

Another Dry Summer For Most of Us

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

Except for maybe the extreme southeast and southwest corners of the state, most moisture status maps show Wisconsin to be "abnormally dry," not a good thing when worry about over water table levels, surface water levels and even our famed Great Lakes. It was only a few days ago that I read a report that Lake Superior will reach an 80-year low level and has experienced over a 4 degree F increase in water temperatures. It has been so dry that some golf course construction projects have actually halted; it is impossible to shape or compact dust.

Much of the state got a drink on July 27th; some of the rain, unfortunately, came too fast to do much good. The Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service reported earlier that week that 80% of the state was either short or very short of soil moisture because of the below normal rainfall. Another fairly widespread storm in the first week of August helped improve the situation, also. Although we are lucky to have irrigation systems, nothing covers like rain from the sky. A lot of time and money has been spent on handwatering this summer. Employees with one-inch green hose and nozzles have been an almost more common site than those operating mowing equipment.

And it is not like it hasn't been hot and dry before. I have vivid recollections of my grandparents and parents talking about the summer of 1936. My family members were almost all involved in farming and the weather seriously threatened crops and livestock. Farmers were cutting the coarse weeds along roadsides and putting them in the barn in hope of getting through, somehow, the coming

winter. Crops were ruined, pastures dried up and so did streams and springs.

Search the Internet and you will see for yourself what it was like where you now live back in 1936. In our town the temperature hit 100 degrees F on July 7, 1936 and stayed there for a week. July 14th of that year saw 107 degrees F, a record that still stands, but it was

less than the 114 degrees the day before in the Dells! On July 13th of 1936, every weather reporting station in Wisconsin soared to 100 degrees F or higher.

August 18th, 1936 was 100 degrees and for much of the rest of the month it was over 90 degrees everyday. So don't relax yet; August can be a barn burner, too.

Although I was only nine, I can

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remember the hot summer of 1955. Two years before in 1953, August temperatures ended with a week in the 90s and had a 100 degree topper on the last day of the month.

Many readers experienced the heat of the summer of 1988; count me among them. Twelve days in July and August set all-time high

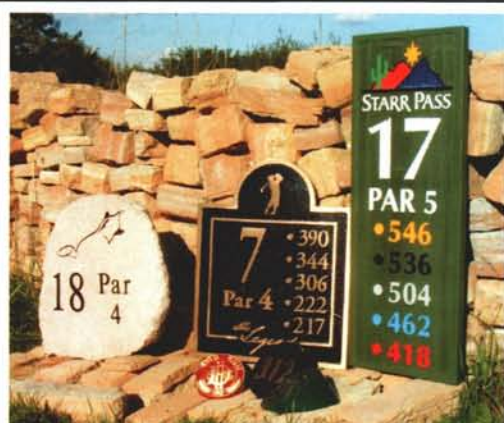
temperature records and six of them were over 100 degrees F. That was the summer, on about August 1st, that Midwest Irrigation started installation of our new irrigation system. Good timing!

So, yes, it has been hot and dry. And we complain (it is almost a duty!), yet courses in general were very playable - "fast and ugly," as our

esteemed WGCSA president Mike Lyons related to me. But, as it always has, the rains come and within days Wisconsin is green again.

But who hasn't been absolutely delighted with the reduced level of plant diseases? Honestly, I have seen only a couple dollar spot infections, likely where a boom missed. The dry weather has been accompanied by some days with lower dew points, making the lack of rainfall a little easier to accept. I have seen some anthracnose and some rhizoctonia, but that is about it.

As has been observed for almost forever, it all evens out. The soil moisture status of the various regions of the state is here for you review, thanks to the great staff at the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service.



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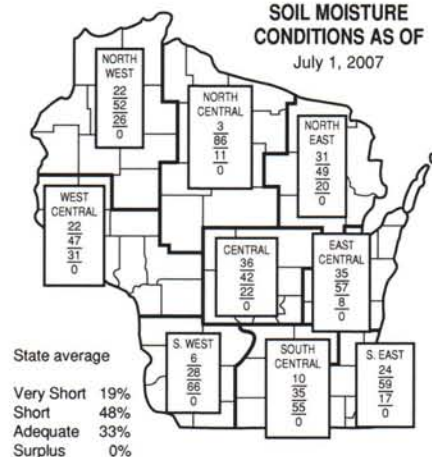
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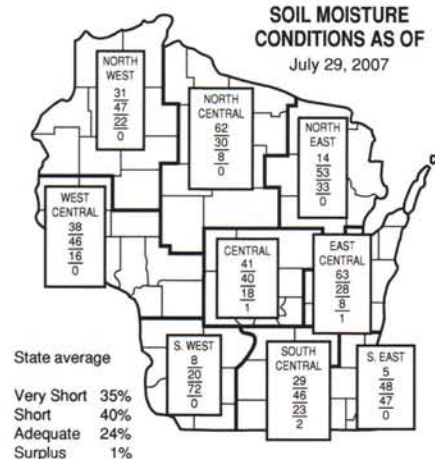
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SOIL MOISTURE
CONDITIONS AS OF
July 1, 2007



SOIL MOISTURE
CONDITIONS AS OF
July 29, 2007



I guess you could say it is the "elephant in the room" and is too hard to ignore. I am speaking, of course, of the TurfNet survey of turf colleges in the country. I looked through it quickly, fully expecting to see Wisconsin's land grant university ranked in the top ten. It should be.

Not only wasn't the school in the top ten, it wasn't even ranked.

I was angry and disgusted. And so were a lot of people associated with the program, past and present. We figured the reason for a no show was due to either laziness or incompetence somewhere along the line. I mean, when you look at a program with ONE undergrad student ranked in the top twenty, you can ONLY conclude that somehow or other the survey didn't make sense and was seriously flawed, whether we were included or not.

It is safe to say that we have gotten the appropriate attention. None of

our faculty were at any fault. The survey was sent to the wrong person, as near as I can tell (TurfNet's fault; a call to GCSAA would have given the accurate information for all universities, colleges and two-year schools) and someone (do not know who) in the UW - Madison sat on it until one day prior to the deadline.

John Stier has the right idea: the water is over the dam for this survey. He is focused on the positive aspect of designing a survey that will be accurate the next time one is conducted. Maybe then we will have data that will actually mean something.

By the way, among those left out are Florida and Tennessee. Misery likes company, and we definitely have some.

Hats off and three cheers to Schwab, Anderson, the Noer Facility staff, Stier, Soldat and UW - Madison staff who presented

absolutely the finest WTA/TPI/MSA Field Day in the history of all mankind! I exaggerate not - it was unbelievable, and Tom Schwab's column and pics tell the story.

I'll ask the question: Where were the Wisconsin golf course superintendents? Funny how a monthly meeting can draw over a hundred of us for a day of golf and chow (see the President's Message) at some considerable distance, but research plots, lectures, equipment and supplies, demonstrations and more bring half that number (or less).

Too bad. Twelve hundred from several continents and lots of countries descended on the Noer Facility for a fantastic and affordable show. Our lack of presence was embarrassing.

It doesn't add up. For those in attendance, you know what I mean. For those absent, you really missed something.

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- Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association
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Jim Spindler was in town in late July and stopped by our shop with Tom Wentz. We had a great visit. Jim has a long history - longer than his age might indicate - with the WGCSA. He was back home in Wisconsin for his brother's wedding in Sheboygan and the three of us had fun talking about times and people gone by. I find myself doing that a lot more lately.

Jim runs his own business in Florida, but is still active with the Noer Foundation.

By the time this issue of *The Grass Roots* hits the newsstands, we will have invited four or so candidates for the Jung turf pathologist position to town for an interview. I believe there are 14 applicants and some very qualified individuals are interested in our turf pathology position. Several of us with 'one foot in the furrow' are involved and will help select the best candidate for a critical position. The hope is to have this person on campus on the job by 1/1/08. To hasten the process, the Wisconsin Turfgrass Position is providing the first year salary and benefits package for this person, an unbelievable expression of support from the grass industry.



WGCSA friends Tom Wentz and Jim Spindler.

So another golf season winds down. If I count the four summers when I was a college student, this will be the end of my 39th year in golf course management. No wonder I feel tired. But winter comes, the batteries get recharged and the anticipation of another golf season returns in the spring just in time for opening day.

Here's hoping you have a great autumn. 🌿

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