

Flood repairs begin in Ohio, Kentucky

by TERRY MCIVER, Editor-in-chief

LOUISVILLE, Ky.—The river ran through, and then came the clean up.

The floods of 1997—another in what seem to have become annual, weather-related mishaps across the U.S.—hit southern Ohio, Indiana and northern Kentucky hard. Now, landscape companies and golf course superintendents are busy mopping up.

"Floyd's Fork Creek rose and covered 12 of our holes," says Tony Littrell, CGCS, Midland Trail Golf Course, Middletown, Ky., about 10 miles east of Louisville.

"We didn't have any major problems, a little bit of siltation, that kind of thing," says Littrell. "We'll have it cleaned up before the month's over. We're using our Sand Pro where it's dry enough to push the silt into piles, because it's too wet to get out there with loader tractors."

Littrell reports that most of the silt on the golf course was a high sand content, "and all that did was improve the soil. Some sand bunkers were completely washed out."

"Better to have a golf course in a flood prone area rather than a house," observes Mark Wilson, CGCS, of Valhalla Country Club, Louisville, Ky., site of last year's PGA Championship. Wilson reported the water was receding as of March 10.

Wilson assessed the situation by saying the course had "no real turf damage, but tons of debris."

The clean up is monumental, as silt, leaves, logs and the garbage that was left behind is scattered everywhere.

It was about a 10-day clean up job for Wilson. "There was as much as three inches of mud on the cart paths. The



Golf courses in Ohio and Kentucky were covered by flood waters at different times during the week, depending on location. Shown here is Valhalla in Louisville.

Turf aerification a priority after flooding

"Aerify, aerify, aerify," to reduce compaction and layering problems, says Dr. Bill Knoop, LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT technical editor, when asked what advice he would give superintendents at flooded golf courses.

"And remove aeration cores, if possible. You want to pick up as much of that silt as you can," advises Knoop, of Mt. Vernon, Texas.

"You've got to get oxygen into the root system, and allow carbon dioxide to escape."

On courses where the silt is deep enough to prevent light from reaching the plant for an extended period of time, "the war is probably over," suggests Knoop.

Weeds could become another major concern. "The river water brings in an incredible amount of weed seed," says Knoop.

So, how long can turf usually live underwater?

"It's a function of water, temperature, time, and turf variety," explains Knoop. "Some grasses do better than others. Generally, the warmer the water, the worse off they are.

"You have to be more concerned with bluegrasses. Bermuda will come up through asphalt!" The bunch types—ryegrasses, tall fescues—will have the toughest time surviving because of the way they spread, says Knoop.

"Bermuda, St. Augustine, zoysia, can handle this kind of adversity much better because of the way they grow. You can almost literally bury bentgrass and it will come up."

Trees will need attention, too, says Knoop.

"All root systems have to exchange gases. A tree is going to root in relationship to the soil texture. The heavier the soil, the root system will tend to be closer to the surface. If you seal that surface with silt or clay, you're going to kill that tree. It could be a year before you notice any damage."

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PHOTOS COURTESY MARK WILSON

Mark Wilson's Valhalla crew made bridge repair a priority.

bunkers were destroyed by the 11 inches of rain in two days. Basically, we're still working on bunkers one at a time. With the bunkers we're scraping the silt, trying to clean the contaminants out of the white sand.

"We lost the handrail on three concrete bridges," continues Wilson. Liability concerns made replacing the rails a priority, at a cost of \$5000. A thousand foot stretch of security fence was "flattened," says Wilson, and cost \$6000 to replace.

"It's all labor intensive," says Wilson. "You can't even get small carts to those wet areas."

Valhalla tees, fairways and greens are seeded with Penncross bentgrass. Roughs are bluegrass; long

roughs are fescue.

Wilson is able to find a silver lining in this cloud: mowing isn't a prime concern right now, since the turf's just getting started. And, he says, Valhalla uses "one of the best water tolerant grasses you can find," in bentgrass.

"Bentgrass is probably the best survivor underwater," says Wilson. "We were under water for three days, and there's no harmful effects on the turf."

Wilson had to hire workers from a temporary service to meet the need for extra labor. □

Leaf blower issue still swirls in Calif., NY, Ore.

The ban on leaf blowers is still an active issue in the green industry, as concerned professional users try to educate everyone from irresponsible operators to misinformed activists.

In November, Los Angeles City Council voted 9-3 to approve an ordinance banning the use of gasoline-powered leaf blowers within 500 feet of a residence. The ban takes effect on July 1, with a maximum fine of \$1000. Fifteen other California communities have banned the tools, and dozens of others have approved ordinances restricting their use, according to the Portable Power Equipment Manufacturers Association, Bethesda, Md.

Municipal governments in New York and Oregon are watching the Los Angeles events as they consider measures to respond to what is called "a growing concern over community noise."

It's the operator!

Michael Bellantoni of White Plains, NY, executive director of the New York State Turf and Landscape Association, and president of Michael Bellantoni, Inc., says the Association is considering filing a lawsuit to overturn a ban on leaf blowers in Scarsdale, NY, which, ironically, is the first city where the leaf blower was ever used. The Association had won an earlier ruling allowing professionals to use leaf blowers, but that ruling was overturned due to a procedural error.

"Leaf blowers are a lot quieter than many other powered tools," explains Bellantoni, who says that when the noise issue is challenged, anti-noise advocates change their tune, and say blowers contribute to the spread of carcinogens in the air.

"Limited use restricts work," says Bellantoni. The Association has suggested a compromise to the Village of Scarsdale instead of going to appeals court once again. "We want to seek a happy medium for the landscapers and Scarsdale," says Bellantoni.

That happy medium would be to restrict blower use to the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

"We would support a heavy penalty for any violators, without warnings," says Bellantoni.

A roundtable discussion sponsored by the Portable Power Equipment Manufacturer's Association took place in November, and included most manufacturers of two-cycle equipment.

"The ideas expressed spanned the spectrum of alternatives, including educating users in the industry to fighting the laws in the court system," says Larry Wilson, president of NYSTLA. "Many thought that a public relations campaign would help. Everyone agreed that unity was important." □



Bellantoni: fines for violators.