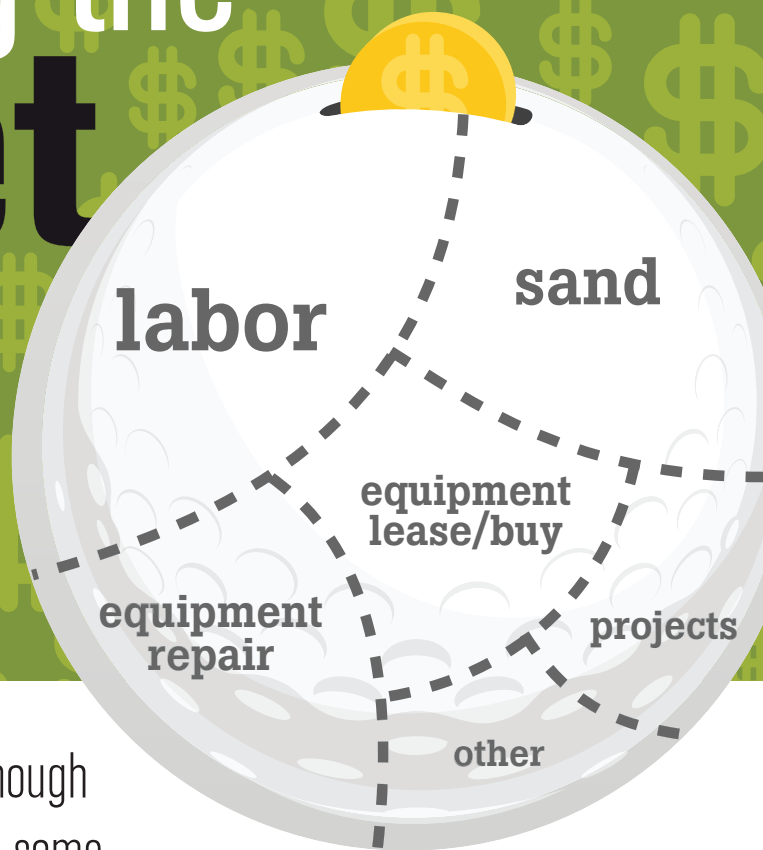
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# Balancing the Budget



Yeah, gas prices are down, but not enough to make a huge impact. But there are some things you can do to save some bucks

By Ron Furlong,  
Contributing Editor

**S**eems like it was not long ago, with fuel prices up over \$4 a gallon, I was telling my oldest daughter about the time when I was a kid and gas prices were around a \$1 a gallon. She thought I was nuts.

To her it was one of those far-fetched stories parents tell their kids, like how they had to walk a mile through a blinding blizzard to get to the school bus. This walking-through-blizzards thing was actually true in my case, growing up in rural Wisconsin, but that's another story. I suppose now my daughter can tell her kids someday about the time when gas prices were close to a \$1 a gallon. Amazing how things can change in such a short period of time.

So how will these lower fuel prices (assuming they're still under \$3 by the time you read this) affect the way we approach the golf course maintenance budget? Can you count on them staying down? Do lower fuel prices offset the overall miserable state of the economy? Do they even help?

I guess the first thing to consider is how many other items do fuel prices affect in your budget. Obviously, they affect the fuel you use on the course for your equipment. Certainly, they affect fertilizers, chemicals (to some degree) and sand delivery (I suppose). Anything else? Maybe a few items, here and there, would be slightly altered, but enough to change your budget accordingly? Probably not.

The bottom line, as depressing as it may be, is I don't think you can significantly lower the cost of any of these secondary items

*Continued on page 36*





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Is this really the time to build those forward tees? Or to renovate that green that won't drain?

*Continued from page 34*

— fertilizers, chemicals or sand — because of reduced fuel prices. None of these things are going to be reduced enough by lower oil prices to justify it.

So, what to do? Raise the white flag? Ask the government for a bailout for golf courses? Punt? Move to New Zealand? Well, before we all become Kiwis (not that *that* doesn't sound rather pleasant), here are a few suggestions to consider when sitting down at the laptop to hammer out the old budget. If we can't significantly lower fuel, fertilizers, chemicals or sand, maybe there are a few alternative line items that could be lowered a bit to ease the burden. Here are four I came up with that might help:

### Labor

Nothing drains more away from the golf course maintenance budget than this line item. It comprises more than 50 percent of my budget each year. We have no choice

but to try to lower it. This, of course, could have a cascading effect on your entire operation if you do lower it. How to lower labor and not drop conditions and standards accordingly? Um, I don't actually have an answer for that question, but part of me thinks it sounds like a fun challenge. Did I say fun? I meant, interesting. Yeah, an interesting challenge.

### Projects

This may or may not be a line item on your budget. It is on mine, and in years past a fairly significant one as well. This is definitely the time to ask yourself (and your board or owner): Is this really the time to build those forward tees? Or renovate that green that won't drain? Or take out those trees on that right dogleg that make golf balls disappear like the Bermuda Triangle did airplanes? ("Here's a Noodle, Jim. Are you playing a Noodle? No? Oh, just found a Top Flite. How 'bout a Top Flite? No?

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### THIS MONTH'S HEALTH TIP



Exercise is a very important part of keeping your dog healthy. It keeps his muscles, heart, lungs and bones strong and healthy. It's also fun for your dog. Playing fetch, Frisbee, and hide and seek are some of the more popular exercise choices. Swimming can be a great way to exercise your dog and will keep him cool during hot summer days. But just be careful if you take your dog to the beach. Be sure to bring him some drinking water, as drinking sea water will make him very sick.

**Goose.** His owner is Bob Banner, former golf course superintendent of Amarillo Country Club in Amarillo, TX.  
(Photo by: Jim Banner)



*Improving the Way Professionals Care for Turf*

Here's a Titleist? Yes, it's a Pro VI. Ah, let's see. No it's a 3, not a 4. Well, just drop one for gosh sake!") What do you think, maybe status quo on course improvements for a year or two? On the bright side, it means more balls to find for you and your staff.

### Equipment repair

This item is another huge portion of my budget. Only labor and, in my case, sand have a higher dollar total. Having the right person as your equipment technician is by far the most essential tool in controlling this item. However, in addition to having a good mechanic, there are a few other factors to consider as well. The condition and age of your equipment are positively critical in the your ability to lower this line item. If your equipment is old and constantly breaking down, then this probably isn't the area you want to cut back. But if you have a relatively newer fleet and it's running well, this might be a spot to shave a few thousand dollars. A strong preventive maintenance program (as good as the one you probably have for chemical applications on your greens) needs to be in place, and if it is already in place then it needs to be fine-tuned. Don't sacrifice the future, but do be more on top of what is getting fixed and where each dollar is going. Have a purchase-order number system just for equipment repairs and know how much you spend on each piece of equipment throughout the year.

### Leasing equipment

This makes up another big chunk of money in many budgets. Experience and a little bit of wisdom have told us in the past that it is better to lease equipment (in many cases) than to buy. This way you keep the equipment circulating and keep newer equipment coming in on a regular basis. Perhaps it is time to re-evaluate this practice. Although probably still sensible in certain areas (like greens mowers for instance), maybe the time has come to buy more equipment and try and get as much life out of it as you can.

### And, finally

Lower fuel prices are not guaranteed. Keeping those oil-related line items like fuel, sand, fertilizers and chemicals up near past dollar levels is probably prudent. Having the ability to cut in a few other areas in these lean times may be the ticket to a budget that works for everyone. You might even have fun trying to make it all work. There I go again! I meant to say, you might enjoy the challenge of it all. Oh, what the heck. It might be fun. There, I said it. ■

*Furlong is superintendent of Avalon Golf Club in Burlington, Wash.*



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# At the Controls

Customer friendliness and ease of use drive latest irrigation technology

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

**J**ust as golf course maintenance has become more intricate over the years, so too have golf course irrigation systems. And that includes controllers.

“Customer friendliness” and “ease of use” are two adjectives that come to mind when discussing controllers. In regard to those two attributes, Brian Birdwell, business manager of golf irrigation for

John Deere Irrigation, says the key is for manufacturers to make controllers intuitive so users don’t need to spend a lot of time thumbing through manuals to figure how to operate them.

“The more we get into it, the more we try to make them like computers,” Birdwell says. “Most superintendents are computer literate because they use them every day.”

Ease of use is integral so superintendents can build water schedules, among

other things, Birdwell notes. Ease of use is also important when superintendents are troubleshooting controllers for problems.

While Dave Shoup, product manager of central controls for Hunter Irrigation, believes that superintendents collectively are computer savvy, he says that doesn’t mean that ease of use is not an issue. Hence, controller software needs to be easy to navigate.

“Microsoft Windows is a scary place to be for a lot of people,” Shoup says. ... “Virtually every person’s computer has its own environment, and all this stuff has to work and coexist with all of the other applications, de-

vices and drivers out there.”

Shoup is a proponent of making controller software less busy.

Bruno Quanquin, Rain Bird’s product manager for golf controllers and wireless rotors, says it’s important to make face plates on in-field controllers more user friendly with larger LCD displays, including type and icons. Easy access to a controller’s components, such as a volt meter, is also important for troubleshooting. “Tidbits like this make it easy for the end-user,” Quanquin says.

Ease of installation is also important for the contractor’s sake, he adds. A contractor is concerned with easy access to inside a controller.

PHOTO BY: MIKE KLEMM





In regard to user friendliness, it's important to have an upgrade program for existing users of the company's controllers, says Steve Snow, director of golf sales and service for Toro Golf Irrigation.

"For somebody who has had a 20-year-old control system, how do we make it as painless as possible for them to migrate to the new technology?" Snow asks.

Factors for a painless upgrade include ease of use and installation, adding new capabilities and fitting within a budget, Snow adds.

As control platforms age, they are harder to support, Snow points out. So it's vital to have a "drop-in replacement" for the old platform that fits within the budget and takes advantage of new technology.

Water efficiency is also an important aspect of controller technology. Quanquin says central-control software acts as the brain in future product development to make the entire irrigation system function efficiently. "As we look at future water savings and efficiencies, we have to look at the whole system," Quanquin adds.

Shoup believes controller technology will continue to develop to assist superintendents with water efficiency, especially with remote-control capabilities.

Birdwell says the goal from a controller standpoint is to "manage every drop of water in the most time-effective manner."

While modern technology allows for a controller

to operate one sprinkler at a time, Snow says water efficiency starts with the sprinkler head.

"You can have the smartest controller in the world, but water will be lost if the sprin-

## Controller technology must be protected so regular maintenance is important.

kler is not applying water efficiently," he adds.

New controller technology must be protected, so regular maintenance is important. Experts advise superintendents to look inside the controller box twice a year to assure its components are functioning properly. They should also make sure controllers are properly grounded and that electrical connections are secure. They should also make sure there are not bees' or birds' nests inside the controller box that could cause a short.

Quanquin points out that controller pedestals are often in the path of sprinklers. It's vital to ensure the enclosures on the pedestals are working properly to protect the expensive electronics inside from water. "We tend to talk a lot about electronics and programming features with controllers," Quanquin says. "But there's a basic component that gets neglected — the enclosure."

Mobile and wireless controllers are now on the scene. "That means superin-

tendents can go anywhere on the course that has cell phone reception and control their irrigation systems with most of the commands they have on their desktop computers back in their offices.

with a handheld device, such as a cell phone or PDA.

"That's coupled with Internet access so more superintendents can log in from home to look at what their irrigation systems are doing," he adds.

Algier predicts the future will bring more of a "big-picture" approach to controller technology where there will be better integration with the pump station as well as sensors.

And you can bet that controller manufacturers and marketers will continue to listen to superintendents' needs.

"It's our role to innovate and simplify their worlds," Algier says. ■

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PBI/Gordon  
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By John Walsh

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**F**or most people, their 40th birthday was, or will be, a big deal because it's a significant milestone in life. A 40th birthday for a broadleaf herbicide is a much bigger deal, though, considering the many pesticide product improvements made throughout the years. PBI/Gordon Corp. is celebrating such a milestone this year with Trimec.

"Trimec defies most product lifecycles," says Doug Obermann, professional turf and ornamental products manager for Kansas City-based PBI/Gordon. "I attribute its longevity to a lot of hard work and a little luck. It's a household name in the industry."

The herbicide has treated about 97.8 million acres through the years — and counting.

Obermann, who worked with Trimec for 21 years, says there are 12 versions of Trimec products on the professional side of the market, some of which are sold through formulators with liquids and fertilizers. The ratio of active ingredients — 2,4-D, MCCP and dicamba — varies to fit the niche of weed markets in the North and South, as well as price points (high, medium and low). Trimec Plus, which came to market 22 years ago, includes a fourth ingredient, MSMA.

"We have a synergistic effect with the three active ingredients," says Everett Mealman, PBI/Gordon's chairman of the board.

"Trimec technology is based on two secrets — the way the active ingredients are reacted and the special inerts in the formulation," Obermann says.

#### **A history lesson**

In the late 1960s, Skip Skaptason, who worked for Sherwin Williams Cos. of Canada (Green Cross Products), was approached by the people who invented Trimec. They told Skaptason they wanted to introduce Trimec in the United States. Additionally, Skaptason was on a local civic committee with Mealman, who was PBI/Gordon's executive vice president at the time and mayor of a Kansas City suburb.

"Skip obtained the rights to the patent, and depended on PBI/Gordon