

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.