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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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