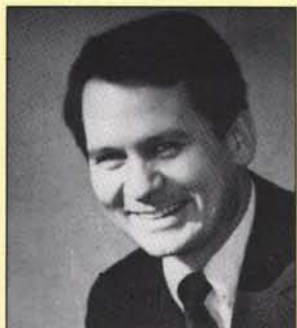


THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE

WATER SHORTAGE BRINGS OUT IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC TURF



As water continues to be a scarce commodity in the Southwest and its price continues to rise, it's interesting to see where schools, golf courses, and parks spend their water dollars.

After five years of inadequate rainfall, athletic fields and golf courses remain green and in play. That says a great deal about the value of sports turf in this country.

To really appreciate the value of water, you have to experience water rationing personally. For the past two years, I have had to shut off the sprinklers for my lawn. That's a tough thing for a turf editor to do, but there was no choice if I hoped to protect my trees and plant beds. I painted the scorched turf last year. This year, there wasn't enough turf left to paint.

During the past two years however, the School Board and the baseball and soccer leagues have worked closely together to build new fields and to improve the irrigation systems at our schools and parks. Residents have chipped in to add new laterals, upgrade sprinkler heads, and buy seed and maintenance equipment. Use of all facilities for games and practices is closely monitored and coordinated among community groups. Fences have been installed to guard against overuse or vandalism.

The community as a whole has sent a clear message to its elected leaders that our parks and school fields must have priority at budget time. Even though our own lawns are brown, we will not tolerate poor turf conditions at our parks and schools.

If anything, the quality of our facilities has improved during these trying times. We no longer take our public sports facilities for granted. Attendance is up at games. Parents don't balk at sticking around after games or volunteering their time on the weekends to work on the fields. Even the kids have learned not to abuse the fields and equipment.

The planning board has gotten the message. No new development will be approved without setbacks for parks, schools, and public golf courses. That requirement needs to be extended to include water as well as land.

As water becomes scarce, the condition of public turf facilities gains in importance. People will make the sacrifices necessary to protect their community athletic facilities. They aren't amenities, they are necessities. People will fight for them if challenged. Water shortages may be the challenge we've needed to support what the turf industry has been saying all along.

Bruce Shank

EVENTS

CALENDAR

AUGUST

21 Turfgrass Field Day, University of Rhode Island, Turfgrass Research Farm, Kingston, RI. Contact: Dr. N. Jackson, Plant Sciences Department, Woodward Hall, Kingston, RI 02881.

SEPTEMBER

12-14 Golf Development Expo, The Peabody Hotel, Orlando, FL. Contact: Crittenden Research Institute, P.O. Box 1150, Novato, CA 94948, (415) 382-2486 or (800) 443-8318.

15-17 Annual Alabama Turf Conference, Alabama Cooperative Extension Service, Auburn University Conference Center, Auburn, AL. Contact: Dr. Coleman Y. Ward, (205) 844-5475, fax (205) 844-9022.

17 Professional Turfgrass Field Day, Metropolitan Golf Course Superintendents Association, Inc., Westchester Country Club, Rye, NY. Contact: Bob Lippman, (914) 248-7476 or Byron Johnson, (203) 748-5069.

17-19 Virginia Tech Turf and Landscape Field Days, Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, Virginia Tech Campus, Blacksburg, VA. Contact: J.R. Hall, III, (703) 231-5795

OCTOBER

2-3 Southern California Turfgrass Expo, Southern California Turfgrass Council, Orange County Fairgrounds, Costa Mesa, CA. Contact: Chuck Wilson, Expo chairman, (714) 951-8547.

13-16 Florida Turfgrass Conference And Show, Florida Turfgrass Association, Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center, Jacksonville, FL. Contact: FTA, 302 S. Graham Avenue, Orlando, FL 32803-6399, (407) 898-6721.

16-17 Texas Turfgrass Conference, West Texas Golf Course Superintendents Association. Contact: George Fugitt, WTGSSA, 5402 21st Street, Lubbock, Texas 79407, (806) 792-7442.

NOVEMBER

3-5 Annual Meeting, Georgia Golf Course Supt. Assoc., Jekyll Island, GA. Contact: Karen White, GGCSA, P.O. Box 683, Watkinsville, GA 30677, (404) 769-4076.

Send announcements on your events two months in advance to editor, *Golf & SportsTURF*, P.O. Box 8420, Van Nuys, CA 91409. Fax: (818) 781-8517.