



That Old Annual Review

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Many departments at the University of Wisconsin-Madison have their managers write year-end annual reviews. The department I work for is one of them. I work for Agricultural Research Station (ARS) which operates twelve University research farms widespread throughout the state. It's likely there is one in your vicinity. These reviews can be a pain to do especially when you have so many other projects going like I do right now. But they really do offer many positive benefits in the long run. It's a good way to document

your past year's accomplishments and set goals for the coming year.

And there have been big accomplishments at the Noer Facility in 2002. I'm not talking about the outstanding turf research conducted by the professors. I'm going to report on the work I do as an employee of Ag Research Stations. The three biggest projects accomplished this year were replacing the facility carpet, adding more parking, and developing 10 more acres for research land. For these annual reviews, I also like to document weather

occurrences, pest activities, success of field days and other events, and describe how much support we get from industry that helps us maintain the facility and get the research done.

The first improvement we did this year was to replace the facility carpet and repaint the offices. The carpet had become pathetic and didn't leave a very good first impression for visitors. I first set off to try to find funding because new carpeting wasn't in my budget. Luckily the professors were as tired of the worn out

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carpet as I was. So they chipped in some funds. Then I was able to get a large chunk of funding from my department and through a grant from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. I also saved half the installation cost by doing lots of the labor myself. Now if I can just pound on the grad students and other laborers to keep the carpet clean, it may last another 10 years.

The second improvement was to add more parking spaces, which may not seem like a big deal. But it was to me. This facility was built with only nine parking spaces. That may have worked 10 years ago but the facility is utilized by many more people these days. It bothered me to have employees and grad students parking all over the lawn. This is supposed to be a state of the art turf research center for goodness sake!

So I set off this spring with a budget of nil and constructed 13 more spaces. I soon discovered when I started excavating that I was digging into an old barn site. The old silo and barn foundations were a challenge to work around with my little John Deere tractor but I also found a bottomless supply of sand which must have been the floor of the old barn. That sand worked great for the sub-grade of the new parking lot. I then found a state agency that takes care of facility roads and it donated gravel for the parking lot. We thus got a new parking lot for free. We finished it off with a nice landscaping bed, compliments of Mark Watts, from Tumbledown Trails Golf Club, lending his tree spade to relocate 3 small hawthorn trees and my summer staff helping to relocate an ornamental bed.

Those accomplishments were nothing like the main highlight of the summer though. We added 10 more research acres to the facility. The original land has 127 irrigated plots which are almost 100% utilized. The researchers have turned



Relocating ornamental bed with new parking lot in background.



Aerial view of new land prior to seeding.



Bruce Company reshaping new 10 acres.

away projects because there wasn't land to conduct them on. Over the years we realized we had to find more land. Luckily the University owned 10 acres adjacent to the facility. Unfortunately it was too sloping to conduct research on. Along comes Lee

Bruce from the Bruce Company. He offered to recontour the land for a price we couldn't refuse. On top of that, Olds Seed Solutions donated all the seed and Spring Valley Turf Products donated all the fertilizer to grow in the new land. This new land development

is a shining example of a very collaborative effort.

Those three accomplishments were pretty major in my mind and surely got documented in the review. The rest of the review deals with my inputs of Research Assistance, Technical Duties, Outreach/Teaching, Writing/Editing, and Extra Service I provided to the University, my department, and the community. Those notes are pretty tedious compared to the new projects so I'm going to spare you the details on those.

I would like to mention all the donations of equipment, supplies, and services that industry donated to the Noer Facility, though. I wouldn't have been able to accomplish those projects and the researchers wouldn't have been able to conduct all their important studies without this help. I'm sure I speak for all the researchers and the University when I say thanks in keeping the Noer Facility one of the top facilities of its kind in the nation. Here is the list of donors to the facility that I know about: I'm sure there are other donors who gave directly to the researchers that I don't know about, so I'm sorry if I missed your names.

- Aventis/Chipco
- B&B Sprayers
- Bruce Company
- Club Car
- Cushman
- Greensmix
- Horst Distributing
- Jacobsen Equipment
- John Deere Equipment
- John Deere Horicon
- JW Turf Equipment
- National Mowers
- Olds Seed and Solutions
- Prosource One
- Reinders Turf and Irrigation
- Spring Valley Turf Products
- Syngenta
- Toro Equipment
- Toro NSN
- Turfco

- United Horticultural Services
- UW-Madison College of Ag and Life Sciences
- Watts Landscaping
- Wisconsin Turf Equipment

Other items of note during 2002 were that we conducted another very successful Summer Field Day and Turf Research Golf Fundraiser. Field Day is really an effort of several departments, researchers, grad students, and staff whom I'm sure are all proud of the event. Although the attendance numbers for 2002 were down substantially for Field Day, the event was still a resounding success as far as showing off the facility and all the new research. This was a little difficult to pull off with the mini-drought that occurred this summer. We went 24 days without rain in July except for one day when a trace 0.08 inch of rain fell. During this same period we had two outbreaks of Black Turfgrass *Ataenius* where we counted as many as 125 grubs per one square foot.

Attendance for the Golf Fundraiser, which is mainly organized through the Noer Facility, was a different story. The fundraiser sold out for the first time in the event's history. This had way less to do with the event organizing at the Noer Facility and way more to do with Mike Lee hosting the event at the Meadow Valleys Course of Blackwolf Run. For your information, there are already 20 people who reserved spots for next year's golf fundraiser which will be hosted by Tony Rzadzki at the Bull at Pinehurst Farms in early October. And the price of the event hasn't even been announced yet. Don't be left out next year. A Golf Fundraiser flyer will be mailed out in May.

Now back to my annual review. Another part of the review asks us to set goals for the coming year.

Here is a list of some of the items listed that I hope to accomplish in 2003:

1. New land

- Meet with professors over winter to discuss immediate & future needs for the new land.
- Continue to work with City of Madison to expedite the construction of the surface waterway that will traverse the new land.
- Work with professors to develop a Hatch Grant proposal for irrigation and maintenance equipment for the first phase development of the new land.
- Install temporary irrigation and maintenance procedures this spring, for new studies that will be established on new land.

2. Budget

- Develop a better budget expense tracking procedure to manage the facility for the likely state budget reductions.
- Keep a list of needed supplies for users of the Noer Facility to purchase to more equitably share the real costs of conducting research.

3. Facility Management

- Implement more policy statements for users of the facility (graduate students, summer staff). Policies will include equipment and tool usage, safety, and upkeep of plots and the facility. Conduct regular meetings about abiding by the policies.
- Upgrade the central irrigation program to the latest version of Sitepro. Investigate mapping the facility with GPS and installing this information into the control program to make the operation of the irrigation system more user-friendly.
- Find creative ways to continue keeping up the appear-

ance of the facility in light of likely budget reductions. Options will be to enlist master gardeners, find more donated plant material, and use more practices to cut down on hand labor.

- Find funding to convert our copy room into a reference library.
4. Professional Development
- Read more text and periodical information on turf culture.
 - Do more information retrieval of turfgrass subjects on the Internet.
 - Learn more about Microsoft Office as it pertains to editing newsletters, planning turf organization functions, and keeping records for the facility.
 - Attend as many turfgrass con-

ferences and meetings as time/ budget allow.

5. Association Business

- Improve activities I provide for the WTA, WGCSA, and Wisconsin Sports Turf Managers Association (WSTMA) like writing for or editing their newsletters and helping to organize educational and fundraising events.
- Continue serving on the WSTMA executive committee.

6. Research and Demonstrations

- Cooperate more with the professors to install many new studies on the new and existing land.
- Add more types of ornamental grasses to the cold temperature tolerance demonstration.

- Install several new and informative studies for our 2003 bi-annual Homeowner Turf Day.

These are more goals than I'll be able to accomplish. It's good to put them on paper anyway and chip away as time and priorities allow. In other words it's good to have a plan. I don't know if you do annual reviews at your place. If you can find time, it would be a good way to document all your past year's accomplishments and set goals for the next year. I had to use the better part of a Sunday that I could have been spending with the family, to find time to write this article about my annual review. But at least I'll make it home in time to watch the Packers thrash the Vikings tonight. ♣



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