

# GCSAA Responds to New York Attorney General's Report, Calls It 'Unsupported by Fact, Inaccurate and Misleading'

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), responding to a report recently published by the New York State attorney general's office, called the report "unsupported by fact, inaccurate and misleading."

The report, *Toxic Fairways: Risking Groundwater Contamination From Pesticides on Long Island Golf Courses*, is based on a survey of 52 golf courses on Long Island, N.Y. The report claims that the golf courses surveyed are treated with as much as seven times more pesticides per acre than are used to grow food crops. The report implies that the chemicals could pose a risk to local groundwater supplies.

GCSAA President Stephen G. Cadenelli, CGCS, stated, "A number of points from the report are unsupported by fact, inaccurate or misleading. The primary thrust of the report seems to be that simply because these materials are applied on golf courses, they will *de facto* enter groundwater. Yet, no scientific evidence is cited in the report to support this notion. In fact, actual monitoring and sampling studies suggest that there is very little movement of materials applied on courses—even in more vulnerable soils than those found on Long Island."

**A major independent study** completed on Cape Cod, Mass., and other university studies at Cornell and Pennsylvania State University show that golf course chemicals do not pose a threat to groundwater supplies when properly applied.

"Any suggestion that turf chemicals, when professionally and properly applied, will enter groundwater under golf courses in any amount sufficient to pose risks to humans is without foundation in science," Cadenelli said.

Cadenelli continued, "The report and the news release that preceded it refer to the fact that pesticides are applied to courses for 'merely aesthetic' reasons. Plant protectants are used to control diseases, insects and unwanted plants that cause damage to a very valuable piece of property. Golf course superintendents manage golf courses in an environmentally responsible manner to ensure that there are acceptable conditions for golf

and to protect the significant investment that golf courses represent."

Golf courses are businesses: they provide thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in property taxes. The value of land around the golf course is also enhanced, creating a larger volume of tax revenues from homes and businesses located nearby.

**Properly maintained turfgrass** actually benefits an entire community by preventing erosion, cleansing the air of pollutants, acting as a "heat sink" that cools the atmosphere, maintaining much-needed greenspace in urban settings, providing habitat for thousands of species of birds and wildlife, and filtering pollutants from rain and irrigation water.

More and more golf courses around the country are utilizing effluent (reclaimed wastewater) for their irrigation purposes. The natural filtration properties of turfgrass allow this wastewater to be disposed of on golf courses and be cleansed before it reaches the groundwater supply.

Cadenelli said, "Golf course superintendents were putting the principles of integrated pest management into practice long before 'IPM' became a government buzzword."

Integrated pest management, or IPM, is the utilization of turfgrass management strategies that are economical and have the least possible effect on people, property and the environment. Reduced pesticide usage is an important element of any IPM program.

**"Given the expense of chemicals** and our own deep concerns about protecting natural resources, why would we use them unnecessarily? Modern emphasis and education is on using pesticides 'curatively,' as a doctor would use a specific medicine to treat a specific problem. Ask those who know—extension agents, pesticide regulators, educators—and they will tell you that golf course superintendents are leading the way in implementing IPM practices," said Cadenelli.

Maria Cinque, turf specialist at the Cornell Cooperative Extension on Long Island, backed up this statement. "We at the Cornell Cooperative Extension have

been teaching IPM practices for the last 10 years. Many of those practices are used by golf courses on Long Island," Cinque said. "I believe that the amount of pesticides has definitely been reduced during this period."

Cadenelli noted that superintendents nationwide are using fewer and fewer chemicals more effectively each year.

"It seems ironic that this report is issued at a time when we're using better materials in increasingly small amounts. If there isn't a problem now, I don't see how there could be one in the future," he said.

The report itself stated that "there is no reason to believe that any water now supplied to Long Island exceeds safe drinking water guidelines for any pesticides."

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