

# From the Sidelines



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## Earth Day should mean something to us all

**A**CCORDING TO WIKIPEDIA, the genesis of Earth Day is credited to Gaylord Nelson, a US Senator from Wisconsin. After witnessing the ravages of the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill, and inspired by the student anti-war movement, he called for an environmental teach-in, or Earth Day, to be held on Wednesday, April 22, 1970. More than 20 million people participated that year, and now Earth Day is observed on April 22 each year by more than 500 million people and several national governments in 175 countries.

Kevin Trotta is the New York team captain of the Global Sports Alliance and president of Environmental Turf Craft, LLC. The GSA is a global network of sport enthusiasts that want to leave a healthy environment for our future generations. Kevin, an STMA member, asked me to share his Earth Day thoughts with you:

“In life as in sports, there are spectators and there are participants. We choose which role we play. Without question, the world would be a different and better place if more of us were players rather than onlookers. Earth Day calls us off the bench and into the game.

“As sports enthusiasts we bring a special vitality to our endeavors. Athletes, coaches, athletic field managers and others involved in the world of sports function at an enhanced energy level. It’s an enthusiasm that sharpens our focus and performance. If we were to collectively direct this energy towards defending our environment the outcome would be world-changing. We have good reason to do so.

“Environmental quality exerts a direct influence on the quality of the sports experience. “Preparations for the Beijing Olympics of 2008 offered a world-stage example of the potentially devastating effects of compromised air quality on athletic competition. Recent history provides too many disturbing examples of cancelled aquatic events or sickened participants due to water pollution. Winter sports and recreation have been altered along with a changing climate. Environmental concerns have been raised regarding the methods and materials used in the management of sports facilities.

“Those of us who work and play outdoors are in direct and intimate contact with the environment. While competing, preparing fields, training or just exerting ourselves having fun outside, we are the environmental ‘canaries in the mineshaft.’ Clearly, we have a vested interest in these issues; for as the environment is compromised so is our well-being.

“Unfortunately, the average citizen remains uninvolved or unconvinced of the urgency to change our present course. We will not succeed in realizing our vision of sustainability on a planetary scale without engaging the general public. People from all walks of life must be made aware that the inefficient use of materials and energy, the fouling of air and water, the destruction of habitat and the loss of biodiversity threatens all life on earth; including our own.

“To implement change we need public will and political pressure. Earth Day affords an opportunity for the sports community to mobilize for stewardship. We can leverage the popularity and enthusiasm of sports to generate a passion for environmental action. We need to step up to the plate, exploit our influential platform and lead by example. We can demonstrate stewardship through our lifestyles and our work. We can recruit colleagues, teammates and friends to engage in clean up efforts, tree plantings and other proactive events in our communities. We can celebrate this extraordinary planet and work towards ensuring that the water our children drink is pure and the air they breathe is fresh and clean. A vested interest? You bet. We have many reasons to get involved. Clearly, every day is Earth Day.” ■

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The Official Publication Of The Sports Turf  
Managers Association

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SportsTurf (ISSN 1061-687X) (USPS 000-292) (Reg. U.S. Pat. & T.M. Off.) is published monthly by Specialty Information Media at 1030 W. Higgins Road, Suite 230, Park Ridge, IL 60068. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sportsturf, PO Box 4290, Port Jervis, NY 12771.** For subscription information and requests, call Subscription Services at (845) 856-2229. Subscription rates: 1 year, \$40 US & Poss.; 2 years, \$65 US & Poss.; 1 year, \$65 Canada/Foreign Surface, 1 year, \$130 Airmail. All subscriptions are payable in advance in US funds. Send payments to Sportsturf, PO Box 4290, Port Jervis, NY 12771. Phone: (845) 856-2229. Fax: (845) 856-5822. Single copies or back issues, \$8 each US/Canada; \$12 Foreign. Periodicals postage paid at Park Ridge, IL and additional mailing offices. COPYRIGHT 2013, SportsTurf. Material may not be reproduced or photocopied in any form without the written permission of the publisher.