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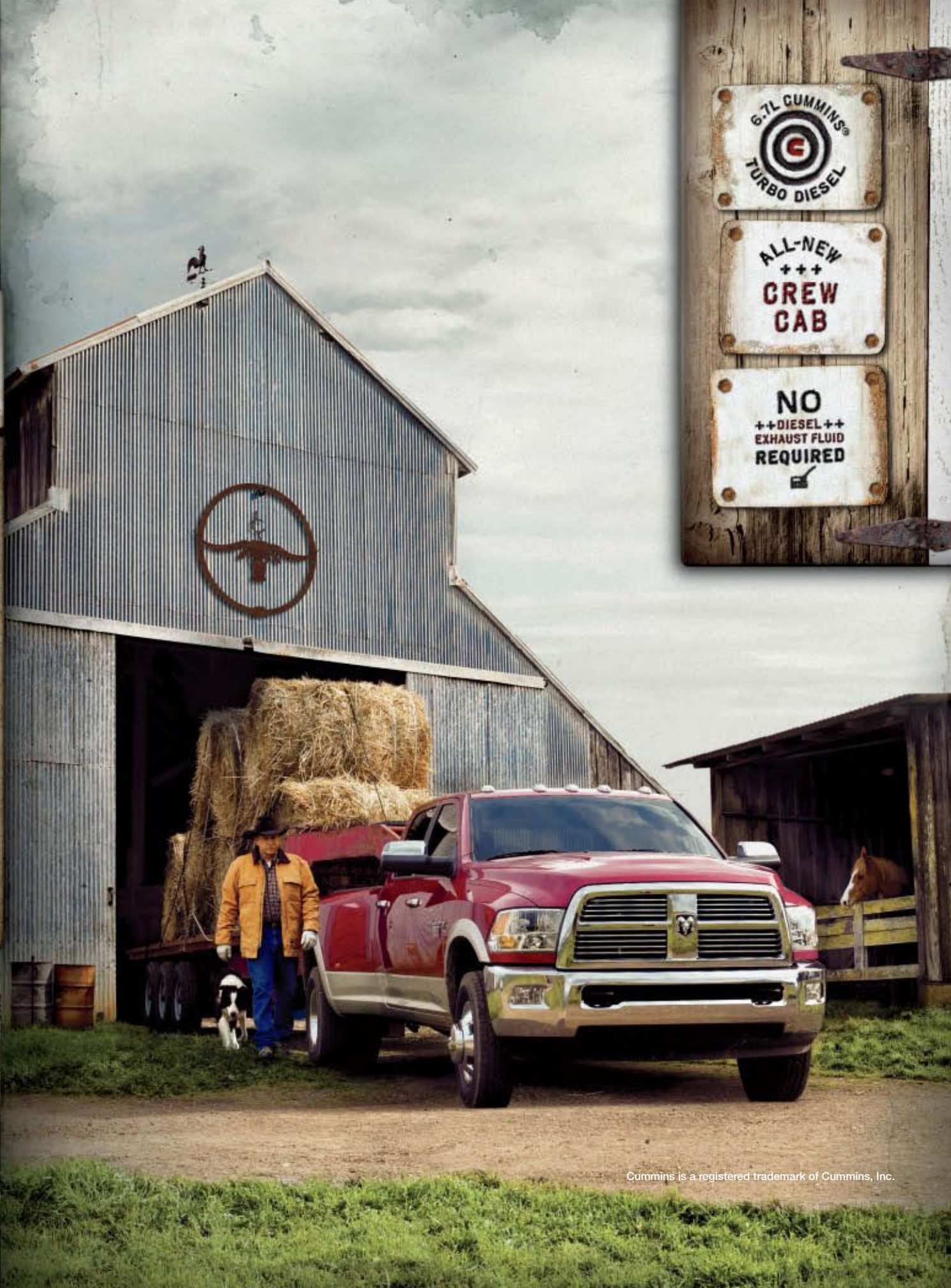


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JULY 2010  
VOL 49, ISSUE 7

# 10

## Oil & water

B D/B I LC M

The era of easy oil and plentiful water is ending. Better managing these two resources could be your next great business opportunity.

BY NICOLE WISNIEWSKI

**LM MARKET MATCH** We've made your life a little easier by supplying icons that direct you to stories targeting your core business.

B – Business, D/B – Design/Build, I – Irrigation, LC – Lawn Care, M – Maintenance



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Proper planning can reduce the amount of wasted irrigation water and increase profits.

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Illustration by iStock International Inc.; design by Carrie Parkhill

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## DIGITAL VAULT

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### LMdirect!

It's a part of our everyday lives. Whether because of the economy, our jobs, our families, our health or even simply our schedules, we all have some kind of stress.

### Athletic Turf News

The 2010 FIFA World Cup begins in South Africa and the action at this year's spectacle will unfold on grass – mostly.

### LD/B Solutions

Creative Landscaping Co. designs and constructs a special treehouse garden structure for 2- to 5-year-olds.

### Get Growing

More than 155 perennial customers from roughly 50 companies attend the Darwin Perennials Day Inaugural Showcase.



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## FIRSTCUT

NICOLE WISNIEWSKI EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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# 2010: A Turf Odyssey

**A**fter talking to so many industry experts on the oil and water conundrum and its affects on the landscape industry, particularly how conserving these two resources is leading some groups to point to turf and plants as the problem, I started having nightmares.

I pictured vast hillsides of turf and trees — lush and vibrant green — reduced to dusty, barren mounds. No turf for cooling and erosion control. No trees for shade. No plants creating texture, depth and color. Brown for miles. Heat radiating off of concrete. Dry air. Labored breathing; oxygen seeming scarce.

Our industry — extinct.

And then I woke up.

First of all, for full disclosure, I should mention that my husband watches a lot of science fiction. So, yes, this dream could have been conjured up from thoughts of *Dune* in my subconscious. But I still couldn't help but wonder: In a time where plants and turf are constantly being attacked as supposed water and energy hogs, is there a possible future in this picture?

And I'm not the only one having nightmares.

PLANET president Bill Hildebolt recently highlighted a similar realization in his March 2010 *PLANET News* letter. He detailed travels to China where at one point under Mao Zedong's leadership, the country rid itself of turf and other landscaping the Marxists considered capitalist trappings. The countryside was a moonscape — nothing was green. The air, he said, was so full of dust and dirt with rampant pollution he could actually taste it.

Then, as Georgia was suffering a severe drought in 2008, contractor Jim McCutcheon remembers going to a meeting to discuss landscape water use limitations. One contractor drove to the meeting in his landscape truck. But fearing the end of his business as a result of sever water restrictions, plastered over his company logo he put a sign that read "EXTINCT."

But, "don't panic," McCutcheon says. The industry's problem — and the reason myself and others are letting science fiction get the better of us: We've lost confidence. We're constantly under attack, and this economy has taken the fight out of us as we focus on keeping our businesses on track.

To regain focus, Hildebolt says the biggest defense is a solid offense. Collect the positive facts about landscaping and, armed with that, your reputation and photos of the work you've done (as well as a list of references from happy clients), stand proud and confident that in your work you make the world a better place — one landscape at a time.

As Bert Swanson of Swanson's Nursery Consulting says in the June 2010 issue of *MNLA's The Scoop*: "Plants are not ornaments; plants are a necessity." He says contractors should continue to tout plants as "environmental, energy saving, soil stabilizing, phytoremediation and, yes, even sustainable."

So, in sci-fi words everyone can understand: "May the force be with you."

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## Keep SITES in your sight

**T**he Sustainable Sites Initiative's (SITES) two-year pilot program runs from June 2010 to June 2012. Feedback from the more than 150 participating projects will be used to revise the SITES final rating system.

At this stage of its development, it's difficult to gauge the impact of SITES on the professional landscape/lawn service industry. It's likely there will be little effect, at least until the release of the final rating system in 2013. But once the rating system is in place, things could change — significantly.

SITES, simply explained, is attempting to do for outdoor urban environments what the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building rating system is doing with the building trades. Even if you have just a passing knowledge of LEED, you know that it has had a profound “greening” effect on construction. By the end of 2009, commercial ventures included more than 12,200 projects either registered or certified. The commercial category is the largest LEED category, followed distantly by retail projects (4,398). The number of registrants or certifications for the LEED Home program is much smaller and wasn't immediately available on its website. All in all, however, LEED is rapidly transforming the construction industry.

The goal of SITES is just as ambitious. It envisions sustainability and the very notion of landscapes in a much broader context than what most of us in the professional landscape/lawn service industry associate with the properties we design, install and maintain. In its view of landscapes, SITES includes parkland, transportation corridors, industrial sites, educational sites and government complexes — along with, of course, the commercial and residential properties that occupy our efforts.

A summary of the projects participating in the pilot program provides a reference for the scale of its goal. Pilot project types by percentage:

▶ 25% Open Space/Park;

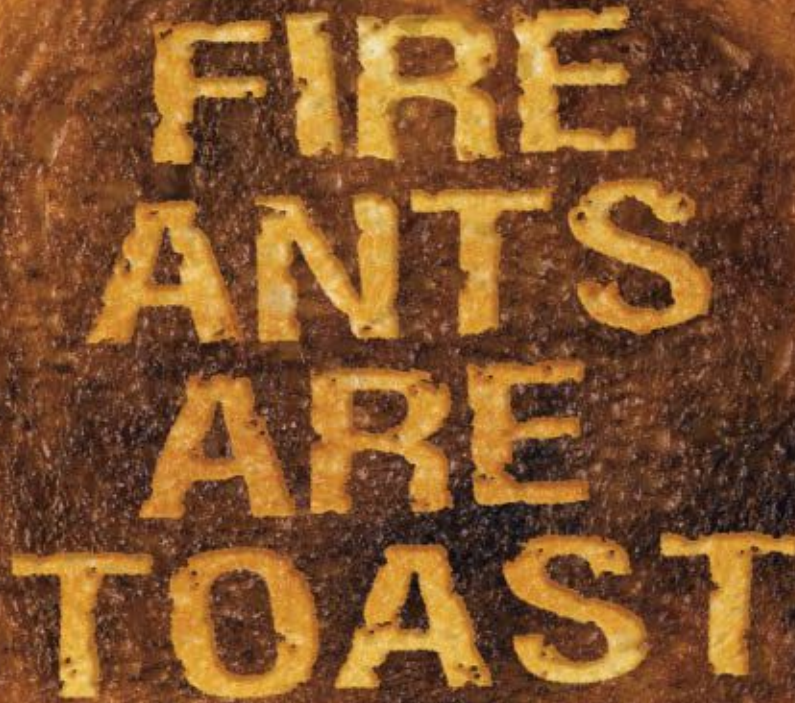
- ▶ 20% Institutional/Educational;
- ▶ 15% Commercial;
- ▶ 13% Residential;
- ▶ 9% Transportation Corridor/Streetscape;
- ▶ 8% Open Space/Garden/Arboretum;
- ▶ 6% Government Complex;
- ▶ 3% Mixed Use;
- ▶ 1% Industrial

There are SITES projects in 34 U.S. States and several in Canada, Iceland and Spain. Approximately 25% of the projects involve properties of less than 1 acre, 26% are 1 to 5 acres, 40% are 6 to 100 acres, 8% are 101 to 500 acres and 1% are greater than 500 acres.

If you scan the descriptions of the more than 150 pilot projects, the names of familiar landscape companies appear. For example, The Brickman Group's Chicago-area project involves improving rainwater runoff quality, reducing potable water use, improving soil health and instituting sustainable management practices at the Hoffman Estates Marriott Hotel property. This is one of two SITES pilot projects partnering Brickman with Marriott. The second involves Brickman making similar landscape improvements to Marriott headquarters in Bethesda, MD.

In Portland, OR, the DeSantis Landscapes' Ash Creek House residential project converted a 7,500-sq.-ft. weed field adjacent to a small stream into a low-maintenance garden with native and adaptive plants. The project involves improving the quality and water-holding capacity of the soil at the residential greyfield, and collecting stormwater from the residence's roof for sub-soil distribution to the field.

Lupfer Landscaping in the Chicago area, Piedmont Landscape Contractors in Atlanta, and L.I.D. Landscapes and Nielsen Designs, LLC, Boulder, CO, are just a few of the other landscape professionals adding their names and efforts to SITES pilot projects. Their involvement suggests that they recognize the potential for SITES to become a transformative agent in our industry.



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The background of the cover is a grayscale image of water with ripples and droplets. Overlaid on this is a large graphic of a black oil splash on the left and a blue water splash on the right, separated by a diagonal line. The text 'OIL & WATER' is centered across this line.

# OIL & WATER

BY **NICOLE WISNIEWSKI** EDITOR-IN-CHIEF