



Tire ruts created now will be slow to heal this spring, and will likely require additional labor to fix, something that isn't disposable at most courses.

DON'T CREATE FUTURE HEADACHES

BY ELLIOTT DOWLING | AGRONOMIST, NORTHEAST REGION

A recent finding from the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) showed that January 2020 was the fifth warmest on record in the contiguous U.S. According to their data, the Northeast was particularly warm relative to normal. Along with mild temperatures, many states in the region are also wetter than normal.

Saturated soils and golf do not play well together. Saturated soils are more likely to be compacted by maintenance equipment and golf carts, which will eventually cause problems with water infiltration and rooting that will need to be addressed with cultivation.

An easy-to-spot issue is rutting from vehicles on soft playing surfaces. This damage often needs to be fixed with soil and regrassed in the spring. If the ruts are not deep, but tire tracks are visible, this can still be problematic because grass is not growing yet and thus, cannot grow out of damage. Rather, the grass

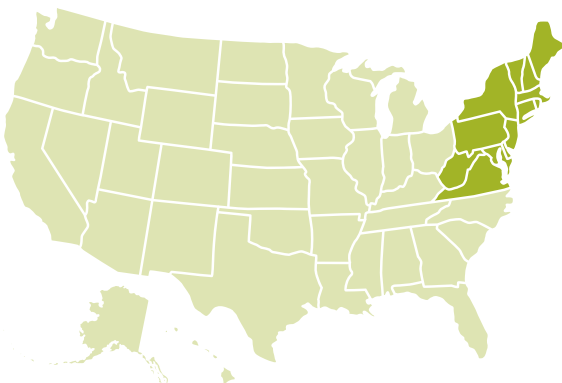
will remain in a rutted condition for several more weeks until growth resumes. In the meantime, the thin turf is vulnerable to additional wear stress and more likely to be invaded by *Poa annua* or other weeds.

The point is this: Enjoy the mild weather but don't be too quick to rush projects or resume normal golf cart traffic. Forcing the issue too soon might put your course behind before the race begins. Patience is a virtue, and something that is needed when it comes to late winter on golf courses in the Northeast.



For information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service Contact the Green Section Staff.

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