

BUDGETS from page 29G

"borrow" from other line item accounts to cover the costs.

We may use this fund-shifting technique within the operational budget for other reasons, too. For example, additional funds to replace concrete damaged during a car accident or to cover repairs of unexpected equipment breakdowns may be diverted from the landscape renovation category. We do stick to the budgeted line item figures as closely as possible, and must stay within the constraints of the overall operational budget.

We divide the grounds operational budget into three defined seasonal areas: July through fall; winter; and spring through June. Major capital improvement projects and renovation work are accomplished most easily from the third week of May to the second week of August, when fewer people are on campus. But because the "budget year" starts July first, we currently have a tight window in which to get major work done.

Those planning and administering budgets are always looking for ways to cut costs and increase operating efficiency.

In some cases, pre-committing funds to specific uses can be beneficial. We pre-contract with greenhouse growers for production of the specific varieties and quantities of annuals and perennials for campus needs so we're assured of getting what we want, when we need it, at a predetermined price.

We also make pre-season purchases of certain turf and landscape maintenance products. To keep the overall budget in perspective, we note these pre-committed line items as "encumbered" on the budget printout until the funds are actually spent.

We compare the costs and efficiencies of performing various services in-house with the costs of hiring contract labor for those services. For example, we currently use in-house crews for sidewalk snow removal, and contract for the parking lot snow removal which requires a fleet of heavy equipment.

We analyze equipment use, down-time records and maintenance and repair costs. Equipment replacement is scheduled into the appropriate budget as effective usage time drops and cost of use escalates. Despite a good preventive maintenance program, we always include a line item figure for unexpected repairs.

We keep records of all outside expenditures that were not included in the original budget to determine if they merit a line item budget allocation for the next year.

Budgeting takes commitment. It's a matter of weighing the effect of defined needs and fund requests for their impact on the overall short-term and long term goals. It is essential; an effective program requires solid guidelines.

—Richard Moffitt is Superintendent of Grounds for Saint Louis University, St. Louis, Mo., and a board member of the national Sports Turf Managers Association.

10 top turf tips

■ David Oatis of the USGA Green Section looks at

all the "turf tips" his organization has produced in the past 12 years.

"We're not playing the same game on golf courses we played 10 to 15 years ago," he says, speaking to the New Jersey Turfgrass Expo. "Championship conditions of 20 years ago we surpass on a daily basis now. Plant material is superior, we have faster greens, wonderful research, genetic engineering on the horizon, and weed-resistant varieties.

"The best ideas come from everyday superintendents who are just trying to do their job better."

He picks his top 10, pointed at the northeast sector that he serves. Here are his choices, in decreasing importance:

#10 - Using grooming and rolling—with "good common sense and moderation"—to produce a smoother, faster putting surface.

#9 - Using a high-tech camera to find out what's inside drain pipes if you have a high sand green and aren't getting good drainage.

#8 - Using 2x4 wood to level new greens (like you would concrete), or rent-

ing high-tech laser equipment.

#7 - Separating the layers of soil, for courses with non-homogenous soil profiles, to get tested. Don't mix the layers.

#6 - Deep aerify greens with Floyd McKay or Verti-Drain or Hydroject machines. "This isn't a panacea, but a good idea if done properly," Oatis says. First, though, check for proper soil moisture so the aerification process is successful.

#5 - "Hire someone with a computer to accurately diagnose irrigation coverage problems. You can use it to simulate what effect changes would have in coverage without ever going out in the field and trying them," Oatis notes.

#4 - Using burlap bags filled with soil as edging when rebuilding sand bunkers. You can sod right over the bags, which decompose with time.

#3 - Installing supplemental irrigation systems for the banks around greens.

#2 - Using asphalt or clay tampers to make sand bunkers playable almost immediately. "But do it before you open the hole for play," Oatis says, "because you don't want to get a reputation for having soft sand."

#1 - Using time-lapse photos (one hour apart) to chart the path of shade across any greens at which you need to take down



Oatis: Time-lapse photography can help superintendents.

trees. These photos will prove to members that the trees were doing more harm than good.

"At clubs with members with a sense of humor," he suggests using chain saws with the names "Thunder" and "Lightning." "You can safely and honestly say," he notes, "in response to members with questions about tree removal that 'thunder and lightning got it.'"

—Jerry Roche