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EPA Partnership Can Benefit Superintendents

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Throughout its over a quarter century of efforts to push for cleaner, healthier surroundings, the federal Environmental Protection Agency has become well known for its regulatory programs. While many citizens have enjoyed the environmental and health benefits of the Agency's programs controlling air and water pollution and waste disposal, members of the regulated community have not always welcomed the impact those regulatory programs have had on their operations.

In recognition of that sentiment, the Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program (PESP) is part of a relatively recent effort by the Agency to reach out to industry and to form voluntary partnerships that might address environmental concerns more effectively and harmoniously than regulatory programs. Thus, where EPA's pesticide regulatory program focuses on chemical manufacturers, PESP's focus is on the community of pesticide users, and looks to their creation of voluntary risk-reduction strategies.

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America was one of the first organizations to become a Partner in PESP. Through its PESP efforts and other endeavors, GCSAA and its members have taken progressive stances not only on pest management practices but on overall approaches the entire golf industry should take to environmental concerns. For example, the GCSAA has played a key role in the Golf & the Environment project, in which EPA and a number of environmen-

tal groups are participating. That project, which created the well-received "Environmental Principles for Golf Courses in the United States," stands as a model of consensus-building and progress through cooperation.

Participation in PESP brings an organization several benefits: recognition of its efforts; the opportunity to apply for grants through which it can further its risk-reduction strategy; and the services of a "liaison" within EPA who can help with a myriad of issues. Among the services a liaison can supply are (1) helping the organization understand the impact of current regulatory developments; (2) insuring that information the organization has makes its way into the regulatory process; and (3) networking of new ideas, whether through bringing to the attention of a Partner knowledge of reduced-risk alternatives or bringing to the attention of the right Agency staff innovative Partner thinking that might lead to better Agency approaches. One goal is to develop Agency support or encouragement of better industry practices, involving the use of pesticides or otherwise.

One recent example of progress aided by PESP involved the proposed registration by EPA of a new reduced-risk biopesticide. When questions were raised by the regulators about certain aspects of the product's application and use, the PESP relationship led to a site visit, hosted by a local superintendent, that put the issues in context and led to the development of answers

that eventually allowed the registration to be issued.

The PESP relationship also allows GCSAA, or its regional chapters, to draw on EPA for information -- through speakers at events or through other means -- to help inform superintendents about pending developments. This, in turn, allows superintendents to anticipate trends that may influence how they should approach their jobs.

Given the "tough regulator" perception about EPA, it is good news for superintendents that EPA provides liaisons who can help make the Agency's activity more comprehensible and more accessible to those who have a stake in the outcome and who possess, or can generate, data that will help the Agency make better informed decisions. We at PESP urge the Mid-Atlantic Association of Golf Course Superintendents to take advantage of all the benefits this voluntary program provides.

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