

BY RON HALL / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Prepare for the big squeeze

The next major source of fresh water for our growing society will be squeezed from those of us who irrigate lawns and ornamentals, and from our customers, too.

This "new" source of fresh water is the 25% to 35% that water purveyors say homeowners waste on their landscapes because of inefficient irrigation. As 2002's droughts and severe water restrictions reminded us, this sentiment isn't limited to any single region.

Eye-opening droughts

Last season, water restrictions resulting from droughts slowed Green Industry activity in the Northeast, the Mid-Atlantic and some areas of the Midwest. It also created a big problem in the Denver area. (See "Drought — prepare a plan" on page 46.) This peek into our future water situation is no revelation to colleagues in regions such as Arizona and Southern California, which get much of their fresh water from a single source.

The Colorado River is the lifeblood of this arid region with its a 360-day-a-year growing season. The Southwest is also the fastest growing section of the United States, with its fresh water needs growing daily.

But there's only so much water to be apportioned among seven states, with Mexico using what's left. The Colorado gives up all of the water that it collects from the mountains in Colorado and Wyoming. Last year it wasn't nearly enough.

Record low snowfall in the Rocky Mountains during the winter of 2001-2002 left the river suffering, leaving it at 26% of its normal flow. Even with welcome spring precipitation, water levels of its massive lakes are still low.

Not all of our industry's water concerns are as immediate or dramatic, but they are as real.

Wise up

All of us must wise up and practice proper irrigation and water conservation techniques. More importantly, we have to get the word out to our clients, particularly our residential customers. Water officials say that homeowners are the worst water wasters, and that's the segment of our customers that will be asked to make the biggest water sacrifices.

What does this mean to us? It means:

- ▶ designing and installing turf and landscapes appropriate for the regions where we do business,
- ▶ taking advantage of the latest and most efficient irrigation technology,
- ▶ educating our clients and helping them manage and maintain their irrigation systems, and
- ▶ becoming a part of the water decision-making process in our communities.

It will do no good for us to moan about our bad luck or butt heads with water purveyors when the next water crisis arrives. It's better — much better — that we become a part of the water wise movement now.

Contact Ron at
440/891-2636 or e-mail at
rhall@advanstar.com

All of us in the Green Industry need to **Wise up** and practice **proper irrigation and water conservation techniques.**

