



June Frowns Turned into Smiles in July and August!

By Monroe S. Miller

Some members of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association were having flashbacks to 1988 this past June, reliving the nightmare drought of that year.

Dry conditions were found well beyond the state borders, and, in fact, included most of the Midwest.

It was common for areas to be six inches below normal in precipitation.

Insult was added to injury on June 17th when a tornado ripped through Wisconsin, starting in Middleton and ending at Lake Michigan. It prevented Bruce Worzella and Gary Zwirlein from attending Gayle Worf's retirement event.

The tornado touched close to home—it removed the roof from Jeff Parks' home. Fortunately, no one in Jeff's family was injured. In fact, in his typical fashion, the repairs to his house were completed about as quickly as anyone else's in Dane County.

Most lucky of all was the lack of serious injuries; no lives were lost, either.

Little rain accompanied the storm, by the way.

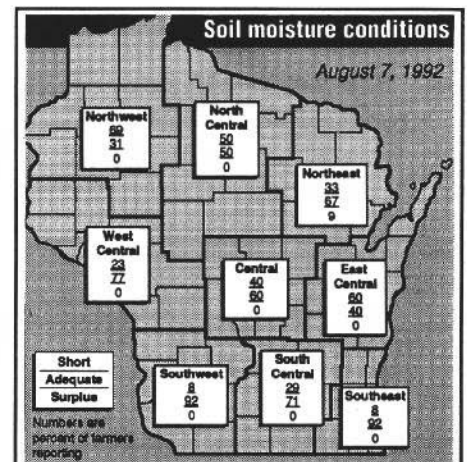
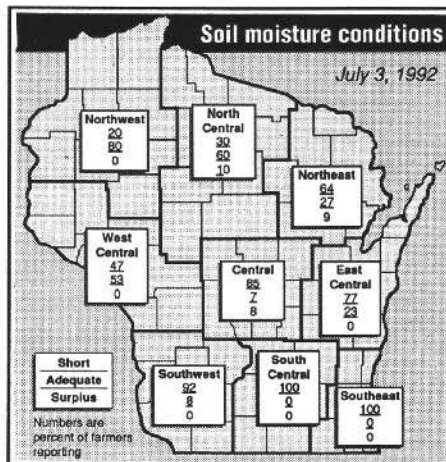
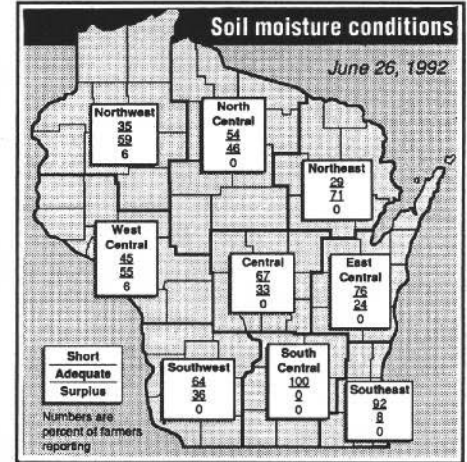
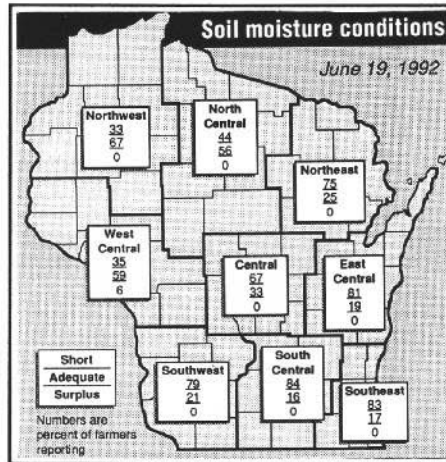
The scorching hot weather ended rather abruptly the day after the first day of summer when record cold hit the Great Lakes region.

An arctic weather system brought two days—the 20th and the 21st—of broken low temperature records.

For us, the sight of frost on drought stressed rough grasses was unusual, as was the white of irrigated greens, tees and fairways.

For Wisconsin farmers, the frost was a killer. Estimates were that between ten and twenty percent of the corn crop suffered damage. In our area, thousands of acres were literally turned brown, causing corn fields to look more like October than June.

Northern Wisconsin actually saw temperatures in the mid-20s! Dan Barrett told me he was wearing gloves and a stocking cap on the Fourth of July.



Frustration pretty much ended in the first and second weeks of July when significant rainfall blessed the state. Prosperity of the grass returned! Fears lessened! Golf course superintendents could rest comfortably again (for a few days, at least).

Although the rains were appreciated, we were still three plus inches below normal rainfall in our town at July's end.

More is needed. Here's hoping...

The EPA is in the news daily, it seems. News of late has a bearing on our business.

The EPA has made the first step toward offering financial incentives and regulatory relief to pesticide

manufacturers that develop safer products.

The agency is now seeking public comment as it tries to promote the use of insecticides that pose a lower public health and environment risk.

"Our goal is to develop policies to create improved economic incentive for the development, registration and use of newer biologicals and other types of low-risk pesticides," said an assistant administrator for pesticides. "This effort to encourage innovative approaches is part of EPA's initiative to prevent pollution."

Their plan for new safer pesticide policy has been in the works for several years. It would be designed to reward pesticides that pose low risks,

and to replace pesticides that post a significant risk to human health or the environment.

The effort could also cut the costs of marketing a new pesticide and speed the time it takes to bring a new pesticide to market. That time can now take as long as seven years because of the studies required.

Other actions under consideration by the agency are:

1. Counseling applicants early in the process to clarify registration requirements.
2. Accelerating the review process.
3. Waiving certain fees.

It seems like these are all moves toward a win-win situation for all involved.

Sometime in June a federal appeals court in San Francisco disallowed any trace of four pesticides in processed foods, ignoring that their ruling imposes a zero tolerance.

The decision seems unrealistic since you cannot find any food that doesn't have natural carcinogens. It allows natural carcinogens at unsafe levels but not man-made products at a safe level.

That decision is of interest to us because two of the products are useful in turfgrass management—benomyl and mancozeb. This action may well hasten their departure from our list of fungicides.

A survey of Wisconsin residents that was released in July gave the UW System very high grades.

Surprising to me was the fact that Wisconsin people value graduate education more than undergraduate education. That adds credibility to the role the NOER facility will play with graduate students.

The Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory reported that 80 percent of adults surveyed deemed grad education "very important". Seventy-seven percent called the undergrad programs "very important".

UW administrators had to be especially pleased when 85 percent of those surveyed statewide agreed that the UW gives "a good return" on their tax dollars.

Overall, 93 percent said they had a very favorable or somewhat favorable impression of the UW system.

Count me in that 93 percent, please.

Although most citizens are pleased with the UW system, I've not spoken to a single solitary soul who is pleased with Wisconsin's rating as absolutely the worst, dead last place in the country to retire.

Why? TAXES.

MONEY magazine surveyed states on the amount of taxes retirees can expect to pay. We came in 51st. Last.

The editors said the Wisconsin tax load for a "typical retired couple" was a startling annual tax of \$7,449. Maryland was second worst with a \$5,935 obligation, far better than ours. We are last by a country mile of \$1,500.

Alaska, on the other hand, had a typical annual tax of \$133.

The survey of 50 states and the District of Columbia was based on the income tax, sales tax, gas tax and property tax for a hypothetical couple.

People in our state need to wake up before election day and vote out of office the losers who are taxing us out of existence. As much as I love this state, retirement elsewhere is looking more and more sensible.

For a full reading of the bad news, see the July issue of *MONEY* magazine; the story starts on page 146.

Those of us who grew up in rural Wisconsin generally very much like the county fairs we enjoyed in our youth. Even today they are pretty much like they were thirty or forty years ago.

The midway rides, the livestock shows and judging, and the 4-H displays are great fun.

So are the tractor pulls. The ones I especially enjoy today are the antique tractors. One of the guys I work with—Val Breunig—is an ace operator in these events. Val currently owns a refurbished Oliver Row Crop 88 that he hauls around Wisconsin for tractor pulling. He's used other tractors, too. The most notable in my preferences was a John Deere Model 70.

Tractor pulling is reaching down to equipment sized to the scale we use on our golf courses. There was one such tractor pull in Oregon, Wisconsin on August 1st—a lawn tractor contest.

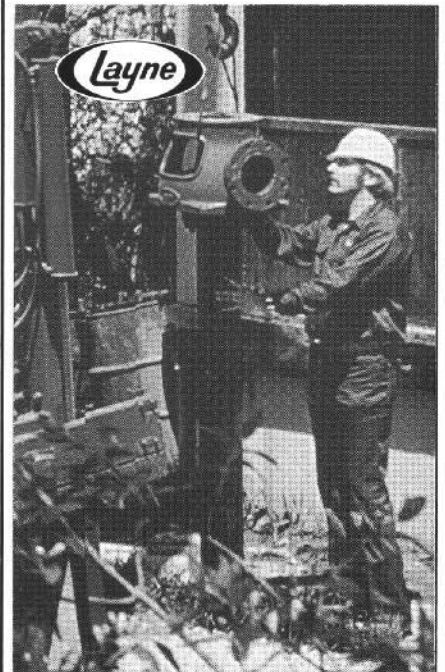
They do everything the big guys do at their tractor pulls. These miniatures hook up to an appropriately sized sled and on command lurch forward to see how far they pull the sled before breaking traction and momentum.

There were 150 people present to watch lawn tractors fitted out with big tires belch smoke and exhaust in an effort to win.

I learned there is even an organization—the U.S. Lawn Mower Racing Association—that caters to this sport. They promote the sport and require safety rules like helmets and cutting blade removal.

The small tractors here have names just like the big ones have.

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Raisin' Hell, Bull Pull, and Slimer were the best. Some machines had super paint jobs. Others had weights hung out front to keep the wheels down.

There was competition in several classes—10 h.p. stock, 18 h.p. stock, mod-stock, pro-stock, superstock and four-cylinder.

Cub Cadets, built by the old IH Company, dominated the competition.

Drivers ranged in age from 7 to 77 and included women operators.

What's next in the logical evolution of pulling contests—triplex greens-mowers? Trap rakes? Cushmans?

Probably better let it stop with garden tractors!

A lot of WGCSA members have started feeling comfortable again, now that right-to-know programs are in place, AG 29 ramifications have been studied and fuel storage rules have been met.

Well, better get uncomfortable because the EPA is coming at us again. Or Joe Homeowner for now, at least.

The EPA calculated that the nation's 83 million lawn mowers produce as much exhaust pollution as 3.5 million new cars.

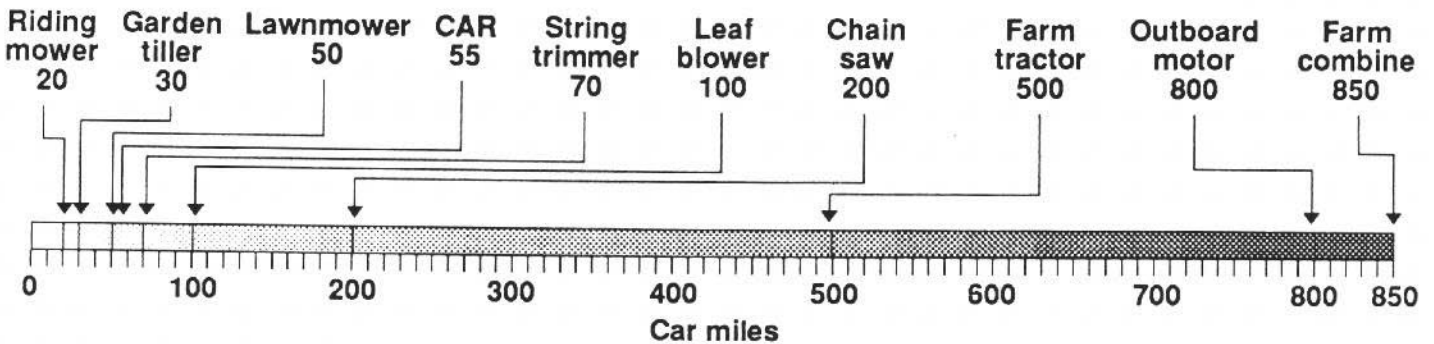
Their estimates are that using a gas-powered mower for one hour will generate as much exhaust as driving your car for almost two days.

What is the EPA proposing? They

are initiating a program to replace gas mowers with electrics. And they are working with engine manufacturers on ways to make engines run cleaner.

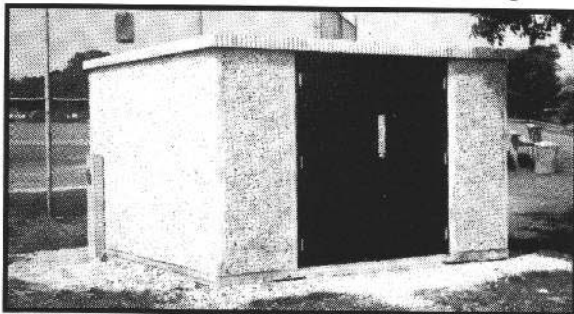
No question that this focus will affect us. We may be cutting greens with an electric greensmower sooner than we think. Parts inventories will all include catalytic converters for our small engines that power everything from utility cars to towing tractors.

Cars are the obvious polluters in our environment and are a benchmark for comparison with the above-mentioned more subtle sources, many found in our shops. The following graphic gives you some details.



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