THRU THE GREEN

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The Golf Course Superintendents Association of Northern California

— Committed to Responsible Turfgrass Management —

It Could Be Worse . . . . It Could Be Raining

When recently asked to describe the characteristics of a golf course superintendent, two of the first things that came to mind were, enjoys challenges and enjoys problem solving situations. Well guess what, with the onslaught of El Niño's driven winter rains, those skills are being put to the test like never before. Stories of flooding, fallen trees and turf too saturated to mow, are common place among golf course superintendents these days.

The winter storms have brought more new rainfall records than world records at the winter games in Nagano. It's a little disconcerting when many of the records that were eclipsed were 120 years old, or in some cases, in recorded history. You know things are bad when Meteorologists no longer describe rainfall as "storms" but rather choose to define them as "events."

Conditions were so bad that the joke was, in golf shops through out northern California, superintendents had gone from posting daily stimpmeter readings, to posting daily rainfall totals. Lately, I've heard stories of maintenance workers actually having to weedeat the tall grass that has grown around the base of signs noting such things as "carts on paths only."

Personally I've developed a whole new vocabulary this winter. Words like mud, silt and bulldozer roll off my tongue with ease now. Phrases like, "your just gonna have to go for it" and "try not to get stuck," have become daily slogans. It's been months since I've been able to use words like playability and conditioning.

Conversations with course mechanics commonly now go something like this, "We're going to need that flail mower by Tuesday, and the dozer is going to need to be serviced and ready to go by morning." Phrases like, "quality of cut" have been replaced by "cut what you can." No operator leaves the shop anymore without a two chain strapped to their side.

Even the wildlife have been affected. Song birds, once common on the golf course have been replaced by sea gulls sifting through the mud. It's as though I am reliving my childhood trips to the landfill with Dad. More humbling has been my wife's recent request that I take my shoes off before I come in the house. My mother was the last person to make such a request and that was at least 35 years ago. I've even caught myself subconsciously humming songs about rain. Classics such as, "It's raining, it's pouring" and "It never rains in California," have become personal favorites of mine.

In spite of it all, I continue to remind myself that surely, somewhere among those dark clouds that stretch all the way back to Hawaii, there must be a silver lining. Perhaps it's all the free nitrogen we have received with each passing storm, or maybe it's all the soil we received, free delivery, I might add, all we have to do is scrape it into piles. I suppose there is some comfort in the thought that, like all things this too shall pass, and soon thereafter I, like most of my counterparts, will anxiously await the next challenge and problem to solve.

California Government Relations

Air Quality Regulations Around The Corner?

By Jim Husting, CGCS

What would your operations be like if you could not purchase anymore weedeaters, chainsaws, or other two-cycle engine products to maintain the golf course that you manage? Well, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) in January 1998 is seriously considering air quality regulations that would just about eliminate 85% of all these two-cycle products that we use now to currently maintain our golf courses. What is in question is whether CARB will go with the U.S. EPA guideline/goal of a 50% reduction of air emissions or their own more stringent proposal of air emissions reduction of 81% for these types of equipment. If CARB decides to go with the 81% reduction then most of our manufacturers/suppliers of these two-cycle items will not be able or want to comply with this regulation. It may be time to invest in an Echo dealership in Nevada as these items would most assuredly vanish from the California marketplace.

What is at stake here? Well, for one thing, more government regulation on our profession, and probably a definite increase in costs of our operating budgets as we try and find ways to continue to do the same

Continued on Page 3

In This Issue

From The President . . . . . Page 2
Cantankerous Coots . . . . . Page 4
Survey Reveals Responsibilities - Attitudes Page 6
Naumann's NorCal News . . . . . Page 6
Dues Increase To Appear On Ballot . . . . . Page 6
Boardroom Briefs . . . . . Page 7
Welcome New Members . . . . . Page 8
Candidates' Statements . . . . . Insert