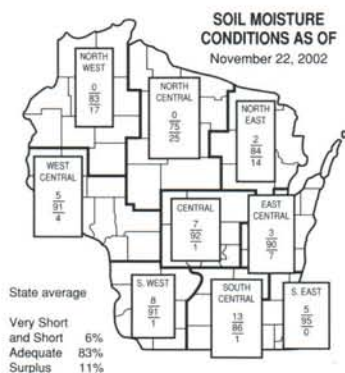


Another Brown Holiday Season

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

It seems anymore it is the norm to I miss out on snow for the Thanksgiving to New Year holiday season. Such was the case again the past six weeks, resulting in another brown Christmas. Recent Decembers have been very warm, excepting the year 2000. Who could forget the unusually cold weather and the nearly three feet of snow during that Christmas season? Three feet of snow will give you cold temperatures, that is a certainty. December 2002 was more like 1998 (2.2" of snow), 1999 (3.2" of snow), and 2001 (2.3" of snow). This past December saw temperatures push to near 50 degrees F in the southern extremes of the state a few days after Christmas, far too warm for natives like me.



Interesting charts, graphs and tables from the professional staff at the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service are here, and also on pages 49 and 50 for your permanent record.

Most of us, as we reflect back to the year past, will remember it as a warm year. We are correct, according to NASA scientists who monitor global temperatures. The year 2002 was, in fact, the second

warmest year in recorded history, globally speaking. The three warmest years have occurred in 1998, 2002 and 2001. The year 1998 holds the record and 2001 was the third warmest. Some are worried that the greenhouse effect is happening quicker than expected.

The Earth's temperature during 2002 was 58.35 degrees F, more than one degree above the long-term average of 57.2 degrees F. What's scary is the fact that 2001 experienced a La Nina event, which keeps temperatures lower. Without it, who knows how warm 2001 might have been.

Our working lives are so greatly affected by the weather that such data disturbs some of us (me, at least) a whole lot more than the guy who works in an air conditioned building all day. If greenhouse gases are responsible for this increase in Earth temps, life is going to have to change. And soon.

A couple of recent, significant moves by GCSAA have struck me the wrong way. Both are, in my view and in the view of many Wisconsin superintendents I have talked to, either untimely or unnecessary. I am speaking of their decision to raise dues, and the preliminary steps required to move headquarters out of Lawrence, Kansas.

The dues decision-makers must be living in a different world than the rest of the golf world. We are in a down time for golf - rounds, golfers, dollars, members, outings and nearly any other measure or indicator of golf business have declined. Directors and officers

should be forced to read Pat Norton's excellent piece in this issue of *The Grass Roots*. He is nose to nose with the business realities of golf and I don't believe Nettle Creek CC raised its green fees when business went down.

But GCSAA raised dues. And yes, I read all of the PR out of headquarters - the rational and justifications and all that, well, PR. Fact remains, in a serious downturn it is illogical raise dues. Why didn't the association reduce expenses or costs, like golf courses have to do and as Pat detailed in his article. Did that occur to anyone? Their failure to do so, once again, leads to distrust and a loss of credibility and the renewed charge that GCSAA cares only about big budget operations.

Where to cut costs? Let a few

Steuer
TURF FARM

Growers of
'Quality'
Bluegrass

Mineral & Peat

Pickup or Delivery
414-425-7767

hands-on members like Pat Norton tell you how. One place to start might be a substantial reduction in travel. That, however, seems to be sacred. I really enjoyed reading about the flap over the trip to the Ryder Cup. Normally, I have no problem with providing reasonable representation at such events. But it isn't believable that GCSAA would be greatly missed for one year; ask someone in an allied association two years hence who attended the Ryder Cup in 2002 for GCSAA. My guess is the question would be greeted with a blank stare. That is how important most of us feel it is. The symbolic gesture of passing on attending in a tough year would gain exponentially more than any meager benefit from being present. Let's at least be honest about it.

A foolish mistake was the response to criticism - parading the thoughts of GCSAA members from large courses whose travel budget probably exceeds the fertilizer budget of over half the members. Why not talk to a colleague from a small town 18-hole course who pays his own dues and travel? Too often his voice in our association isn't heard or listened to. Why cannot these association

leaders exercise a little sensitivity and common sense?

The initial steps required before moving the headquarters out of Lawrence really upsets me. There isn't any legitimate reason I have heard, including a nice discussion of the matter with Steve Mona, that justifies such a move.

Who cares how many people visit headquarters? It is a place of business, not a tourist destination. There is a nice little historical display, much of which is moved to the GCSAA conference for members' enjoyment, but that is about it. It is an office building. I have been there many times, most often as a committee member of one sort or another, but also on my own a couple of times. It has a central location near a large airport in the center of America. That was the point when the move from Chicago to Lawrence was made. What has changed? If a members wants to visit, they most surely can do that now, fairly easily.

The gossip I have heard and read indicates strong favor for a move to Florida, which would physically put the headquarters a long, long way for people on the west coast.

The biggest negative comes with what I predict would be a sub-

stantial loss of important, experienced and well-trained staff. I cannot imagine why someone with long term ties to Lawrence and the Midwest would want to move to a metro area in Florida. The potential problems are scary.

And unnecessary. For all the turmoil and ill will that would be created, answer this question: "How will the average member benefit from such a move? I will give you my answer - he or she wouldn't.

The GCSAA functions as well in Lawrence as it would in Orlando or Phoenix. I like Rod Johnson's suggestion: if they want to move headquarters, why not move it to Sheboygan?

And speaking of Rod Johnson, thanks go out to him and Beverly and Danny Quast for the work and planning that went into a wonderful evening to honor Wayne Otto's retirement. Such fun we won't have again in quite a while.

The Wisconsin Turfgrass and Greenspace Expo 2003 is almost here. I hope to see you at the Marriott West in Middleton for a truly excellent educational experience. ♣

GCSAA ATLANTA 2003

An Event of Worldly Proportions

February 10-15, 2003

Georgia World Congress Center
Atlanta, GA