

>HOT TOPICS**NTEP funds cut again**

BELTSVILLE, Md.—The United States Department of Agriculture has again cut funding for the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program, this time for fiscal year 1998.

The action took NTEP by surprise, especially after a successful green industry effort to restore funding in 1997.

"[USDA] took the same projects that were identified last year, and cut them again," says NTEP director, Kevin Morris.

"When the funding was restored last year, we actually got a five percent increase, to \$55,000. Then, they went and cut it again, the whole thing. If they don't set aside any money for us, we lose our connection to USDA, unless we want to pay them for rent, which we don't want to do and won't do."

Morris says the green industry is going to work on getting the money restored at the congressional level, but will also try to get a full-time position established at NTEP.

"That will help to keep us from getting cut in the future. It's easy to cut money when there's no employees attached to it, because you don't have to worry about putting them in a new position, retraining or relocating," suggests Morris, who is employed by the National Turfgrass Federation, a non-profit corporation, not by USDA.



Morris: NTEP 'out on a limb.'

The NTEP was started in 1980; its first manager was the late Jack Murray.

"When Jack retired in 1988, his position was cancelled," explains Morris, who has been with the program for nine years. The USDA has not had a full-time person in the turfgrass program since 1988.

"A couple years ago, all the projects within the agricultural research service were rated in terms of their importance. The administrators rated our project 'low,'" recalls Morris.

"They're using the same ratings now, to determine which projects to cut. We're still an easy target."

"USDA has at least 10 full-time scientists working in ornamentals," says Morris, "so it's not like the green industry doesn't have any support here. In fact, the ornamental people got \$200,000 additional funding for this fiscal year. The ornamental people have congressional support. They've put a good case forward, and the congressional people have agreed to it."

Green industry professionals are urged to contact their congressional representative to voice support for the NTEP/USDA cooperative effort.

"Let them know it's important to have that link between the USDA, the green industry and NTEP," says Morris. **LM**

Events**APRIL**

10-12: Landscape Maintenance Association Annual Equipment Show Roundup Palm Beach Airport Hilton, W. Palm Beach, Fla.; Fred Williams, (407) 672-0633.

22-23: Integrated Turfgrass Pest Management for Professionals University of California Extension, Davis, Calif. Call (916) 757-8899.

27-30: North American Snow Conference sponsored by the American Public Works Association, Kansas City, Mo.; (816) 472-6100; fax (816) 472-1610.

26-27: Leesburg Flower and Garden Festival Sponsored by Leesburg (Va.) Department of Parks and Recreation. Call (703) 777-1262.

30-May 5: Western Chapter ISA Conference Disneyland Pacific Hotel, Anaheim, Calif. Contact Western Chapter ISA at (916) 641-2990.

MAY

3-5: Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association Annual meeting, San Diego, Calif. Call (612) 758-5811; fax (612) 758-5813.

3-7: New York State Recreation & Park Society Conference Holiday Inn Sun Spree, Lake Placid, NY. Call Rob Marchiony (518) 584-0321; fax (518) 584-5101.

5-6: Florida Nurserymen & Growers Assn. Menninger Tree Conference Leu Gardens, Orlando, Fla. Contact Linda Vanderzee (407) 345-8137; fax (407) 351-2610.

5-7: Southeastern Turfgrass Conference 51st annual, Tifton, Ga. For more information contact Jeanne Werner (912) 386-3416; fax (912) 386-3822 or e-mail, jwerner@uga.cc.uga.edu.

7: Organizational Meeting for EETC Holiday Inn DFW Airport North, Irving (Dallas), TX. Contact Virgil Russell (512) 442-1788; fax (512) 442-1789.

12-18: American Society of Golf Course Architects Annual Meeting, Hotel Inter-Continental, Toronto. The Society celebrates its 50th birthday at this meeting. Contact the Society at (312) 372-7090.

14: North Carolina Turf & Landscape Research Field Day North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC. Call Gene Maples (910) 695-1333; fax, (910) 695-1222.

29-30: Color Magic—Florida Nurserymen & Growers Ass. sites in Kissimmee/Orlando. Linda Vanderzee (407) 345-8137; fax (407) 351-2610. **LM**