



Navigating the Sea of Phosphorus Fertilizer Regulations

By Dr. Doug Soldat, Department of Soil Science, University of Wisconsin - Madison

As you may know, a statewide ban on phosphorus fertilizer goes into effect on April Fools' Day 2010. Insert your punch line here. In essence, the ban prohibits the application of phosphorus to turfgrass areas of any size with these four exceptions.

1. Applications of phosphorus fertilizer can be made to turfgrass during the first growing season.
2. Applications of phosphorus fertilizer can be made if a soil test demonstrates a need for the nutrient.
3. Applications of phosphorus fertilizer from manure of biosolids-based products (organic products) are allowed regardless of soil test levels.
4. Agricultural applications (sod production)

First violations are not to exceed \$50, and subsequent violations will be between \$200 and \$500. As with previous turfgrass fertilizer regulations, it is not clear how this law will be enforced. However, the law restricts the display and therefore sale of the fertilizers which is expected to decrease the availability of phosphorus-containing fertilizers.

This ban makes every golf course superintendent in the state subject to at least two different laws regarding

phosphorus use (NR-151, and the state ban). In Madison, golf course superintendents fall under four different bans; the other two include ordinances from the City of Madison and also Dane County. These rules, laws, and ordinances often conflict with each other in small but significant ways. Furthermore, it is unclear which of the regulations take precedent. I've spoken with a state official who says state statutes (i.e. the statewide ban) always take precedent over administrative rules (i.e. NR-151). He later called me back and retracted his use of "always". Representatives at the DNR have said that their rule will take precedent over other because it is more restrictive. It is my understanding that local ordinances will take precedent over the state ban.

In any case, it is safe to say that the true hierarchy of these regulations is elusive; but the simple solution to avoid any potential fines or negative press would be to **follow the NR-151 technical standard**, which is indeed the most restrictive of the regulations regarding phosphorus use. I've outlined some of the differences among the phosphorus regulations regarding phosphorus use in Table 1 below. 🌱

Table 1. Summary of various phosphorus bans in Wisconsin.

Regulation Characteristics	NR-151	Statewide Ban	Dane County*	City of Madison
Area Requirement	5+ acres	No	No	No
Exemption for phosphorus applications during establishment season	No**	Yes	Yes	Yes
Requires soil or tissue testing for applying a phosphorus fertilizer to established turf	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Exemption for organic phosphorus fertilizers***	No	Yes	Yes	No
Soil test method	Mehlich-3 or Bray-1	Any	State-certified lab	State-certified lab
Restricts retail sale and/or display	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prohibition of fertilizer (including nitrogen) application to frozen soil or impervious surfaces	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

* In my experience, all other county or municipal phosphorus bans are identical to the Dane County ordinance.

** NR-151 allows for such an exemption in special circumstances.

*** My understanding is that Milorganite is exempt under all regulations in Wisconsin, although this is not in the text of any of the phosphorus bans.



Full-Course Press

By **Jake Schneider**, Assistant Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

The Cubs winning the World Series. Pigs flying. A snowball surviving in Hell. Squeezing blood from a turnip. In my limited time in this industry, the previous list seems more likely to occur than seeing a story in the popular media about the benefits that golf courses provide to their surrounding communities. Ok, to legitimize this article, such a story has an approximately 4000% greater chance of appearing than the Cubbies odds of hoisting the Commissioner's Trophy anytime soon. I digress...

Mere miles from the heart of downtown Madison, I have the privilege of working on a property that is littered with blue jays, orioles, squirrels, cardinals, countless other songbirds and more squirrels. Red-tailed hawks that nest near the top of an adjacent smoke stack circle the property daily and keep our droves of squirrels on their toes at all times (natural selection is alive and well at Blackhawk). In 2009, a family of five turkeys was spotted

on an almost daily basis by 14th and 15th holes, and several deer who apparently took a wrong turn in Albuquerque graced us with their presence. Besides being a virtual wildlife refuge within the hustle and bustle of city life, the turfgrass that lines the course converted thousands of pounds of carbon dioxide into oxygen and allowed millions of gallons of rainwater to filter safely into our ever-depleting underground aquifers. And, the good news doesn't stop there... Just like every other year, several charitable organizations were able to raise thousands of dollars through outings, our members were able to escape their homes and offices for some fresh air and even a little bit of exercise, and me and my fellow Blackhawk employees were fortunate enough to remain gainfully employed.

My (slightly educated) guess is that most of what I just described at Blackhawk could be a narrative of just about any course in the state. So, since I'm preaching to the



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choir, what's my point? Well, with all of the personal, social, and environmental good that comes from our courses, why is it that our industry attracts so much negative attention? (I hope that a question can answer a question) Sure, a lot of the reason is due to the mostly unfounded perception that golf courses are polluters that contribute to surface and groundwater degradation and mysterious illnesses, but I would also argue that we are partially to blame. Although I recognize that there seems to be an inherent humility that comes with our profession, standing in the shadows may not always be appropriate, and I believe that we must do more as an association to generate positive publicity. Following are a couple of positive press generating ideas that have been bouncing around in my mostly-hollow mind:

1. *Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents' Association Environmental Stewardship Award.* Although the proposed title is bulky and uses all of the more-than-four-letter words in my vocabulary, I hope that you get my point. It pains me to no end to admit that the idea came courtesy

of our purple-clad neighbors to the west. After reading about Mr. Paul Diegnau, CGCS being awarded the 2009 Minnesota GCSA Environmental Award, I thought to myself, "Why don't we have an award like that for our association." Although anyone deserving may apply for GCSAA's Environmental Leaders in Golf Award, a similar Wisconsin-based award would shine the spotlight on a deserving course and superintendent in an extremely positive manner on a yearly basis.

2. *Audubon Certification.* Currently, there are only seven Audubon Certified golf courses in Wisconsin. Seven. To me, that's an astoundingly low number. At Blackhawk, we recently began the process of becoming certified. While the 60-plus page packet that you receive seems daunting at first, it becomes very manageable when broken into sections, and it provides a wonderful means of assessing the impact of your maintenance on the environment and scheming for ways to improve. Becoming certified by an organization as well respected as Audubon International would do nothing but reap benefits to you and your course, while doing right by the environment.
3. *Superintendent of the Year.* At one point, I was actually considering writing an article about how absurd and arbitrary I thought it was that the WPGA names pros of the year. In some aspects, naming any one person the superintendent of the year probably is absurd and arbitrary. Considering the wide range of budgets, weather conditions, and standards, among others, determining a recipient would be a daunting task, to say the least. However, at the same time, with so many hard-working, driven and dedicated superintendents scattered throughout our great state it would also be hard to go wrong.

If the day comes that positive stories about golf courses outnumber the negative ones, I might even be OK with a championship run by the Cubbies, maybe. 🌱

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Interns Can Learn A lot From Old Men

By **Michael Rzadski**, Horticulture Student, University of Wisconsin - Madison

I started working on golf courses when I was fifteen years old. My first job was at The Bull at Pinehurst Farms (a newer Nicklaus design) in Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin. After learning the ropes, I moved on to work at Whistling Straits in Haven, Wisconsin. Two years into my time working on golf courses, I decided to get into turfgrass management as a career. Currently, I am a senior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, pursuing a bachelors degree in turfgrass management. Looking back on the past seven summers working on golf courses, I thought to myself, "wow, look at how far I have come." The funny thing is, I feel like there is so much more that I still need to learn.

Throughout my experiences working on golf courses, I have found the intern - superintendent relationship to be a very challenging one for both the intern and the superintendent. It is challenging to interns because of the short time period that is offered to us in the summer months to learn and experience all of the skills and capacities needed to become an excellent superintendent. The challenge for the superintendent in teaching his interns how to run and maintain a successful golf course, is all of the extra work and added anxiety to an already stressful position.


When I say "Old Men" I am referring to most golf course superintendents, as it is nearly an undeniable fact that most superintendents are oftentimes twice as old as the interns they hire. I do not say this to age any superintendents out there, but to honor them. For without their help and guidance, I would not be where I am today.

It seems like many people these days see "Old Men" as washed up dinosaurs, that don't know anything and can't do anything. For example, Abe Simpson, Homer's dad on the television show "The Simpsons" is portrayed as a stereotypical old man. When in reality, many older people are very wise. Many "old men" that I have met and worked for or with, are simply a wealth of knowledge and information. Once you get the ball rolling and develop a relationship with them, they are more than willing to share their experiences and knowledge with you. Remember, a little gray hair is a sign of wisdom not just age.

Three short summers ago I became serious about my work on the golf course; it was not just a summer job anymore. I realized that my time was short and I wanted to learn as much as I could. I knew to succeed in the turf-

grass industry that education would be vital. I had picked up some information from working previous summers, just from being on the golf course and from what others had taught me. But, soon after that an unquenchable desire to learn and know had come over me. I needed to know how everything worked, why, when, for how long, etc. As I learned and picked up a little information my inquisitiveness grew, and I needed to know more. It is amazing what a little bit of information can lead to, and how powerful of a tool it can be. Now that I am nearing completion of my degree here at UW-Madison, I have more questions than I know what to do with. I would like to thank all of my professors who have helped and guided me along the way.


Questioning is the main way that interns and superintendents can learn from each other. One of the great




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things about the aggressive and inquisitive nature of most interns is that it keeps the “Old Men” sharp. Not only do interns learn about the skills needed to run a successful golf course, the superintendents might learn something from their interns, or at least be reminded of the basic principals that govern the turf world. One of the things that I have learned is that if you want to know something about how or why something is done, always ask, always question, and always challenge whenever possible, even if it is a stupid question. Otherwise you will never know. This goes for the “Old Men” too, test your interns, question them, and challenge them, push them to be better everyday. It is only for the betterment of both the student and the superintendent.

Therefore, I challenge all of the “Old Men” to fuel our fire. Expose us to new things, if we have not yet experienced them. Don’t assume that we will learn them later as assistants, get our feet wet and teach us how to rise up to the expectations of our futures as assistants and as superintendents. Going to school and being educated in turf management is essential, but nothing compares to actually experiencing it. I think you would be pleasantly surprised at how well the experience can turn out. Share your knowledge with your interns. You would be shocked at how much actually rubs off. Shape us, mold us and guide us into our futures as great superintendents.

Not only would I like for the “Old Men” to challenge us as interns, but also I would challenge interns to take their professions seriously and to ask, question and learn from their elders whenever possible. Do it with respect and the intent to learn, these “Old Men” have been around longer and have been through a lot more than we have. Latch on to that old man, whether he is your superintendent, your father, or anyone else that you look up to, learn from their experiences and make them your own. When they are trying to tell you something, LISTEN, because believe it or not, they are telling this to you for a reason, even if it is something that you think you know, a repeat never hurts. That old man might actually know something!

Throughout our lives we all meet only a select few people that are very stiking to us. These are the people that leave a direct impression on us. That one person who knows you personally and of whom you can say, “This person made me who I am.” As superintendents, you have the opportunity to be that person and to leave that impression. You have the chance to lay the foundations as teachers and mentors of the trade, to foster in us the skills, character and grit necessary to become some of the greatest golf course superintendents in the world. Thank you, to all of the “Old Men,” for all of the time that you have put in and the sacrifices you make to pass on the “turfgrass torch,” to the next generation of superintendents.

Interns and students, take the time to recognize these great teachers and mentors. I have found that a great way to do this is to be the best that you can be everyday, at work and in life, for they will surely see the fruits of their labor in you. They truly do a great job molding us into what we are today. My dad always told me as a kid, “Whatever you strive for in life, do it to the best of your abilities.” For some reason that stuck with me all of these years. He has been my boss, my mentor and my “Old Man.” So, to you dad, and all of the others who have shaped me into the individual that I am today, I thank you and I salute your efforts.

These are all life lessons for me, and hopefully for you as well. Respect your elders and learn from them. With any luck you will be as fortunate as I have been to work with such great “Old Men.”



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President Brian Zimmerman

By David Brandenburg, Golf Course Manager, Rolling Meadows Golf Course

In the short time I spent in the office of the new President of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association it was clear Brian Zimmerman in a man in demand as Chief of Operations of the Milwaukee County Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture. Between the phone, pop-in visitors and his blackberry sounding off for new e-mails there is was a lot of activity going on in the Milwaukee County Parks office.

Zimmerman takes the distractions and hustle in stride, never losing track of where we were in our discussion. I did learn a guarded secret in how Brian discourages pop-in visitors from taking too much of his time.

Brian Zimmerman grew up in Bellville WI on a 220 acre cash grain and beef operation. He took up the game of golf with his Grandfather a retired dairy farmer. As most farmers Grandpa was an early riser and took the then 10 year old Brian out to Lake Ripley County Club at 5:30 am to play. That led to Brian seeing the golf course maintenance staff in action with their various practices and pieces of equipment.

The WGCSA President started his busy lifestyle early on and had numerous jobs and activities many at the same time. He shared his shortest job was 2 days helping with a hog farm. If the stink was not bad enough the pigs trying to eat his boots led Brian to look for fresh air in other places.

Besides golf course work starting at Nakoma with Randy Smith and Chuck Frasier, Brian had some fascinating side jobs in order to avoid student loans. Brian worked security for concerts and events including backstage work for Rush, Kenny Rodgers, Tanya Tucker and the Black Crows. Between that job and tending bar I am not sure how he found time for sleep given golf course work starts at dawn!

As a student at UW Madison Brian did a formal internship at Maple Bluff Country Club working for Tom Harrison and his Senior Project was work on the 6th Green at Nakoma Country Club. He enjoyed and gained valuable experience from the many construction projects going on at Nakoma over the years.

After graduation Zimmerman was hired as Assistant Superintendent for Gary Johnson at Brynwood Country Club from 1995 to 1998. Then looking to expand his on the job experience Brian went to the municipally owned Washington County Golf Course as the first ever Assistant Superintendent of the newly



Brian, Jill and Carter Zimmerman

constructed Arthur Hills designed layout.

At Washington County Zimmerman was able to experience the public side of the business and the challenges daily fee public golf brings as well as helping put the finishing touches to the new course.

In fall of 1999 Brian was looking for a Superintendents position and luckily had three offers at once and choose Chikaming Country Club in Lakeside MI. He was attracted by the 1920's era design and the opportunity to bring the course up to modern standards. The private course is set about 300 yards from Lake Michigan and is a second or third club for many of its members who come from out of town for summer weekends and vacations.

The club hosted around 12,000 rounds per year mainly in the months of June, July and August. With club support Zimmerman was able to improve the facility with a new irrigation system, redoing 10 of the 18 tee complexes, and a general upgrade to conditions and systems.

The par 71 layout plays 6,384 yards with a slope of 133 and features small greens and mature trees.

After three whirlwind years of improvements to Chikaming the Zimmermans were looking to return to

Wisconsin so Brian applied for and interviewed for the job as Golf Course Superintendent at Brown Deere Golf Course, owned and operated by Milwaukee County and then host to the Greater Milwaukee Open. I suppose you are expecting to hear Brian got that job and worked his way up through the Milwaukee County Golf Division.

No, Brian did not get that job. It went to Tim Wegner who is still there today. Instead on his way home to Michigan from the interview, he received a call and was offered the position of Golf Manager for Milwaukee County overseeing all the golf operations. He was given the task to modernize and evolve the 15 individual golf operations while needing to produce 5 million in revenue.

When Brian left the private club industry and went to Washington County Golf Course it would be considered a lateral or possibly a backwards move for the young professional by some in the industry. However in hindsight the year stop at the Washington County owned facility, gave him municipal experience and helped him obtain his job with Milwaukee County.

In 2007 after leading the golf operations for 5 years Brian became acting Chief of Operations of the entire Milwaukee County Parks Division performing both jobs for a time until the position was permanent.

The Milwaukee County Park system has over 140 different properties covering 15,000 acres, 250 full time employees and 1,200 seasonal employees. Brian has used his leadership and experience to guide his way around the county system. In 2009 the Milwaukee County Parks System was awarded the Gold Medal Award from the National Recreation and Parks Association.

Zimmerman wrestled in high school and is a certified wrestling official. He coached 2 years in Michigan, 1 at Whitnall High School and 2 years at Marquette High School before the time commitment became too much to balance with family and work.

Brian's many college jobs not only allowed him to leave school without any loans it also led to marriage. Brian met his wife Jill when he was bartending in Madison although they did not start dating until he was in Milwaukee. Jill is an aid at the Maple Grove Elementary School in the Greenfield School District. Jill and Brian have a son Carter who attends Cedar Hills Elementary which Brian joked sounds more like a nursing home than a school. Carter is busy like dad and enjoys swimming and dirt bikes. Fortunately he and his friends have a nearby property where they can ride safely.

Brian joined the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Board of Directors in 2003 and has been preparing for the presidency ever since as he worked his way up the leadership ladder.

The new President of the WGCSA is looking forward to seeing member growth as the economy improves and

the Chapter Manager can reach out to clubs who have not been involved in the past. This year marks the beginning of the Industry Partner Plan to enable our vendors to support the association in an organized easy to choose format while reaching out to their customers.

Also new this year is the use of the Golf Wisconsin for Turf Research Program to allow the WGCSA members raise money for turf research at the O.J. Noer Research Facility. This new program will auction off rounds of golf to the public. This idea, modeled after other chapters similar programs does not require us to reach out to our vendors or clubs but to golfers who will be receiving a value while supporting the turf industry.

As a busy professional and family man Brian welcomes the hiring of our first Chapter Manager Brett Grams and looks forward to the effeminacy Brett will bring the board and chapter overall. Zimmerman has found board service a rewarding and educational experience and invites all WGCSA members to get involved.

The association is in good hands with Brian at the helm and his contacts in Milwaukee leave him a highly recognized figure in the Wisconsin Golf Industry. Congratulations Brian! 🌱



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The Off Season Projects

By **Brett Grams**, Chapter Manager, WGCSA

As I am writing this article is early January. We have just received another snowfall here in Central WI. We are having what appears to be our third snowy winter in a row. We have plenty of the white stuff on the ground and hopefully the turf will benefit once again.

The off season of our industry is actually a busy one for me. I am assisting our *Grass Roots* Editor by working with our generous advertisers and Affiliate Companies in securing Advertising and Industry Partner Contracts for 2010. The membership renewal process is also in full swing with many of you using our new online registration and payment features of the website. The website is being updated with content on a regular basis so check in periodically to see what has changed and been added. Our interactive Calendar is also updated as I become aware of events that our members can benefit from. If you experience any difficulties or problems please let me know so I can correct them quickly.

Besides serving our members day to day needs, my main focus has now turned to the Golf WI for Turf Research Fundraiser. Those of you that heard me talk at the Fall Business Meeting in Kohler in November heard of our newest effort to rise funding for the UW Turfgrass Research effort.

The Golf Wisconsin for Turf Research Fundraiser mirrors other fundraising efforts by several chapters throughout the country. The fundraiser will be asking

our membership and our member golf facilities to donate foursomes of golf (hopefully with carts) that will then be marketed and advertised to the golfing public of Wisconsin. Any interested golfer will be able to bid for these donated rounds of golf via an online auction that will run for a period of time early in the golfing seasons this spring. The winning bidders will then pay the WGCSA for the rounds of golf won in the auction. These funds will ultimately be provided to our talented educators and researchers at the UW. For more information you can log in to the members side of our website and learn more in the Chapter Chatter pages.

At this time I am creating the timeline and literature that will help communicate this effort to all our members and also help our members "sell" this idea to the decision makers at your courses. Like any new project the planning and implementation takes a lot of time. Anyone that is willing to help the board and I with this new program is very much appreciated. If you have ideas or suggestions to help make this large effort more successful would also be welcomed.

If you would like to contact me about the new GWiFTR effort or if you have any other questions about the WGCSA please feel free to contact me. I would enjoy hearing from you by phone or e-mail (920-643-4888, bgrams@wgcsa.com). Please enjoy the Winter Months as you prepare for the 2010 golf season! 🌱



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