



A Gentle Year's End

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

Weather-wise, it did not feel like Thanksgiving to me this year when the day actually arrived. It was warm – over 60 degrees F. for several days around the holiday – and more were in shirtsleeves than heavy coats. At first I thought it was because I was in New York City visiting my daughter and son-in-law, but phone calls home indicated similar temperatures in the Midwest. Our course had quite a number of golf players around the Thanksgiving holiday. It was almost too warm to hunt deer!

That seemed only fair since October was such a lousy month for golf. The warm November days

gave some golf facilities in Wisconsin the chance to recoup some golf car and green fee revenue and end the year on a little better note.

We should be getting used to this warmer weather. The winter of 2005-2006 was the fifth warmest on record for the U.S. with an average temperature of 36.29 degrees F. – 1.2 degrees F. above normal. The warmest winter on record was 1999-2000 at 36.95 degrees F. The NOAA forecasts that the December through February period in the 48 contiguous states have about 2% less heating degree days than average

but 5% – 10% more than last year. They attribute this prediction to a weak El Nino under way in the Pacific Ocean.

The warm winter can be problematic to those in our profession. Generally, we are loath to get necessary and required shop work done when the temperatures outdoors offer the chance to do needed work on the golf course. Giving in to the temptation to do that can leave an operation poorly prepared for next year's golf season.

Although we had ample rainfall in our part of the state this past season, other sections were not so lucky. In early November the

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USDA announced that 12 north-western Wisconsin counties were eligible for drought assistance. The counties listed were Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Polk, Price Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor and Washburn. Although golf courses aren't eligible for this aid (as far as I understand it) the point is that it was very dry there this summer past.

We have all been there and in various years have been under similar conditions. But nevertheless, when it does happen to be your turn to suffer it seems like an eternity before the rains return.

The graphics from the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service are included here and tell the story of the weather for the past two months.

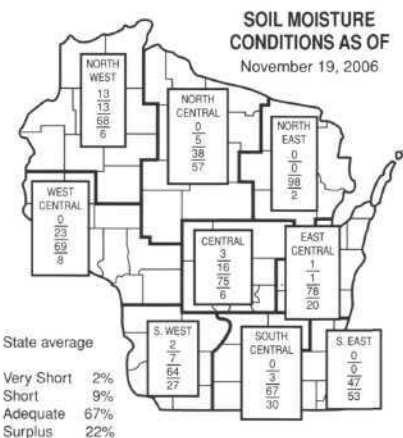
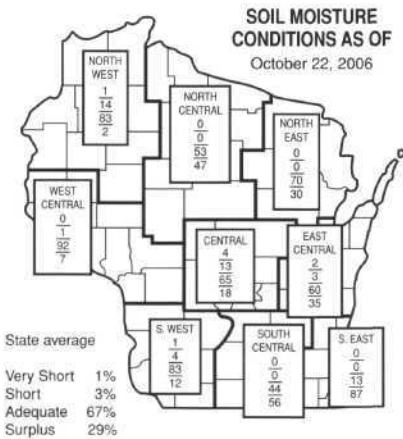
I was disappointed to miss the Symposium for the first time in many years (probably decades, actually), but I wasn't disappointed in the great holiday we experienced in the Big Apple. Christie and Jon live on East 97th Street near Mt. Sinai Medical School where she attends grad school. The streets are reasonably safe in the part of town; they are literally next to Central Park and close to a subway station, which gives you quick access to the greatest city in the world. We went to Macy's Parade, attended the Rockettes Christmas Show at Radio City Music Hall, shopped Fifth Avenue and Times Square (and rested in St. Patrick's Cathedral). And visited museums. I walked across the Brooklyn Bridge and back, stood quietly at the World Trade Center site and browsed through Strand's Bookstore. We couldn't have had a better time although part of the

price for that was missing our meeting in Kohler.

It was a great fall season for us. Our Wisconsin football team went 11 - 1 and we didn't miss a home game. The basketball team is off to a great start, too. Our daughter Holly and her husband Drew gave us our second grandson - Ben arrived on November 1st and looks like a tight end to me. We made a short visit to the pumpkin festival in Circleville, Ohio, FLW's Falling Water in Pennsylvania, stopped at both Latrobe CC and Foxburg CC, drove through the wine country in New York during harvest time and had an easy drive home. It has been sweet.

And now we move into the Christmas season, the most comfortable time of the year. Why, before you know it, the days will be getting longer!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, everybody! 🌿



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