

USGA Green Section

SOUTHWEST REGION

Dealing with the Economic Downturn

By David L. Wienecke, Agronomist

The golf industry is experiencing serious challenges due to recent economic factors. Since September 11, 2001 there has been a decline in tourist travel, which has caused a slump in golfing rounds at many southwest golf courses. The impact has been felt by most golf courses and is now affecting superintendent associations as well as university turfgrass education and research programs. Since research and education are vitally important to maintain the high standards expected at modern golf courses we must find ways to continue meeting the educational needs of golf course operations. Here are some ideas that are working in our region.

Superintendent associations indicate they are finding it more difficult to make ends meet due to the increasing costs they are charged to put on meetings and training seminars. One innovative method of dealing with this situation involves partnering with related industry groups. One proposal is for superintendent association chapters to coordinate events with the Club Manager's Association of America (CMAA) and the Professional Golfers Association (PGA) and rotate monthly meetings between different clubs in a region so that a club hosts a meeting no more than once every five years. This reduces the financial impact experienced by any one club and allows the superintendent association to plan ahead for meeting locations.

Another innovative method to reduce expenses is to host joint meetings with other chapters or professional groups and share the cost of speakers as well as organizational responsibilities. We have seen very successful educational programs that also made money with this approach. Here are a few examples:

- The University of California at Riverside partnered with the Southern California Turf Council in putting on educational seminars that provided research results, professional recertification credits, and education for most aspects of the green industry.

- The Southwest Region of the USGA Green Section recently partnered with the Sierra Nevada Golf Course Superintendent's Association to offer an 8-hour training program involving GCSAA credits for those unable to travel to Atlanta, Georgia for this year's conference.
- The Cactus and Pine Superintendent's Association is planning a bermudagrass conference in March partnering with the USGA and the University of Arizona to be held in the Phoenix area.
- The University of California at Riverside formed an advisory board with representatives from each of the turf related organizations in Southern California. The group funds the salary of the turf research agronomist who in turn obtains grants to address the research agenda set by the advisory board. An outgrowth of this effort is the creation of the new UCR turfgrass research website, which is available to anyone at: <http://ucrturf.ucr.edu>. This site does a great job of reporting timely research results related to specific concerns of Southern Californian golf courses.

Regional Green Section Conferences - There are still a number of good turf conferences available before we begin our summer season. Look for one of the following in your area:

- March 17 USGA/NCGA Regional Conference**
Castlewood CC, Pleasanton, CA
- March 25 Colorado Regional Conference**
Lakewood CC, Lakewood, CO
- April 1 Nevada Regional Conference**
Spanish Trail CC, Las Vegas, NV
- April 3 Arizona Regional Conference**
Phoenix CC, Phoenix, AZ

If you have any questions about upcoming conferences, please contact the Southwest Region office at (714) 5422-5766.

David Wienecke works in the Southwest Region of the USGA Green Section, providing agronomic expertise to golf courses in California, Arizona, and Nevada.

CGCSA Government Relations Network Update Status of the Triploid Grass Carp Program

By Jim Husting, CGCS; Chairman, CGCSA Government Relations

On Tuesday February 4, Tim Howe (representative from George Steffes' office) and myself met with Deputy Director Dirk Brazil and Chief of Inland Fisheries Edmund Pert of the Department of Fish and Game to discuss the California Triploid Grass Carp Program.

We followed many of the network members letters and e-mails concerning the grass carp program. At this meeting we were informed that the California Grass Carp Program was not going to be eliminated but only re-organized. The program administrator, located in San Diego, will be reassigned elsewhere and the administration of the program will shift to Sacramento. Each departmental region of the Fish and Game will now be in charge of implementing the program in their own districts/regions.

Although details of this arrangement have not been worked out, Mr. Edmund Pert will probably oversee the entire program and delegate regionally to the necessary individuals in each Fish and Game district.

The CGCSA expressed their concerns regarding this reorganization and the potential for individuals in the department in certain regions to improperly administer the Triploid Grass Carp Program. Mr. Pert acknowledged our concerns and promised to work with the CGCSA in whatever way possible to make the program better.

In essence, each property that now has the grass carp, through the program, will now deal with the regional officials of the Department of Fish & Game in their particular district. Once the CGCSA gathers more information, we will post the contacts on our web site. Once these contacts are established all new applications for grass carp will go to those respective regions for approval or denial respectively.

For all of those individuals in the Network that responded to this issue (and there were many,) thank you! This type of grass roots campaigning does work and you can and do make a difference. Stay tuned for more on this issue and other issues as they arise.