

Floods are the ultimate 'cause and effect' story



Terry McIver

TERRY McIVER
Editor-in-Chief

Any list of the wonders of this created world must certainly include the unpredictable and downright unstoppable forces of nature.

The late snowfall and subsequent flooding in North Dakota and Minnesota are this year's examples, along with the southern Ohio deluge of early March.

The water rises to reclaim the land for a time, and then recedes, leaving a clean-up job that takes weeks.

I viewed the aftermath of the St. Louis floods

a few years back, and thought that was the worst it could ever get. Lawn care pro John Loyet drove me around an industrial park left ruined by floodwater. Private jets parked at a nearby muni airport were lifted, carried along by the water, and then dropped. How much more ruinous this latest flooding is in comparison!

It's easy to talk about the floods as I sit high and dry in northeast Ohio. Here, floods are just a news story that happens

somewhere else. Spring's been chilly here, but the residents of Grand Forks, N.D., would gladly barter what happened to their town in April for a merely 'chilly' spring.

How bad was it? The Red River crested at 54 feet, in what is being called a 500-year flood, which means it was a flood so devastating that it doesn't occur but once in 500-years.

The school year in Grand Forks has ended; the town was evacuated; and flood watchers say a full assessment of damage won't be possible till the end of this month.

City residents blamed forecasters for under-estimating the height at which the river would crest. The difference between the prediction and what actually happened was only a matter of five feet, which some said meant little when you're

facing the power of a 500-year flood. Remember, we can all talk about the weather, but none of us can ever do anything about it.

I managed to get through to a few green industry professionals, to talk about the recovery.

► Steve Snortum, owner of Snortum Nursery, Granite Falls, Minn., said the flooding in that town was the worst he had seen in a mere 28 years. His company is located in a dry area, but he managed to take some pictures of water that had risen 18 feet and covered a walkway of a bridge. Sandbags were piled 10 feet high on a neighborhood street.

► Woody Woodson, club professional and manager at Montevideo Country Club in Montevideo, Minn., was looking at four holes under about four feet of water on April 24, but said he was confident that the Kentucky bluegrass turf would survive. The eight-man crew at MCC was rebuilding a dike when I called.

"It'll be a challenge, but that's life," said Woodson, who said he'd never seen anything like it in his 27 years in the business. Pumps at MCC were working at a rate of 100,000 gallons an hour, sending water back to the Minnesota River.

► George Sholy of S&S Landscaping, Fargo, N.D. and his crews were helping pile sandbags in Grand Forks prior to the final cresting. Fargo was ultimately spared the full force of the flood.

Sholy's caring attitude and that of others like him no doubt went a long way in helping those who were about to lose pieces of their lives to the force of an uncaring river. **LM**

Don't forget: Tell us how you got into the green industry, and where you are now, for LM's 35th Anniversary Issue. See our April issue, page 54 for our "Talkback" reader response page, or write us a letter. Send your green industry history to:

7500 Old Oak Blvd. Clev., OH 44130
(216) 891-2709; fax: (216) 891-2675

E-mail: tmciver@advanstar.com
rhall@advanstar.com