



**Dr. Henry Wilkinson suggests 'don't guess' when it comes to irrigating your athletic fields.**

guess. Established turf will take about one inch of water per week.

3) Mow regularly, and in non-use areas, raise the cut 1/2-inch.

4) Do not collect clippings.

5) Fertilize as needed, and lower the amount you put down each application. In general, 2 to 3 lbs. of N per year per acre should be sufficient.

6) Use creative encouragement to vary use patterns. Tell the people that are using the fields to try and spread their use, and offer to show them how.

7) Aerify high-activity areas more. Aerifying should be done at least once a season during cool, growing periods.

8) Repair damaged areas only. During the off-season, repair by seeding; in-season, you almost have to use sod.

9) Use soil conditioners when you make repairs.

10) Generally, pest management will be limited to insect control, and only when insects reach a point where they are actually damaging the turf.

Using his recommendations, and figuring the normal football/soccer field as being 1.4 acres and the normal baseball field as 1.6 acres, Wilkinson came up with these minimum costs to maintain a field for one year:

	Football	Baseball
Fertilizer	\$210	\$240
Aerification	\$550	\$600
Pest mgmt.	\$95	\$106
Damage repair	\$200	\$200

—Jerry Roche

# Working with volunteers takes a special effort

**Volunteers claim a facility as their own. You reap the rewards of their work and their pride in the community's facility.**

by Mike Calhoon

Today's limited budgets, combined with increased use of sports and recreational facilities, force us to seek ways to do more with less. One option is to work with volunteer groups to extend the scope and efficiency of your programs with little added cost.

Opening volunteer programs to just anyone can lead to disappointment when "helpers" need too much supervision or simply are unable to do the job. So you must decide what you want to accomplish, the level of expertise needed, and standards of ability and experience that are acceptable.

Tap into the resources of the people you'd like to volunteer. First, identify the target groups and their key interests. For instance, seek out horticultural clubs for assistance with landscaping and flower beds. Look to facility user groups and those affiliated with them—such as parents and booster clubs—for site-specific tasks.

Make assignment schedules flexible enough to attract volunteers from numerous groups. For example, students at area universities can make excellent volunteers. They may not be able to make a year-long commitment, but often can devote blocks of time to specific tasks.

Such volunteer efforts can be beneficial to the students, too. Many students are "book smart" but have little hands-on experience. If we, as professionals, expect to find experienced personnel, we need to provide more opportunities for them to gain the experience. The combination of altruistic effort and hands-on experience will look

doubly good on a resumé.

**Recognition**—The most important element of successful programs is to recognize the efforts of volunteers. Let them know how important their service is when they agree to tackle the job, as they perform the task, and after their work is completed. Here are some other ideas:

- Write thank-you letters.
- Host picnics or luncheons.
- Distribute special badges, shirts, jackets or caps.
- Provide certificates of service.
- Write public thank-yous in the local newspaper or your newsletter.
- Give volunteers preferential treatment, such as "preview" tours of new or upgraded facilities before these sites are open to the public.

Keep a separate file on each volunteer. List:

- 1) full name, address, work and home phone numbers;
- 2) special interests and abilities; and
- 3) complete records of service, including where, when, what and how much time was spent.

Hold an annual celebration. Include everyone. Use your volunteer files to track



**Volunteers help build a handicap-accessible walkway to a fishing pier at North Shields Pond in Fort Collins, Colo.**

down these people and issue a personal invitation to attend, via letter or phone. To skip some people because of a poor record-keeping system will cause the volunteer program to fall apart as quickly as having no recognition system.

Volunteers who are pleased with the program will spread the word to other people with similar interests and abilities. This word-of-mouth "advertising" is the best outreach effort for any program.

Find ways to communicate with the public about the facility, its programs, and its need for (and thanks to) volunteers. Get this message out via the local newspaper, your facility's newsletter, and/or PSA (public service announcements) on local radio or television. Provide thorough information with consistent timing and placement. The public should know where and when it can find such information.

**Preparation**—Train volunteers properly. Tell people what they need to know, what will be expected of them, and how to accomplish it. Develop specific training programs. Monitor training and fine-tune it as necessary.

Develop a system to document each

volunteer's participation in the training programs, including a form signed by the instructor and the volunteer confirming that each training step has been completed. Add these forms to the volunteer's file.

Provide the proper supplies and tools. Volunteers may not expect the best, but don't expect them to work with anything less than what you'd supply for your own crews.

Provide adequate supervision. A thoroughly trained volunteer who is highly competent in operating a certain piece of power equipment may require only that a supervisor be in the immediate area, available to offer assistance if needed. A trainee and relatively inexperienced operator will need direct supervision.

**Protection**—Follow all laws and ordinances, from the federal to the local level. Here are other ways to protect your department and facility:

- Work with top management and your attorney to establish liability policies, and follow those policies precisely (for example, restricting the operation of power equipment to 18-year-olds or older).

- Check with the attorney on the

advisability of having volunteers sign a liability waiver. Though such forms may not be legally binding, they can sometimes be useful to show that the volunteer indeed had knowledge that some level of expertise was needed.

- Conduct background checks if an individual will be placed in a position of trust, such as interacting directly with children. Follow through with the background check even if the person moving into a position of trust has been a long-time volunteer in another segment of your program. All information obtained through a background check must be kept confidential—in a separate file accessible only to the specified personnel who have final approval of the volunteers selected for such positions.

- Make sure insurance coverage is adequate, not only to protect the volunteers, but to protect the facility and its personnel from possible legal action.

—Mike Calhoon is a park technician for the Fort Collins (Colo.) Park Department and an active member of the Colorado Chapter of the Sports Turf Managers Association.

## 10 strategies you can use to make time more valuable, productive and rewarding

### Veteran Chicagoland superintendent Bruce Williams gives pointers on getting more out of the 168 hours in a week.

■ Time must be used. It can't be put in a bank and later withdrawn. Since it must be spent, spend it productively, says certified golf course superintendent Bruce Williams.

Williams, a super since 1979, gives colleagues pointers on how to squeeze extra minutes and hours from each day.

He conducts time management seminars on behalf of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA). This past December he shared suggestions with about 300 fellow superintendents and assistants at the North Central Turfgrass Expo near Chicago.

Williams: write down goals and objectives.



Successful time management, he says, is absolutely vital to becoming a successful superintendent.

Williams, at first glance, has less time than most. He's superintendent at Bob O'Link Golf Club, Highland Park, Ill., with a staff of 18. For the past four years, he's also been a board member with the GCSAA. Before that he served on the board and was president of, first, the

Chicagoland Superintendents Association and, then, the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents.

He says GCSAA business takes about two hours of his time daily.

He maintains that if he hadn't developed strategies (which he admits are still far from perfect) to manage time, he couldn't fulfill his responsibilities to his course nor to the GCSAA board, and still find sufficient time for his family and himself.

Williams says that everybody has exactly the same amount of time each week—168 hours. The difference comes in how individuals use their 168 hours.

Here are 10 strategies that superintendents can use to make their time more productive and rewarding:

**1) Plan, and plan regularly**, maybe even a few minutes each morning.

**2) Write down goals and objectives**, then prioritize them. Make an "A-B-C" list. The A list contains tasks that must be done, the B list things that should be done, and the C list jobs that it would be nice to do. Do the A list first.

**3) Focus on objectives** rather than activities. "It's not how busy we are that determines success, it's meeting our objectives," says Williams.

**4) Take items in order of importance**