A Brave New Year

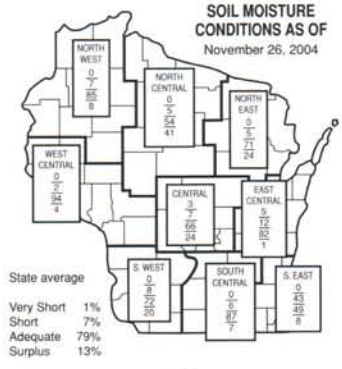
By Monroe S. Miller, *Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club*

You would think Wisconsin golf course superintendents would be basking in serenity these days - the slow paced and normal days of winter. I guess we mostly were doing that, to some extent anyway, until the 2005 Wisconsin Turfgrass EXPO on January 11 and 12. The heavy rain that fell in southern Wisconsin those days spoiled the pleasant mood I was in.

In our town, the one inch-plus of rain dampened the prospect many of us had felt that maybe, just maybe, the golf turf we are responsible for was going to get through another winter season with no more than normal damage. Now we are not so sure. Even Bob Vavrek wouldn't predict how the water and slush that turned to ice when the temperatures plummeted to -15 degrees F. two days after that would affect golf turf. Many golf courses look like ice-skating rinks now. And in my career, ice has damaged more turf than anything else during the dormant winter months.

Right around the 15th of January, the average daily high temperature started to rise. And once you get that going, you cannot stop it! I have discovered that with the longer days, the higher sun and the slowly rising temperatures comes a renewal and optimism that leads us all to believe, with all sincerity, this will be our best year ever.

Graphic summaries of the 2004 weather and growing season, as prepared by the great Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service, are presented below and on page 39 for your edification. Makes you wonder what the same graphs and tables will look like for this Year 2005.



The new *Encyclopedia of Entomology,* edited by John K. Capenera, is now available and Wisconsin's Dr. R. Chris Williamson is one of the authors. If you want to read what Chris wrote about the biology and management of turfgrass insects of the U.S., see Vol. 3, P - Z, pp. 2372 - 2402.

Congratulations are in order; it was a high honor to be chosen to write the section on turf insects.

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The National Climatic Data Center puts out seasonal outlooks to 13 months in advance, but you cannot put a lot of faith in these outlooks (at least in my opinion). That notwithstanding, a mild El Nino is expected to persist through much of the upcoming year, possibly lasting into next winter. This should lead to below normal precipitation for the early portion of 2005, with above normal temperatures being a little better possibility as we move into winter of 2005 - 2006. But who knows...

Maybe a better predictor would be the lilacs. A research at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

MONTHLY TEMPERATURES: 2004 GROWING SEASON AND NORMAL*

District	April 1/		May 1/		June 1/		July 1/		August 1/		September 1/	
	2004	Normal	2004	Normal	2004	Normal	2004	Normal	2004	Normal	2004	Normal
	Degrees Fahrenheit											
NW	42.0	41.7	50.1	54.4	59.5	63.1	65.5	68.1	59.9	65.9	62.5	56.6
NC	40.8	40.4	49.4	53.2	59.3	61.8	64.9	66.4	59.2	64.2	62.2	55.3
NE	42.4	41.3	50.4	53.6	59.9	62.5	64.6	67.0	60.5	64.8	62.0	56.0
WC	47.1	45.2	55.0	57.4	63.4	66.4	68.6	70.8	63.6	68.3	64.7	59.3
C	45.9	44.5	54.1	56.7	63.2	65.8	67.9	70.2	62.7	67.7	64.1	59.0
EC	44.5	42.8	51.7	54.6	61.6	64.1	66.9	69.5	63.6	67.9	64.7	59.8
SW	47.9	46.1	57.2	57.9	64.9	67.2	68.7	71.4	64.3	69.0	64.5	60.5
SC	47.8	45.8	57.1	57.8	65.2	67.2	69.2	71.3	64.9	68.9	64.9	60.6
SE	47.3	45.0	54.9	56.3	63.6	66.0	68.6	71.2	65.0	69.4	65.3	61.4
STATE	44.4	43.2	52.7	55.5	61.8	64.5	66.8	69.1	62.0	66.9	63.5	58.1

1/Preliminary estimates, 2004. * Normal is defined as the 30-year average for the years 1971-2000. Source: State Climatologist.

MONTHLY RAINFALL: 2004 GROWING SEASON AND NORMAL*

District	April 1/		May 1/		June 1/		July 1/		August 1/		September 1/	
	2004	Normal	2004	Normal	2004	Normal	2004	Normal	2004	Normal	2004	Normal
	Inches											
NW	2.63	2.39	5.33	3.29	2.54	4.19	4.05	4.29	3.40	4.44	4.36	3.89
NC	2.72	2.40	5.06	3.31	3.50	4.01	2.49	4.06	3.13	4.36	2.86	4.03
NE	2.12	2.65	5.01	3.29	4.59	3.69	2.53	3.70	2.31	3.81	1.46	3.74
WC	1.85	3.05	9.18	3.69	5.47	4.24	4.48	4.45	3.19	4.54	4.14	3.82
C	1.54	3.02	8.85	3.52	6.72	3.88	2.82	4.13	3.47	4.22	1.22	3.72
EC	2.01	2.81	8.94	2.95	5.12	3.51	2.47	3.38	2.52	3.86	0.83	3.42
SW	1.68	3.55	11.66	3.60	5.76	4.35	4.18	4.33	3.81	4.46	0.80	3.42
SC	2.11	3.47	9.83	3.40	5.37	4.19	3.84	4.07	3.55	4.24	0.65	3.51
SE	2.15	3.48	10.54	3.13	5.13	3.76	2.54	3.82	3.63	4.22	0.47	3.48
STATE	2.17	2.86	7.64	3.37	4.61	4.02	3.33	4.07	3.20	4.27	2.29	3.74

1/Preliminary estimates, 2004. * Normal is defined as the 30-year average for the years 1971-2000. Source: State Climatologist.

COMPARATIVE TEMPERATURE AND PRECIPITATION DATA

District	Average Temperature						Total Precipitation					
	June - September						April - September					
	Normal*	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004 1/	Normal*	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004 1/
	Degrees Fahrenheit						Inches					
NW	63.6	61.6	64.6	65.8	64.3	62.2	22.3	21.5	25.6	28.6	20.3	24.7
NC	62.3	61.3	63.5	65.2	63.6	61.8	22.1	24.1	24.0	28.0	19.9	18.6
NE	63.0	61.6	63.6	65.3	63.6	62.0	20.9	23.0	21.3	26.9	21.3	18.6
WC	66.7	64.9	67.2	68.8	67.3	65.4	23.5	25.4	27.6	29.3	18.6	27.4
C	66.1	64.7	66.6	68.4	66.4	64.7	22.3	27.1	25.8	24.0	19.5	25.9
EC	66.0	64.7	66.7	68.3	65.8	64.6	20.0	24.5	22.4	20.1	20.3	21.6
SW	67.5	66.0	67.4	69.4	67.8	66.0	23.5	30.6	28.7	24.0	19.4	29.1
SC	67.6	66.5	67.8	70.0	67.8	66.1	22.7	30.6	27.6	20.6	19.0	25.8
SE	67.6	66.6	68.0	70.0	67.4	66.1	22.0	31.8	25.5	21.7	17.9	25.1
STATE	65.1	63.6	65.7	67.4	65.6	63.8	22.2	25.6	25.3	25.8	19.7	23.7

1/Preliminary estimates, 2004. * Normal is defined as the 30-year average for the years 1971-2000. Source: State Climatologist.

and Cornell University scientists have found that lilacs are blooming about four days earlier than the did in 1965. David Wolfe, a plant ecology professor at Cornell, says nature's calendar is changing due to an increase in greenhouse gases. "It's not just the weather data telling us there is a warming trend going on. We are now seeing the living world responding to the climate change as well," Wolfe said.

The Cornell study is consistent with other examinations involving the biological impact of rising temperatures, but these studies have been much more limited in geographic scope. Mark Schwartz, the UW - Milwaukee investigator, studied "phenological" events, the study of how living organisms respond to seasonal and climatic changes to their environment, and discovered that certain lilac species green up five to six days earlier across North America in a 35-year period from 1959 to 1993. Schwartz thinks what we are seeing in this period is related to warmer spring temperatures.

Early in 2004, Harvard University scientists also reported finding evidence of earlier blooming in specimens at the famed Arnold Arboretum in Boston, while botanists at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. found the city's famous Japanese cherry trees are blooming about a week earlier than they were 30 years ago. The Northeast Regional Climate Center at Cornell reports that the average annual temperature in the Northeast has increased by 1.8 degrees F. since 1900, which is slightly higher than the global average of 1.1 degrees F. The greatest rate of warming has occurred during the winter months (December through February) with an average increase of almost 3 degrees F. over the past 100 years — a rate that has accelerated over the past 30 years to 4.4 degrees F.

The Cornell researchers analyzed data from 72 locations in the northeast. Genetically identical lilacs were planted during the 1960s and 1970s as part of a joint USDA-funded project involving Cornell and the University of Vermont. The lilacs were planted to help farmers predict plant and harvest dates, but have now provided a historical record of blooming dates.

The Cornell study also included apples and grapes at four sites in New York. They were blooming six to eight days earlier than in 1965.

The earlier spring data may in fact excite many golf players since it indicates earlier spring seasons and earlier golf course openings. But the change could encourage invasive species, adversely affect pollina-

tion of plants and disrupt the relationship between some species of plants and animals. Bird migrations would be affected and plant pathogens could increase.

And, despite the earlier blooming and potentially longer seasons, it is doubtful our budgets will increase to cover the cost.

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The state Department of Tourism commissioned a study to determine the impact of the PGA Championship at Whistling Straits on our state's economy. The numbers are in and show the golf event pumped $76.4 million into Wisconsin's economy. Shattering the previous record for a PGA Championship of $50.4 million, set in 2001 at the Atlanta Athletic Club.

Even more impressive is the fact that the golf event is likely the largest influx of money ever for a sporting event in Wisconsin. By comparison, the 2002 major league baseball All-Star Game at Miller Park in Milwaukee generated between $50 million and $60 million.

The Department of Tourism had expected a $70 million impact, so the tournament exceeded their expectations.

In fact, golf fans of Wisconsin embraced the PGA unlike any PGA Championship before it. In addition to the record spending, this year's tournament also established event records for tickets sold (94,000) and total spectators (321,000). The effect of all of this is the likelihood we will see a return visit of the PGA in the future. It is also no secret that Whistling Straits owner Herbert Kohler would like to host the US Open and is discussing that with the USGA. The year 2012 comes up as a possible year.

The PGA Championship also brought 20 - plus hours of tournament broadcast time, giving the outside world some beautiful views of our beautiful state. For all of these things, those of us who live and make a living in golf are grateful.

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The city of Madison and Dane county bans on the use of turf fertilizers containing phosphorus that went into effect on January 1st are being challenged in federal court. The lawsuit was filed by a group of fertilizer retailers, lawn care businesses and trade groups. They allege in the lawsuit that the ordinances are pre-empted by federal and state laws and violate the equal protection and free speech clauses of the United States and Wisconsin constitutions. The group wants a federal judge to declare the ordinances null and void and stop the city and county from implementing and enforcing them. It claims the ordinances aren't support by law or science.

City and county officials are going to fight the lawsuit, despite research from the Noer Turfgrass Research Facility that shows poorly maintained, unfertilized lawns contribute 40% more phosphorus than well maintained, fertilized lawns. Also, the suit notes that dog manure contributes 91 times more phosphorus to runoff than a fertilized lawn and that manure from a single goose contributes 68 times more.

The suit also claims Dane County exacerbates its problem with Eurasian milfoil by using mechanical harvesters. The harvesting creates thousands of milfoil strands, a method which increases milfoil reproduction.

Stay tuned.

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The wet weather we experienced in the spring and early summer not only influenced golf in Wisconsin, it inspired the winner of the Burlington Liars Club's annual contest.

Mardy Nersesian of Racine spends much of his summer at his cabin on Long Lake in Phillips. He is a 68-year-old retired high school art teacher who spent that wet period watching rainstorm after rainstorm come through. The weather inspired this fib that won him title of world champion liar.

"We had so much rain during the spring and summer seasons, there were puddles on our lakes."

There are a few golf course superintendents in Wisconsin who might argue that Mardy's claim is closer to the truth than a fib!

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For the second consecutive year, a golf course dog from Wisconsin has been selected to grace the "Superintendent's Best Friend" calendar. If you haven't noticed, Mark Kienert's eight-year old terrier mix — Sadie — is front and center for September 2005.

Congratulations to Mark and Sadie!

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Well, the old earth is starting another orbit around the sun. What kind of year will it be? Will it be better than 2004? We will at least have a chance to do better this year than last and if we are smart we will make the most of that chance.

Some good advice from the late UW-Madison CALS professor Chappie Chapman, a former neighbor of mine, could help us all be better each and every year: "These three principles are worthy of devoting your life to — do unto others as you would have them do unto you, honesty and fairness is the only policy, and pull your weight in every aspect of your life." Dr. Chapman's principles are worthy of reaffirmation or acceptance by all of us.