

PLCAA considers giving new life to the 42-year-old Lawn Institute

Marietta, Ga.— On June 30, the executive committee of The Lawn Institute suspended operations of the 40-year old turfgrass trade association. The Professional Lawn Care Association is looking at ways to revive it.

Lawn Institute President Scott Patterson said the decision was made "due to insufficient interest and financial support from the turfgrass seed industry" over the last several years.

"A number of sticks are in the fire," said Patterson. "There's been a number of proposals, including the possibility of The Lawn Institute being united with an industry organization such as the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA). We're trying to make some decisions now."

PLCAA's Thomas Delaney acknowledged: "We're working with them to see how we can either make them a division [of PLCAA] or keep it going. . . We're trying to put a proposal together to see what we can do."

Open up membership

Delaney said PLCAA wants to open the Lawn Institute's membership to all supplier categories, an idea whose time has perhaps finally come.

Dr. Eliot Roberts, a past executive director of The In-

stitute, is one observer who believes the Institute's narrow membership has limited the Institute's success.

"I thought it should be open to equipment manufacturers and chemical [companies] as well," Roberts said. "The educational effort would have been a benefit for



Roberts: non-profits need money.



Jacklin: low membership a problem.



Brooks: don't yank plug on Institute.

the whole of lawn care industry. We never got beyond a one-person, half-time executive director. If staff had increased at the same time our base of support increased, it might have made a difference," suggested Roberts.

"Our top budget each year was just over \$100,000," recalled Roberts. "You need at least a quarter million for a non-profit [association] to make an impact."

Roberts believes politics was one cause of lack of support for the Institute.

"The seedsmen have had their agenda," said Roberts.

"One of the key points that has benefitted the landscape and lawn care industries has been the way it has matured over time. I don't think the lawn seed trade has matured over time. They're still fighting over non-green industry issues. Instead of worrying about whether one

and financial support from a wider base of turf industry suppliers and professionals."

About 75 firms belong to the Institute, but "without financial support, no organization is going to make it," emphasized Patterson.

Institute began in '55

The Institute began in 1955 as The Better Lawn & Turf Institute, to promote research and education on the benefits of lawn/sports turf.

"We felt the program had value, but when crunch time came, we were all busy," said Tom Stanley, marketing director for Turf-Seed. "We just didn't want to put those stickers on the bag, because it's another step before it gets out the door."

"We educate people," said James Brooks, most recent director of the Institute.

"The Lawn Institute has never sold a bag of seed and I don't think it ever will. Our role is to raise the consciousness of the homeowner and consumer to where they'll say, 'I want some of the good stuff,'" when planting a new lawn.

"Let's not yank the plug on this thing," added Brooks. "We're going to see if we can come up with another plan." □

company has an advantage over another they should be promoting the lawn garden and turf industry as a whole, not worry about their individual benefits."

"Though the Lawn Institute has been very successful in its consumer education and public relations efforts on behalf of the turfgrass industry, the current membership level cannot financially sustain its growing number of worthwhile activities," said Doyle Jacklin, Jacklin Seed Co..

"We certainly hope a viable plan can be developed to expand the interest, participation

Race track surface with a 'bounce'

COURTESY SKYCAM, USED BY PERMISSION



Moisture levels are monitored at The Lone Star Park racing track.

Grand Prairie, Texas—

When the horses run the turf track at the \$96 million Lone Star Park here, there's more going on below the 48,000 square yards of bermudagrass than meets the eye. To make certain Lone Star installed what they believed to be the

best surface possible, they went to Dennis Moore, a world renowned consultant and owner of Track Tek, Fallbrook, Calif.

Moore designed a state-of-the-art course, one that uses the "Stabilizer" system, a growing medium made from

80 percent sand and 20 percent organic material.

▶ The bottom layer of the course begins with a cement-stabilized subgrade.

▶ Above that layer is six inches of choker sand that acts as a drainage system.

▶ Ten inches of Stabilizer mix goes on top of the choker layer.

▶ The top four inches of the growing medium incorporates TurfGrids, fibrillated polypropylene fibers, to strengthen the root system and provide better footing for the horses. Stabilizer, Inc. of Phoenix, makes TurfGrids.

The improved design is all meant to make for better footing for the horses, and to reduce the beating to the turf.

Sand alone simply does not provide enough support for racing, according to Moore. TurfGrids bind the sand and water together to produce an equestrian surface that is resilient and has a good water bearing capacity.

"When the Stabilizer organic material is combined with the TurfGrids, the result is much like the feel of a trampoline," says Moore.

"To maintain the effectiveness of this system, we maintain a damp soil consistency," says Dennis' brother Ron Moore, director of track maintenance for Lone Star Park.

Ron Moore keeps a close eye on soil moisture. A Toro irrigation system provides the needed irrigation.

"The results have been tremendous with our equestrian surface," says Moore.

"Any needed repair is done after each race, though with this type of grass, there are very few repairs. We tamp it in and get water on it right away. That's basically all you have to do."

The rail can also be moved in or out to relieve turf wear during the races. □

—Robert Reaves

Lofts acquires big distributor in South

Lofts Seed, Inc., acquired Sunbelt Seeds, a wholesale grass seed and fertilizer distributor in Norcross, Ga., on June 18. Sunbelt Seeds is one of the largest golf course distributors in the South. It will be a subsidiary of Lofts Seed. It will sell seed to golf courses, sod farms, retail stores, landscapers, lawn care operators, sports facilities and municipalities.

Richard Budd, chief executive officer of Lofts Seed, Inc., said the acquisition

"opens new market opportunities while maintaining the philosophies which both businesses were founded on—customer relationships built on trust, confidence and professionalism."

Lofts Seed is based in Winston-Salem, NC, and markets turfgrass seed. It owns patents on more than 25 seed varieties. The 74-year-old company has more than 100 employees. □



TurfGrids, fibrillated poly fibers, blended into this 80/20 planting medium provide stability to the bermudagrass racing surface.

NY again in legislative tussle

Members of the NY State Green Council are looking with interest at S-3889-B, "the adjacent notification bill," which they say could cripple many pesticide applications in New York State.

The Council has begun to lobby Senator Carl Marcellino and other lawmakers to let them know why the proposed bill would be a mistake.

As has happened before with pesticide legislation, the NY staters say prior bills have got it covered.

"Any concern about neighbors coming onto treated property is already covered by ECL Article 33, Title 10, which requires sign posting for commercial lawn applications to warn persons coming onto treated property from adjoining properties. The purpose of this notification appears to presume that there will be off-premises contamination," wrote attorney Thomas West in a letter to Marcellino, on behalf of the Council.

"Requiring off-premises notification in the manner prescribed by this bill will be cost-prohibitive, precluding many people from treating their property," wrote West. Many of the application techniques utilized would trigger the off-premises notification requirements of this legislation. Very often, it is difficult to determine who owns adjoining property or how many properties actually abut the premises being treated."

West also noted technical flaws in the proposed legislation, flaws which he said would force a return to outdated, cover spray techniques of treating an entire property to avoid having to notify neighbors if a spot treatment is required later.

"I remain committed to seeing legislation requiring notification of certain pesticide applications become a law," responded Marcellino in disagreement.

"Many hours have been spent working with interested parties on all sides of the issue to craft a workable program to provide for neighbor notification."

For more information on the bill, or to help the Council in its legislative battle, call the Council at 518/783-1322. □

Toro alleges trade secret theft

The Toro Company's case against irrigation company Grizzle and Hunter will be heard by a jury trial this fall.

Toro is seeking to have the court remove the company's sprinkler products from the market. The products are marketed under the trade name "Bear Irrigation".

Toro claims that the company, owned by Glen Grizzle and several key former Toro employees, misappropriated several Toro secrets related to the golf course sprinkler market.

Toro also alleges that Grizzle and Hunter has committed unfair competition and deceptive trade practices.

Killmer leads Environmental Earthscapes

Kevin Killmer has been named president and chief executive officer of Environmental

Earthscapes, Inc., dba The Groundskeeper, Tucson, Ariz.

Killmer has been with The

Groundskeeper

for more than 20

years, first as a

landscape crew

leader, then as

an area supervi-

sor, and in 1985,

as senior vp and

general manager. The

Groundskeeper is an em-

ployee-owned landscape

contracting firm, with seven branch offices,

in Tucson, Phoenix, Las Vegas and Palm

Desert, Calif.

[CLIPPINGS]



Killmer

Troutman with ECI on east coast

Dr. Barry Troutman is manager of technical support for Environmental Care's east coast operations, reports ECI, Calabasas, Calif. He is charged with management of technical programs for fertility, weed control and insect control. "Our industry faces the challenge of providing the environmentally important benefits of landscapes in a world of limited resources," says Troutman. "I see ECI's people and their leadership in total landscape maintenance business perfectly positioned to meet this challenge." Many know Troutman from his tenure as director of training for PLCAA. He was also technical director and research weed scientist for ChemLawn and past president of the Georgia Turfgrass Association. □