

THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE

A THEORY THAT HOLDS WATER



When I was a junior at the University of Missouri College of Agriculture, one of my professors described how certain parts of the country simply would not have enough water to keep up with growth in the future. He was sounding an alarm, one based on supply versus demand.

Twenty years later, his prediction appears accurate. If anything, it fell short of the mark. Droughts have created shortages in regions generally considered to have plenty of water. Water

tables in some states are dropping at alarming rates. And, as the professor figured, most of the growth in the country is taking place in locations with the least available water.

To learn a lesson in college is one thing, to apply that lesson in real life is another. The professor's solution to the problem was to control growth by pricing water to control demand. Some of the money generated from higher prices would then be funneled into research on water conservation. Looking back, his ideas were sound in theory. Implementing them has been the problem.

Water conservation research is probably the greatest need of the recreational turf industry today. Without water for irrigation, the golf and sports turf industries could not exist. Yet, how much money is being spent on this type of research by water purveyors, those agencies charged with finding, treating, and distributing water in this country? These agencies have saved parks and golf courses in some areas by providing treated and recycled water at lower cost. But, they have not participated in finding new ways to save water in the long run.

From what I've seen, virtually all the support for water conservation research at universities has come from manufacturers and industry associations. With little to no support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture or water agencies, university turf specialists have still been able to show that it is possible to conserve between 20 and 50 percent of the water we use through more efficient turfgrasses, computerized irrigation controllers linked to weather stations, wetting agents, and more effective ways to deliver water to turf and plants. Still, they have only scratched the surface and need our continuing support.

Much more research needs to be carried out on perfecting moisture-sensing devices, subirrigation, and polymers and other amendments for rootzones. Only when research demonstrates that these and other methods of water conservation are effective and practical, will they be fully accepted by managers of existing facilities and by architects and builders of new ones.

I think my professor had an excellent idea. Water purveyors need to play a greater role in water conservation. They control the use of water because they control the price. That price should include a percentage for conservation research. They must assume a major role in helping find new ways to conserve water in the future.

Brian F. Shank

EVENTS

CALENDAR

JUNE

19

Buildings and Grounds Maintenance Exposition, Santa Clara Convention Center, Santa Clara, CA. Contact: Richard Mauck, Public Works, 1500 Warburton Ave., Santa Clara, CA 95050-3792, (408) 984-3151.

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Fourth Annual Athletic Turf Field Day, Kitchener Auditorium, Ottawa Street, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. Contact: Michael J. Bladon, Sports Turf Association, 185 Edinburgh Rd. South, Guelph, Ontario, Canada N1G 2H8, (519) 824-4120, Ext. 3460.

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Midwest Sports Turf Institute, College of Du Page, Glen Ellyn, IL. Contact: STMA, 400 N. Mountain Ave., Suite 301, Upland, CA 91786, (714) 981-9199.

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University of Massachusetts Turf Research Field Day, Turfgrass Research Center, South Deerfield, MA. Contact: Dr. Richard Cooper, Dept. of Plant and Soil Sciences, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003, (413) 545-2353.

25-26

Second Annual Summer Turfgrass-Fest, Western Washington Research and Extension Center and High Cedars Golf Club. Contact: Northwest Turfgrass Association, P.O. Box 1367, Olympia, WA 98507, (206) 754-0825.

JULY

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Facilities Management Workshop, Davidson College, Davidson, NC. Contact: PGMS, 10402 Ridgland Rd., Suite 4, Cockeysville, MD 21030, (301) 667-1833.

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International Lawn, Garden and Power Equipment Expo, Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center, Louisville, KY. Contact: Expo 90, P.O. Box 70465, Louisville, KY 40270, (800) 558-8767.