

Government Cutbacks Force Increased Efficiency

Park superintendent job grows
as staff size and budgets shrink

By Maureen Hrehocik, associate editor

The economy has put a tight lid on government landscapers' budgets, and according to the results of a Weeds Trees & Turf survey, staff sizes have stayed the same or decreased.

The average budget for government maintenance in 1983 is \$270,000, with an average \$50,000 budget for landscape construction. The average staff size is 17.5, with number of personnel ranging from 1 to 175. "Our staff has been reduced to one-half its original size in 1975 through the attrition process. But the areas of respon-

Most Important Areas of Work

1. Athletic Fields
2. Outdoor Building Maintenance
3. Park Maintenance
4. Tree Management
5. Snow Removal

involved in municipal government landscape management of, on the average, 1,020 acres (50 under some form of irrigation). Those answering the survey came from a broad range of city, state, county and military landscape management, including school superintendents, grounds foremen, crew chiefs, park rangers, gardeners, airport managers and entomologists.

Athletic fields, outdoor maintenance of buildings and park maintenance ranked among the most important areas of care for the respondents. Least important

were military installations, cemeteries, golf courses, street and airport maintenance.

The most common type of machinery owned by managers were tractors, small push mowers, chain saws, large riding mowers, dump trucks, string trimmers and fertilizer chemical spreaders.

Most contract out tree trimming and plant and landscape installation . . .

Repairs are most frequently done by state, county or city service departments or city mechanics. Many repairs are done by the equipment operator.

A resounding majority of those who answered the questionnaire were responsible for purchasing chemicals, seed and equipment for their agency or division, usually under bid. Most budget planning is done in February and March.

Fertilizers were the most frequently used chemical by a majority of the respondents, followed by herbicides for turf weed control and herbicides for total vegetation control. Few used growth regulators or wetting agents.

Trade magazines, publications and journals provide the primary source of information for new seed varieties, chemicals and equipment. Company sales reps, seminars and advertisements are

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sibility and maintenance have increased," said one respondent. Another respondent said with the tight money situation, he will be feeling the effects for a "few more years, at least."

One park superintendent said his 1983-84 budget plan of attack will be greater use of chemicals, large mowing equipment, specialists, park planning, maintenance management, low-maintenance turf and computer use.

The majority of respondents were in supervisory positions and

Most Common Types of Equipment Owned

1. Tractors
2. Small push mowers
3. Chain saws
4. Large riding mowers
5. Dump trucks

Regularly-Used Chemicals

1. Fertilizers
2. Herbicides for turf weed control
3. Herbicides for total vegetation control
4. Tree Insecticides
5. Fungicides

also used to decide a maintenance program as well as purchases.

Most contract out tree trimming and plant and landscape installation as well as tree removal, grading, asphalt repair, ballfield dugouts, snow removal and tree moving.

Most landscape managers agreed the property they managed is in passable shape for its use and felt that major improvement in public landscaping would be a hard issue to sell to voters.

An almost equal split of respondents thought a degree was necessary to perform the duties of government landscape manager, while the other half thought it was unnecessary. Some of their thoughts:

***"We normally have too many other duties beside the care of the land. The persons hired by our school district learn from trial and error or from a salesman. We normally pay too low to hire professional employees."

***"It (degree) would be helpful to some degree, but my duties are so varied, the degree would be of limited benefit."

***"A degree requirement may eliminate well-qualified non-degreed persons. But extensive knowledge is definitely needed for quality results."

***"This is a highly competitive and technical profession. Our entry-level positions require only a high school education, but

An almost equal split of respondents thought a degree was necessary to perform the duties of government landscape manager, while the other half thought it was unnecessary.

almost all our entry level staff have degrees. A degree specifically in horticulture or business is not necessary, however, but they should be the two of the most useful disciplines to be considered."

And on the other side of the coin:

***"You deal with so many people from all walks of life you must know the material and be a good business executive as well."

"The ideal person is one with a degree AND experience." **WTT**

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Salem Enlists Neighborhoods To Keep Park Budget in Line

Nineteen neighborhood groups help plant ivy in medians, pull weeds by hand, pick up litter, and plant trees.

By Maureen Hrehocik,
associate editor

Dealing with cutbacks is part of life for Frank Bellinghausen. With a budget that has continually weathered cut after cut and a staff reduction of from 68 permanent employees six years ago to 45, the parks superintendent for the city

of Salem, OR, was running out of ways to keep the quality of services he provided at an acceptable level.

One of the ways he decided to stem the tide of his ebbing budget, Bellinghausen's department became involved in the city's Self Help Project. The Project lets neighborhood groups get involved

in the work of keeping their neighborhood in good shape. It saves the city time and some expense and offers the residents a quicker way of getting things done in their particular neighborhood.

This summer, Bellinghausen had three projects under way with four completed. Residents help with planting ivy in medians, hand weed pulling, planting trees and litter pick-up. Salem has 19 neighborhood associations.

"It has its problems, but it works," said Bellinghausen who endorses the project enthusiastically. "We live within the resources we have and where we can, we seek non-governmental support. We're reaching more and more to the volunteer aspect."

After a neighborhood's proposal is accepted by city council, the city provides the funds and the neighborhood provides the labor.

Working with and within a combined city and county \$1,900,000 parks' budget consumes much of Bellinghausen's time. (Another \$100,000 to \$200,000 is budgeted for construction.) He admits budget bureaucracy can be time consuming and tiresome. All budgeting is done through the city's budget



Frank Bellinghausen, parks superintendent for the City of Salem.



Tree trimming and shredding in one of Salem's many city parks.

committee, composed of 9 city council members and an equal number of citizens.

"There's a lot of red tape," Bellinghausen said. "I have to go through three budget committee hearings a year."

The department's greatest task is maintaining the turf and trees. In 1979, the department cared for 976 acres. This year that acreage has climbed to 1,644.

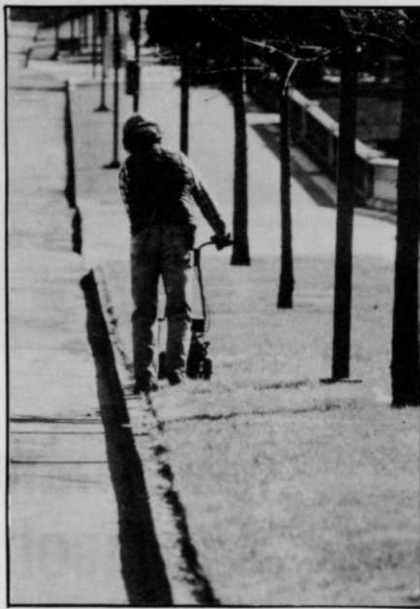
"We know how to do the work, but the budget curtails us," Bellinghausen said. "We have had no uniform application of herbicides for the past five years and have no budget for fertilizing in 1983. While the cutbacks continue, the demand and use of the turf in all areas is up. We can't reduce mowing any further without disturbing play."

The city has multi-use fields for baseball, softball and soccer and has a four-field softball complex in the middle of the fairgrounds. "When it gets to be state fair time, I have to schedule crews to go in and take down the backstops," Bellinghausen said.

Even with the cutbacks, Salem has had its share of recognition and awards, including being named Tree City, U.S.A. for the past seven years by the Arbor Foundation (The city of Salem alone has more than 60,000 street trees) and being named an All-American city for municipalities of its size for 1961 and 1983. "The city has done well to promote its parks with the resources it has," he said.

To make his division more efficient, Bellinghausen contracts out some of the maintenance on the older city parks so that his crew can handle the newer areas. He has developed a "program budgeting system" where the work areas in the city are divided up and cataloged so that an orderly and efficient maintenance schedule can be followed.

The city of Salem has neighborhood "mini-parks" which are usually small plots with play equipment on them. The larger community parks have regulation



A city worker does edging around the Salem Civic Center.

ball fields and in some cases, tennis courts. Large urban parks such as the Minto-Brown Island Park & Wildlife Refuge, only five minutes from the heart of downtown Salem, has jogging and bike trails and observation areas.

Bellinghausen has a serious erosion problem to deal with along the Willamette River in the refuge and will work with the Army Corps of Engineers to correct it.

"We are reaching more and more for volunteer help."

The equipment for the parks and recreation department is rented from a city equipment pool. In some cases, Bellinghausen has found it more cost and time efficient, rather than tying up his rented equipment, to contract out certain work such as mowing and tree trimming.

Manhattan ryegrass is predominant in the city's older parks. Now, Bellinghausen said, he uses a Derby/Manhattan mix. More than 400 acres are irrigated automatically.

He is also having a reoccurrence of Oak pit scale."Up until two years ago, we had it under control, then the budget was cut and we couldn't afford preventive maintenance anymore."

Bellinghausen has a parks supervisor who is responsible for the maintenance section and who oversees four foremen; and a Foreman II who heads the repair and construction section and also cares for three pools owned by the school district. Nine craftsmen work for him.

"A lot of my job is to pave the way for other people to get their jobs done," said Bellinghausen, referring to the governmental channels he must go through. But, he says, he is used to it and his past work experience shows it.

Prior to coming to Salem, Bellinghausen worked for 16 years for the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation. He was a park ranger and became the Statewide Ranger Training Coordinator at Asilamar, assisting in training all new park rangers in the state.

Besides working for the Forest Service, he was a State Parks Supervisor and an Area Manager. He has worked in Squaw Valley, Marin County, Samuel Taylor State Park, Point Reyes and was involved in the early stages of the Old Town San Diego State Historical Park renovation. In those 16 years, he made 13 household moves.

"It was just getting to be too much," he said, "and I wanted to get out of the law enforcement end of it."

When he came to Salem in 1972, he restructured the Parks Division. One month after he started his new job, he became involved in the Pacific Northwest Park and Recreation Management school. "My department has managed to meet the day-to-day challenges and avoid suffering too much," Bellinghausen explained. "We haven't had to run around and put out 'brush fires' because of the support of the community and elected officials." **WTT**

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

The Commons is a Number One priority area, receiving twice-a-week trimming and daily policing to keep up the Naval Academy's spic 'n span image.



Sherman Wallace and Bill Cusimano inspect the ornamental plantings at the Superintendent's Quarters on the academy campus, where visiting heads of state are entertained.

Cusimano Navigates Protocol At U.S. Naval Academy Campus

Former landscaper scrambles to make 4,500 midshipmen, thousands of tourists, and visiting dignitaries feel at home.

By Kevin Cooney,
assistant editor

The U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD., is not only a government reservation, but a university, tourist attraction and an athletic entity, according to Bill Cusimano, grounds maintenance manager. It is foremost a military base and operated like one.

Strolling through the tree-shaded central campus, one would believe this was another well-manicured Ivy League university until you notice the military statues and memorials that dot the landscape. Then come the plebes (freshmen) and midshipmen, strolling smartly along the red brick pathways in their crisp white uniforms.

Down by the harbor, rows of athletic fields line the sea wall while a few yards away the class of '87 clamber over the school fleet of training vessels, learning the basics of navigation and boat handling they will one day use to pilot destroyers, frigates and air-

craft carriers through the world's waterways.

Cusimano ran his own general landscaping business for 19 years before he took over turf maintenance chores at the academy in 1978. He said he learned quickly government work means "you have the responsibility, but not the authority" to get the job done on time.

"When I ran my own business, my work crews had the authority to go out and buy the necessary tools to keep the job going. Here, I have to plan sometimes two months ahead to make sure we have what we need.

All equipment and tools at the academy are purchased by the General Services Administration, which determines what to buy based strictly on the lowest bid. "That way you get the cheapest, but not necessarily the best," he said.

Sherman Wallace, Annapolis' pest control foreman, noted that he can, and does, receive specific brands of fertilizers, fungicides

and pesticides he requests. But he has to specify why a specific brand is more appropriate than others for individual jobs and meet state, naval and coastal regulators' requirements before he gets what he needs.

Trim areas are mowed with Jacobsen 20-inch rotaries, and the division's Woods rotary mowers handle the big areas towed behind John Deere or Massey-Ferguson tractors.

Jacobsen reel mowers are also in the academy's inventory. Hustler Excel riding rotary mowers round out the campus equipment.

Decentralization is so inherent in the management structure at Annapolis that Cusimano can't estimate his annual budget. Those figures are spread among the payroll, transportation, purchasing, personnel, housing, athletic and several other departments at the academy.

Occasionally, Cusimano will discover an outside contractor doing work on the grounds as he

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Outside Contractors install new sod after raising the crown of one of the academy's intramural fields.



Plebes pass in front of Hospital Point, a 22-acre intramural field that was suffering from drought stress earlier this year. Cusimano overseeded that field with K-31 tall fescue.

does his inspection rounds. Virtually all new plantings are handled through outside contracts. The Contracts Division will have arranged for the work, and because of the complex management structure and independence bred into the system, he said communication problems are a constant consideration.

Cusimano's equipment is bought through the GSA. The Ford, Chevrolet and Chrysler vehicles are allocated by the transportation division, and other tools are repaired by the mechanic's division. But irrigation equipment is repaired by the plumbing division.

"The biggest part of my job is salesman and diplomat, trying to convince the other departments that my job needs to be done first," he said.

In addition to the hodgepodge of offices he deals with on equipment matters, Cusimano's crews maintain everything from the garden at the superintendent's ceremonial quarters to apartment complexes, single-family homes, greenhouses, football and soccer fields, areas surrounding radio transmission towers and the academy burial grounds.

Visiting heads of state are entertained at the superintendent's quarters, sometimes on a moment's notice. The landscape there always has to be in top condition. The basement of the stately building houses a flower room where staffers can cut and arrange table decorations within hours of receiving word that a for-

mal event will take place.

Officers, instructors and their families are housed in garden apartment complexes and single-family homes. There's the academy medical center and the cemetery where Annapolis graduates are entitled to be interred.

Then, of course, come the classrooms and laboratory buildings, including one area where Japanese pear trees were planted on

"I learned quickly you have the responsibility, but not the authority to get the job done on time."

the roof of an underground laboratory.

"That presents a unique management problem," Cusimano said of the Japanese Pears. No irrigation system was installed to service the dozens of trees located on a concrete mall, and a wind shear coming from the bay through a tunnel created by two buildings means that planting has to be continually monitored to prevent any long-term damage.

Every one of the 4,500 midshipmen at Annapolis is required to engage in one sport during their four years. Every day at about 3:30, "the thundering herd," as Cusimano calls them, invade the 60 acres of intramural and practice fields near the waterfront. Because of rigid time schedules built into a military establish-

ment, he has to adjust his maintenance schedules around the needs of the academic, athletic and military arms of the academy.

One Monday morning his staff overseeded the academy's parade grounds, the foreman said, and by Friday two practice sessions were held on the fledgling turf.

The "military lives by the clock—that's the tradition around here." When it comes to maintaining the athletic areas along the waterfront, soil characteristics present a special problem—those fields were built on top of land reclaimed from the Annapolis Harbor, "and it changes every ten feet - you might have some seabed, then construction fill that came from inland—it makes soil testing almost ludicrous," he commented.

This year Cusimano overseeded those athletic fields with a mix of 10 percent Cheri bluegrass and 90 percent Olympic tall fescue with good results. The non-athletic areas received a 30:30:30 mix of Pennant, Premier and Citation perennial ryegrasses with 10 percent Cheri.

Although he called the Annapolis area "the worst place in the world to grow grass—" it's located in the heart of the transition zone—Cusimano said he's pleased with the results of the overseeding and said the turf is in generally good shape throughout the academy.

Cusimano also instituted a full Par-Ex IBDU fertilizer program this year, but due to a month-long drought in July, he said it's going

to be hard to judge the success of the program when he lays down fertilizer in late spring and mid-November.

To maintain the sprawling academy grounds efficiently with the staff of 70 full-time employees, Cusimano has five separate rating systems. Top priority are high-visibility areas, which are cut twice a week and policed daily. Number five areas,

such as around the transmission tower complex and fuel storage tanks, receive occasional attention to minimize weeds and fire hazards.

The athletic areas are in a category by themselves and are maintained according to the needs of the various coaches and athletic department heads who use them. When it comes to chemical control of weeds, insects and fungi,

Cusimano said he and Wallace, "go by bloom" when they schedule their pest applications.

"You can never schedule by the calendar here," Cusimano said. "You get 100 degree days in April and snow flurries in May."

Wallace said he uses Roundup around the athletic areas, such as on the tartan racing tracks and under bleachers, as well as in all perennial areas throughout the 330-acre complex. He also applies it on the red brick walkways that wind through sections of the campus, as it doesn't stain the old brick as other non-selectives might.

To control white clover on the athletic fields, Wallace applies MCPP, and ornamental lawns are treated with non-volatile 2,4-D.

Dalapon is used for top burning on the waterfront areas, beneath bleachers and in combination with Simazine along fenceline. Orthene is the main insecticide used on the academy grounds, and Wallace said he applies Sevin for leaf chewers.

By combining post- and pre-emergents for fenceline control, Cusimano said his crews can treat those areas twice a year instead of four or five times as they did in the past.

Like many areas on the Eastern Seaboard, Annapolis is afflicted with Dutch Elm Disease. When an infestation is noted, Wallace's crews inject cups of Bidrin around the trunk. "That shoots up to the leaves in a matter of hours," and quickly kills off that particular infestation, Cusimano said.

"It's a big problem, but we're holding the line" by using Arbotect 20S in a preventative program, Wallace commented.

Forty-five hundred cadets, their families, VIPs and almost-three million tourists visit Annapolis each year. There isn't any land bank for rotating use of the athletic fields, and new construction projects are always on the drawing board at the Naval Academy. By keeping on top of the myriad regulations, customers and departments at Annapolis, Cusimano keeps Annapolis both an institution and attraction.

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