



THE GRASS ROOTS



an official publication of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association

Volume XV, No. 6

November/December 1988

THE 23RD ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

WATER MANAGEMENT — THE PERFECT THEME FOR 1988

By Michael Semler

The 1988 Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium was once again a large success. And why not. With the topic of "Water Management — A Cultural Practice for All Conditions", how appropriate that it was chosen in a year of one of the most severe droughts in recent memory.

Speaker topics ranging from water conservation, Wisconsin water laws, and pesticides and water management kept those in attendance truly interested. However, the issue which drew the most response and the largest concern was how to prevent yourself from having water restrictions placed on your golf course, or worse yet, being completely cut off.

Ted Horton, Superintendent at Westchester C.C., in suburban New York City, presented his experiences in dealing with water restrictions in his home state of New York. Ted gave us two key points he has learned from water restrictions and from dealing with municipalities in charge with water regulation. The first is that Superintendents are inherently qualified to deal with water challenges because of their training and background and that we should use this expertise to the fullest extent. The second is that the Midwest should prepare itself for water restrictions now, so in the near future we are ready to present solid reasons and factual data for the need for water on golf courses.

You may ask why we should worry about the availability of a resource we find generally abundant now. Scott Hausman, Chief of Water Regulation

with the Wisconsin DNR, gave the best answer to that question by saying that if, and when, water shortages occur, regulation will fall along a priority list. Right or wrong, golf courses are at the bottom of that list of priority water users. In other words, we will be the first to be shut off.

That brings us back to need to prepare now, so that in the future we will be on, or near, the top of the priority water user list.

Will the Midwest ever run out of water for use on golf turf? Ask Mark Kienert, Superintendent at Bullseye C.C. in Wisconsin Rapids. His Symposium presentation explained how he was forced to stop pumping water from the Wisconsin River on June 20, 1988 after water flow rates in the river dropped to pre-set minimum levels. The DNR shut off his primary supply of water. His slide presentation showed the devastation the shut-off caused on his golf course. Not only was the loss of golf turf a disaster, but the amount of money and time needed to renovate the lost fairways and tees to bring them back to playable condition was a tremendous burden to his club.

His situation may have been unique in the state in 1988, but it may be a signal for what lays ahead for more of us in the future.

If there was one significant thought which came out of the 1988 Symposium, it was probably preparation. Prepare yourself, your golf course and your state organization for the possibility of water restrictions and cut-offs in the future. We should have plans for alternative water sources. We

should be prepared to give facts and data for the water needs of golf courses. And finally, never take that precious commodity for granted again.

Certainly the Symposium did not deal entirely with a forecast of doom and gloom. It dealt with a wide range of topics concerning water and water uses.

The keynote address, given by Dr. Van Cline of the Toro Company, introduced us to the issues of water and how Golf Course Superintendents fit into a world-wide scheme. Not only do we provide psychological relief through the enjoyment of golf, but we are purveyors of ecological relief through the maintenance of greenbelts as well.

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Dr. Cline also spoke on the three most important issues relating to our job. The first is that we keep our perspective of how we fit into the global picture and that we practice conservation on our own little area for the benefit of the whole scheme. Secondly we need to recognize that our purpose is to do more than grow grass. We should educate others about the beneficial aspects golf courses make in the environment. And finally, we need to be proactive and press forward as leaders in water conservation and ecology so we can show that we are doing our own part.

We also heard from Dr. Michael Agnew, Professor and Turf Extension Specialist from Iowa State University. He brought us up to date on legislative activity and concerns from our neighbors in Iowa. These included underground storage tanks, groundwater protection, pesticide licensing and disposal measures.

During the Tuesday session we also heard Scott Hausman of the Wisconsin DNR who, in addition to describing water priority use lists, explained how the DNR regulates surface water pumping permits. Regulation of lakes and streams is through two means. One is through diversion permits, which allow the user to withdraw a specified amount of water for a specified time period. Second, regulation is through setting minimum water levels, below which no water removal for agricultural purposes may occur. This was the case at Bullseye C.C. where the flow rate of the Wisconsin River went below the minimum level and the DNR shut off their water diversion rights.

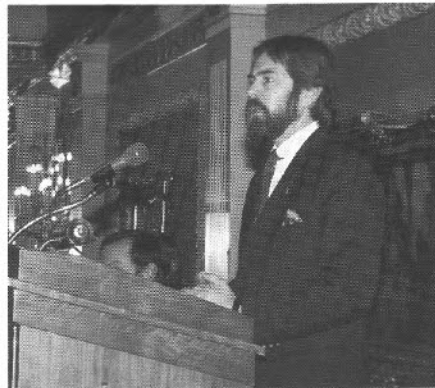
Scott also left us with fair warning that the DNR will be getting tougher on permits, reporting of water levels and usage, and making sure irrigation pumping equipment and wells are maintained up to state standards.

Along the lines of water management came the issue of effluent water for use on golf course irrigation. Bud Quandt, Superintendent at Pasadena Yacht and Country Club in Florida, provided some insight into his trials with effluent water use. His number one concern (and recommendation) for anyone interested is to make sure the effluent source is of good quality and low in salt. Since all sources of effluent are different, it is imperative that constant monitoring take place to insure quality.

Dr. A. Martin Petrovic, Professor of Turfgrass Science from Cornell Univer-



WGCSA President Roger Bell welcomed everyone to the 1988 Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium.



Noon luncheon speaker Jeff Percival.

sity, discussed the fate of nitrogen applied to turf.

In addition to explaining the nitrogen cycle, Dr. Petrovic examined research results showing where the nitrogen applied to turf ends up and what the percentages are. His conclusions were that 10% to 75% is taken up by the plant, 35% to 40% is stored in the soil, 1 to 36% is lost to the atmosphere and 0% to 50% is lost through leaching to groundwater.

This is significant because of the concern of nitrate pollution in the groundwater and its effect on the health of those who drink that water. Nitrates are known to be carcinogenic, mutagenic and may cause the Blue Baby Syndrome affecting newborn infants.

For those reasons it is critical that we more fully understand the fate of nitrogen applied to the soil.

The subject of groundwater pollution was addressed by Nick Christians, Professor of Turfgrass Science at Iowa State University. He spoke on the use of pesticides and water management. His focus was on the factors affecting groundwater pollution and how to deal with them.



Keynote speaker, Dr. Van Cline of The Toro Company.



Scott Hausmann, DNR Water Regulation Chief.



Professor Marty Petrovic's appearance at the Symposium was the second time he's come to Wisconsin to speak at the Symposium.

The primary factors affecting contamination are: the type of pesticide being used; the type of soil at the application site; the climate, geology and depth to groundwater at that site and the management practices instituted at the site.

When trying to determine the level of contamination possible at a specific area, it is important to consider all of these factors and make the necessary changes in the management practices and the pesticides used to avoid groundwater contamination.



Jim Latham did his usual superb job of summarizing the message of the 1988 Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium.



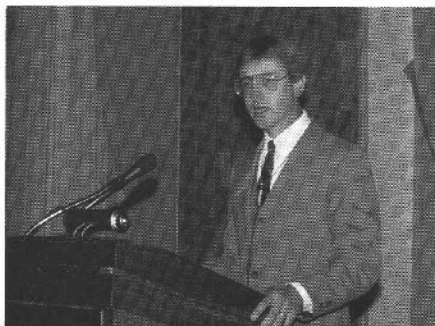
Dr. Nick Christlans, Iowa State University.



Bud Quandt traveled a long way (St. Petersburg, Florida) to address the 23rd Symposium.



Ted Horton's second appearance before the Symposium was as professional and informative as his first one a few years ago.



"Dusty" Kienert



Dr. Michael Agnew, Iowa State University.

Keeping with a tradition of the Symposium, our USGA Green Section Director, James Latham, provided the Symposium roundup on the final day. His comment was that this was the best Symposium he has attended. Jim was right. The drought of 1988 has made us all aware of the need to keep up with information and the times we are in, and that we must always be informed professionals.

His perceptions on the major theme of the Symposium that turf is a low priority product in water use and that golf turf may, in times of short water supply, be deemed frivolous in the public eye, certainly was true in the eyes of the Symposium speakers.

If the Symposium did nothing else, it made all those in attendance realize the importance of water in our management of golf turf and the need to preserve the right to use that commodity for economic and ecological reasons.

The Symposium Committee — Belfield, Bell, Latham, Miller, Otto, Quast, Spindler, and Welch — did their usual outstanding job of planning for this year's meeting. Extra special thanks go to Jim Spindler for handling the endless details that go into a successful meeting. The quality of this year's edition has made their task next year even more difficult — this will be a tough act to follow.

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