

# Green Section Record

## REGIONAL UPDATE

April 3, 2020



*Without basic maintenance, playing conditions can quickly deteriorate. Superintendents will be forced to prioritize key playing surfaces with minimal staff sizes.*

## COVID-19 IMPACT AND OUTLOOK

BY PAUL JACOBS | AGRONOMIST, NORTHEAST REGION

The COVID-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc on society and the world economy, and the extent of its total impact is not yet known. To say things have changed rapidly in the last few weeks would be an understatement. Just three weeks ago I was visiting Fairview Country Club in Connecticut, where the team had laid more than 500,000 square feet of sod and renovated all the bunkers during a favorable winter and was over a month ahead of schedule. Now, along with most courses in the Northeast, they are facing serious challenges as several states have enacted mandatory shelter-in-place orders and the closure of nonessential businesses and services.

Shelter-in-place orders have been coming from the state and local level of government, so it has been challenging to keep up with where each state and locality stands on the issue. However, several organizations have put together websites to help keep facilities and golfers informed. A few of these resources are listed below:

- [USGA Green Section COVID-19 Resource Center](#)
- [USGA COVID-19 Rules and Handicapping FAQs](#)
- [GCSAA state-by-state update on restrictions and closures](#)
- [We Are Golf COVID-19 daily updates](#)

At the time this article was written, there were five states where courses were mandated to close but could continue with maintenance. Four of these are in the Northeast: Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. There were 16 states with executive orders regarding business closures that permitted golf courses to remain open and, fortunately, no states have mandated that golf courses cease maintenance operations. All of this can change rapidly, and even if maintenance is allowed chances are that superintendents are operating with reduced staffing. While no state has ordered a stop to golf course maintenance, there is concern for facilities that cannot afford to maintain their golf course because there is no revenue stream to pay the employees.

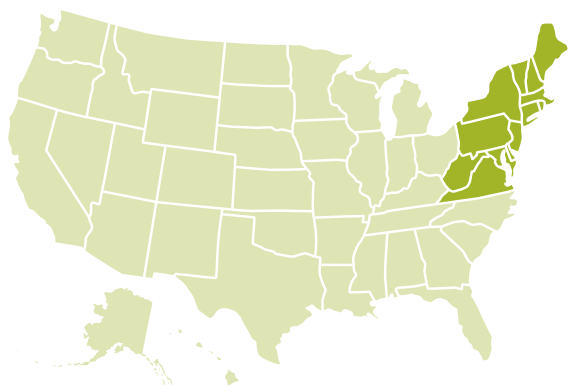


For information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service Contact the Green Section Staff.

[Learn More](#)

Spring is a critical time for maintenance on golf courses in the Northeast. Critical practices – such as aeration and the application of fertilizers and plant protectants – need to be performed in the spring. If they are not performed, course conditions are sure to suffer later in the year. The impact that limited maintenance will have on golf courses later this year will be influenced by staffing levels and how long the minimal maintenance practices continue into the season. As temperatures continue to rise, it will become increasingly difficult for small staffs to maintain a golf course.

These unprecedented times are causing a lot of uncertainty, but I hope that we can all find comfort in recognizing that the entire golf industry is in this together. If the Green Section can be of assistance in any way during this time, do not hesitate to contact your [regional USGA agronomist](#). We are here to help.



## NORTHEAST REGION AGRONOMISTS:

Elliott Dowling, Agronomist, [edowling@usga.org](mailto:edowling@usga.org)

Paul Jacobs, Agronomist, [pjacobs@usga.org](mailto:pjacobs@usga.org)

[Information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service](#)

[Contact the Green Section Staff](#)