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8. Volunteers
   • Recruiting teams, community groups and individuals can help
tremendously.
   • Teams can help rake baseball and softball infields.
   • Eagle Scouts can help with projects such as building signs or
sheds.
   • Local Garden Clubs can be utilized to care for landscaped areas
such as traffic islands. David Pinsonneault, CSFM, public grounds
superintendent for the City of Lexington, MA, has put an “Adopt
a Traffic Island” program into place that local garden clubs take
advantage of to showcase their work.
   • And sports leagues may be able to fundraise for projects, such
as field renovation, or for supplies, such as line marking paint.
   • Volunteer contributions may prolong the need for major field
renovation.
   • Be careful as to how much freedom you give volunteers. Their
idea of helping may turn into a maintenance nightmare for you.
9. Incentive programs
   • As part of the economic stimulus package, some cities receive
money from the government that is allocated to the grounds
department and used to pay temporary seasonal hires.

Reducing maintenance costs

“We aren’t developing new ideas on managing fields, everything
is the same, we just need to adjust our practices and think outside
the box.”- Mike Tarantino
   1. Focus on small trouble spots instead of the entire field.
   2. Cut back frequency of cultural practices such as mowing, or
topdressing.
   3. Try to remedy a problem by using cultural practices before
using chemicals.
   4. Be more efficient with pesticide and fertilizer applications.
      • Always follow label rates.
      • Consider spot treatments in areas of concern rather than broad
based applications.
      • Reevaluate necessity of application versus preventative applica-
tion.
      • Use a slow release fertilizer instead of quick release.
      • Reduce rate of fertilizer applications if possible. Reduce the
application rate for the entire area. Instead of applying 1 lb.
N/1000 square feet, try applying ¾ lb. N/1000 square feet. Or
reduce the application rate only in lower traffic areas, such as end
zones.
   • Determine exact square footage of each area you apply prod-
ucts and buy what is needed to eliminate excess.
      • Shop around. Sometimes less expensive products perform the
same as the premium product.
   5. Use plant growth regulators.
      • Field paint that also contains a plant growth regulator can
reduce the number of times a week you need to paint lines on
fields.
   6. Cut back on field maintenance supplies such as paint, infield
skin conditioner, or hand tools.

7. Restrict high priority field use to only necessary uses.
8. See how cost effective it is to sign 2-year contracts instead of
1-year contracts with outside companies or vendors.
9. Be more efficient with irrigation.
   • Use of soil penetrants, evaportranspiration monitors and sched-
uled run times can all help reduce costs.
   • Keep track of water dollars. You may not realize how much
you are spending just to water your field.
   • Review your electric rates and schedule your field irrigation
during off-peak hours to reduce your utility costs.

Equipment

1. Borrow equipment.
   • Some facilities have the capability to share equipment between
different departments. For example, a parks and recreation facility
may be able to share equipment with a local golf course.
2. Depending on the size of your facility, rotate equipment
between crews that put on a lot of hours to crews that do not.
3. Set time aside for equipment maintenance to prolong life.
4. See if you can arrange an advertising trade off.

Connie Rudolph, CSFM, head groundskeeper at Midway
Stadium, St. Paul, MN has arranged a trade off with local equip-
ment companies. In exchange for company advertising, she is
allowed the use of a piece of equipment for the season.

Communicating effectively

“The key element to a successful approach in dealing with
reduced budgets is effective communication with your boss, owner
and teams. Their input is critical in helping to determine how lim-
ited resources can best be utilized. As part of the communication
process it’s important to stress the direct relationship between
required maintenance and safety and liability issues.”-Steve
Wightman

Communication is fundamental to running a successful facility.
Communicating our standards, expectations, and priorities helps
everyone around us understand our goals and how we plan to attain
them. As sports turf managers, it is our goal to build credibility and
let superiors know we are professional, responsible, and knowledge-
able in our line of work.

1. Be educated about your budget.
   • Know where your resources are being allocated and why they
are allocated to that area. Know your costs associated with each
area.
   • Be able to justify why a specific maintenance practice or mate-
rial is essential if there is the potential for it to be cut out of the
budget.
   • Be honest when calculating your budget. Determine what you
need, how much you need and why you need it to present quality
work. Try to see where you can afford to make cuts if the need arises.
2. Always keep lines of communication open between your staff,
coaches, administrators, superiors, and peers.
   • Consistently communicate your priorities and facility condi-
tions. Keep everyone updated about changes, problems, daily
maintenance, weather factors, etc. Educating the people you deal with on a daily basis may make your job easier.

- Hold meetings to outline the upcoming season or year.
- Have staff meetings so your employees understand your expectations.
- Communicate with coaches on what to expect. It is sometimes hard to make these people understand what is happening on the field.
- Have a close working relationship with those that deal directly with the budget.

3. Listen to those around you.
- Staff members often have valid input and ideas.
- Surround yourself with people who can offer ideas.

4. Stay positive. No one wants to be led by a pessimist, and your mood influences everyone around you.

5. Be aware of your mistakes and don’t repeat them. Evaluate your operations and determine how to sustain strengths and improve on weaknesses.

Once the economy hits rock bottom, it will be a slow recovery using tight budgets and thin resources.

Therefore, we need to focus on what really adds value to what we do and what is truly essential to make things better and stronger. Times like these call for sports turf managers who can spark innovation, are adaptable and can execute change efficiently. It is important to remember that you are not the only one facing budget cuts, but that you have an extensive network of peers that can be relied upon for support and advice.

Contributors:
- David Pinsonneault, CSFM – Public Grounds Superintendent for Town of Lexington, Lexington, MA
- Connie Rudolph, CSFM – Head Groundskeeper at Midway Stadium, St. Paul, MN
- Michael Tarantino – Director of Maintenance and Operations at Poway Unified School District, Poway, CA
- Mike Trigg, CSFM – Superintendent/Parks at Waukegan Park District, Waukegan, IL
- Steve Wightman – Stadium Turf Manager at Qualcomm Stadium, San Diego, CA
- Anthony Wise – Division Manager for City of Houston – Parks and Recreation Department, Houston, TX
- Kevin Yeiser – Director/Grounds and Athletic Facilities at Lebanon Valley College, Annville, PA

This article appears courtesy of the Sports Turf Managers Association.
ACRONYMS ALWAYS SEEM TO CATCH MY ATTENTION when reading through a magazine; sometimes it’s just the pure fun of trying to guess what the acronym stands for or just curiosity.

PCI. I hope most of you are saying to yourself, “Ah, I remember that, Playing Conditions Index.” Now the big question is are you using it? The STMA Playing Conditions Index was developed to give sports turf managers a “snap-shot” of a specific field at a given point in time. Approximately 30 questions related to resources, activities, and agronomic performance are used to produce a numerical value that ranks a field from excellent to unplayable.

The continued use of the assessment tool provides invaluable information to the sports turf manager and can help guide field management practices, assist with communication to user groups, can help to substantiate the need for more resources, and as needed provides a way to provide information to the media relations department. The package contains a Media Advisory Bulletin with instructions to help convey information on field conditions and its effect on athlete performance to sports information professionals on game days. I happened to have found another use for the PCI. If used correctly and honestly (we all like to brag about our sports fields) the PCI will become the sports turf manager’s favorite tool. I have used the PCI to track maintenance practices or in some cases lack of. The PCI is telling me what is working and what isn’t; for example did the fertilizer I selected provide the desired results? Were the climatic conditions applicable to the fertilizer selected? Not only is this information valuable for product selection but if you’re a creature of habit and do specific applications at certain times of the year, logging comments about weather conditions that to coincide with those applications, you will be able to log weather data that will pertain to those applications for years ahead.

Did we have an irrigation problem? Were soil samples taken before application? You can apply the PCI to every maintenance practice you use to maintain your play field and every resource applied to that maintenance i.e. manpower and money. This alone will be a benefit when budget justifications are due, trust me, we managers love this type of real, documented information.

The PCI shown was done in June on the Poway High School varsity baseball field. The great assets of using the PCI is not only are you collecting data to be used later but the PCI serves as a note pad to record data while you’re observing the playing conditions. I use the PCI assessment tool to note what maintenance practices may have worked or failed and to plan upcoming needed maintenance.

When the form is complete (with notes) three copies are made; one is given to the grounds staff so they can plan the needed maintenance, one to the Athletic Director to keep them abreast of the work needed and the condition of the playing field and the last copy is to the coach so they know we aren’t neglecting their field. The original will stay in a folder dedicated to that particular playing field. This system allows me to keep track of the maintenance performed, when the maintenance was performed, what worked and what didn’t, and weather conditions. It is also a communication tool with the grounds staff, athletic director and the coach and will allow me to review all four of the PCI’s when I begin to prepare the budget and look at next year’s maintenance plan.

To get the full benefit out of the PCI, use the PCI at least four times per year with one of those times close to budget preparation. If you haven’t used the PCI, give it a try, you may be surprised at the amount of information you’ll be able to collect and use at a later date. STMA members can access and print out the PCI at www.stma.org/MemberServices/PCI (see page 16).

Michael Tarantino is director of maintenance and operations for the Poway (CA) USD.
Can you identify this sports turf problem?

**Problem**: Brown square areas  
**Turfgrass Area**: Little League baseball field  
**Location**: Valley Center, CA (southern CA)  
**Grass Variety**: Warm and cool season mixture

Answer to John Mascaro’s Photo Quiz on Page 31
### Facility & Operations

1. **Facility Operations**

### Resources

1. Head turf manager experience
   - 1 = 1-2 years
   - 2 = 3-4 years
   - 3 = 5-6 years
   - 4 = 7-8 years
   - 5 = 8+ years

2. Head turf manager experience at site
   - 1 = 1 year
   - 2 = 2 years
   - 3 = 3+ years

3. Total number of fields currently overseen
   - 1 = 16+ fields
   - 2 = 11-15 fields
   - 3 = 6-10 fields
   - 4 = 2-5 fields
   - 5 = 1 field

4. Head turf manager education (highest level completed)
   - 1 = High school
   - 2 = Attended some college
   - 3 = Non-turf related AA or BS
   - 4 = AA in turf management/agronomy
   - 5 = BS in turf management/agronomy or higher

5. CSFM designation from STMA
   - 0 = No
   - 1 = Yes

6. Weekly man hours dedicated to maintaining field
   - 1 = 0-24 hours
   - 2 = 25-49 hours
   - 3 = 50-74 hours
   - 4 = 75-99 hours
   - 5 = 100+ hours

### Activities

1. Are multiple sports played on this field? (0 if no)
   - 0 = No
   - -3 = Yes

2. Last activity type (see Table 1 at end of worksheet)
   - 1 = Football
   - 2 = Concert/ festival/ band practice
   - 3 = Baseball/ softball
   - 4 = Field hockey/ lacrosse
   - 5 = Golf

3. Time since last activity
   - 1 = Less than 24 hours
   - 2 = 2-5 days
   - 3 = 6-9 days
   - 4 = 10-13 days
   - 5 = more than 2 weeks

4. Activity scheduled to occur (see Table 1 at end of worksheet)
   - 1 = Never
   - 2 = 1-3 days
   - 3 = Weekly
   - 4 = Twice a week
   - 5 = Daily/as needed

### Agronomic Performance of Turf

1. Turfgrass variety suited to activity (consider activity and season)
   - 1 = Unmanageable
   - 2 = Manageable
   - 3 = Semi-manageable
   - 4 = Manageable
   - 5 = Ideally suited

2. Root zone quality (consider depth and mass)
   - 1 = Less than 1.0"
   - 2 = 1.0-2.0"
   - 3 = 2.1-4.0"
   - 4 = 4.1-6.0"
   - 5 = 6.1+"

3. Add 3 points if you conduct soil testing annually or more frequently (0 if you do not)
   - 0 = No
   - 1 = once a year
   - 2 = every 2 years
   - 3 = every 3 years

4. Add 1 point if you conduct nutrient analysis annually or more frequently (0 if you do not)
   - Add 1 point if the results of your nutrient analysis were ideal (0 if no nutrient analysis or poor results)

5. Desired turfgrass cover of field is currently
   - 1 = Dormant
   - 2 = Overseeded
   - 3 = Re-seeded
   - 4 = Growing
   - 5 = Ideally suited

### STMA PCI Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field</td>
<td>FL</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>FC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softball</td>
<td>SB</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Baseball/Softball Specific

1. Uniformity of playing surface
   - 1 = Many large rocks (.5” or larger), other hazardous materials, weeds, etc.
   - 2 = Many small rocks (.5” or smaller), other hazardous materials, weeds, etc.
   - 3 = Few very small rocks, very few if any weeds
   - 4 = No weeds, no rocks, but irregular or inconsistent materials
   - 5 = Ideal uniformity of material

2. Maintenance of mowed and home plate areas
   - 1 = Poor (Severe holes, filled/levelled with existing materials, moisture rarely applied, etc.)
   - 2 = Adequate (Some holes, filled with fresh clay when possible, moisture applied when possible, etc.)
   - 3 = Expert (Minimal or no holes, filled daily with fresh clay, regular moisture, etc.)

3. Grass to skin transitions
   - 1 = High lip, inhibits drainage, very irregular shape/edging, etc.
   - 2 = Noticeable lip, very irregular shape/edging, etc.
   - 3 = Minor lip, somewhat irregular shape/edging, etc.
   - 4 = No lip, adequate shape/edging, etc.
   - 5 = No lip, ideal shape, ideal edging, etc.

4. Infield grading of skinned areas
   - 1 = Poor grade, devastating water retention, depressions, washout, etc.
   - 2 = Inconsistent runoff, non-uniform grade, little or no standing water, etc.
   - 3 = Excellent positive runoff, ideal grade, etc.

5. Frequency of moisture on skinned surfaces
   - 1 = Never
   - 2 = Sometimes/sporadically
   - 3 = Dually/as needed

6. Add 3 points if field tarped during any rainfall within 24 hours of an event (0 if no)

7. TOTAL 1 94

8. TOTAL 2 27

9. TOTAL 1 + TOTAL 2 = 121
Membership Application

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MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

Experts on the Field, Partners in the Game.

Name

Title

Employer/ Facility

☐ Business  ☐ Home

Address

City

State

Zip

Home phone

Work phone

Cell phone

Fax

Email

Signature

Direct Supervisor Name

Membership Category:

☐ Sports Turf Manager $110

☐ Sports Turf Manager Associate* (Additional member(s) from the same facility) $75

Please select the primary facility type where you are employed:

☐ Professional Sports  ☐ Higher Education  ☐ Schools K-12  ☐ Parks and Recreation

☐ Academic $95

☐ Student (verification of enrollment) $25

☐ Commercial $295

☐ Commercial Associate* (Additional member(s) from the same commercial company) $75

☐ Affiliate (Person who is indirectly or on a part-time basis, involved in the maintenance/management of sports fields) $50

☐ Chapter Dues (contact headquarters for amount)

Chapter name) ________________________________ $ __________

☐ Contribution To SAFE Foundation (research, education and scholarship): $ __________

Total Amount Enclosed: $ __________

Payment Method:

☐ Check  ☐ Money Order  ☐ Purchase Order #: __________________________

Credit Card: ☐ Mastercard  ☐ Visa  ☐ American Express  ☐ Discover

Name on Card

Card #: __________________________ Exp. Date: __________________________

Signature: __________________________

*I know I am a better sports turf manager because of this association. As sports turf managers, we take the challenge seriously to make our fields the best possible for the next game. The resources I have access to through STMA helps me do it.”

—Bob Campbell, CSFM
Higher Education Membership Segment

Phone: 800-323-3875 www.sportsturfmanager.org
Elements of a successful maintenance schedule

“A list, catalog, or inventory of details.”
“A list of times of reoccurring events or projected operations.”
“A timed plan for a procedure or project.”
“To plan or appoint.”

These are the ways Webster describes the word “schedule.” Some others say, “Life saver,” “necessity,” or “guide.” Without several, I think my wife would have to be committed to the rubber room trying to keep track of me and my two young daughters. Whether you realize it or not, everyday is full of schedules. What time you set the alarm clock to get up each morning is the start of your daily schedule. The time you leave the house to get to work is another. Others are out of your control; try telling your body it’s not time for that first cup of coffee just yet, or in my case, an ice cold Diet Coke. Some of us deal with multiple schedules for multiple things. I am fortunate to have schedules based on calendar years, school years, and budget years, not to mention employees, construction, trash pick-ups, recycling, tree care, and shrubbery. Landscape maintenance has seven different pruning schedules just in itself.

And then there are athletic field maintenance schedules, the topic of this article. I called upon some of my colleagues for help in gathering ideas. I generally asked the same questions to everyone and we led each other into other related topics. We all came to the same conclusion on what a good maintenance schedule should do: give grass the best opportunity we can to grow. What do top managers do that’s different from what I do? Who does the same things? How can I make
it work? When do I get it done? The goal for this article is two-fold. One, to provide some educational and informational subject matter in a lighthearted fashion, and two, for all of us to realize, at some point, we have been there and can relate to what others are faced with. Oh, and three, to have a little fun while I’m supposed to be working!

**Do you HAVE a schedule?**

Do you have a maintenance schedule for your athletic field(s)? Hopefully, everyone has something. Whether it be something simple on paper, a complex, multi-layered spreadsheet, or just thoughts locked away somewhere inside your big melon, have something.

Keep it simple; for example: AM–Keep boss out of trouble, PM–Keep self out of trouble. I have a hard time with this one. Use things that normally occur as a guide like holidays, beginning of seasons, or just months. I like using July 4th as a guide. This is where I look at things like grub control, fertilization applications, and monitoring of crabgrass germination and it’s a good mid-point of the year to take inventory of where you are on your maintenance schedule.

Keep records. Remembering what you did last year is a great guide for the next year, but you have to write it down and retain the data. Those of us who have been at this for a long number of years have the philosophy that we just “know” when things need done, but for my own benefit I make sure there’s something written somewhere, just in case. We are currently in the middle of the information age and there are many people, especially supervisors, who just love to have information at their finger tips. Computers are in every office. We all have the important person who sits behind the desk and needs to know what’s going on and when questions arise, may come to you for the answer. If you have it, you just succeeded in following the first schedule presented to you.

**No “to-do” lists**

Don’t get caught up in blindly following your plan. Things beyond your control will inevitably happen. When I asked my peer group to provide the biggest reason a schedule is not followed, the answer was unanimous. I’m sure everyone has it by now, that’s right: Weather. It can make us look good and it can make us look really bad. (You’ll note there are no pictures of campus with this article.)

I had my schedules changed frequently in the past couple of months for this very reason. Field maintenance was halted when the call came in that our day care director was losing her kids in the grass around the playground because it was so high. Don’t worry, all the kids were saved. Things such as field use, vacations, campus
events, and simple timing are other distractions. Hurrah, we just made the post-season; congratulations, 2 more weeks of practice and by the way, we’re going to host the first round. Remembering your schedule is only a guide will hopefully save you some unmerited stress.

What should you consider when making your schedule? The two things you need to think about before you get started are budget and manpower. Once again, these are the two issues that everyone talked about. You can have the best intentions and have a program that will take your fields to the next level, but you need the backing to get it accomplished. “Nothing is written in pen without a budget number,” was one of the statements I heard. I can’t disagree. Raising the amount of nitrogen through increasing applications is a great idea, but do you have the person available to do it?

Another issue to consider is actual field use. The following are some questions you need to answer: Who uses the field—men, women, boys, girls, small kids? Males tend to be more aggressive turf destroyers than females. What is the field used for, baseball, soccer, hockey, band, multi-sport? Each sport carries its own challenges; crease areas, mid-field, repetitive plays. What is the level of play; professional, NCAA, intramural, club, recreation? Ranking your field priority helps to adjust the maintenance level each may receive. In a school setting, is it in season or non-traditional; game field or practice field? How often is the field used; every day, weekly, seasonally? Am I the only one whose baseball season starts January 15? What are the expectations placed upon you by the hierarchy of your organization?

In the end, we all came to the same conclusion: we do what works for us. What works for Dan or Jim, may not for me or Jerry or Mike. Plan your work, work your plan. Sure, we’d like to do more and will push ourselves to give the athletes that use our fields the best playing surface we can with what we have. We simply won’t settle. We’ve tried, failed, succeeded, and learned.

I wish there was a magic formula or some voodoo spell to cast, everyone does. It simply comes down to hard work and caring about the final product. Find what works for you and make yours a Maintenance Schedule of a Top Manager.

Kevin Bevenour is grounds supervisor for Millersville University, Millersville, PA.

---

**Basic sample maintenance schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brooks Field (field hockey, club &amp; intramurals)</th>
<th>Baseball</th>
<th>Softball</th>
<th>Stadium Practice Field</th>
<th>Spoils Field (Multi-purpose)</th>
<th>Pucillo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring:</strong> Deep aeration (Earthquake) Seed Fertilizer application Broadleaf weed control as needed</td>
<td>Deep tine core aeration Seed Fertilizer application Broadleaf weed control as needed Biostimulant application Irrigate as necessary</td>
<td>Deep aeration (Earthquake) Seed Fertilizer application Broadleaf weed control as needed Biostimulant application Irrigate as necessary</td>
<td>Topdress as necessary Fertilizer application Broadleaf weed control as needed Biostimulant application Irrigate as necessary</td>
<td>Seed Fertilizer application Broadleaf weed control as needed Biostimulant application Irrigate as necessary</td>
<td>Seed Fertilizer application Broadleaf weed control as needed Biostimulant application Irrigate as necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summer:</strong> Fertilizer application Biostimulant application as necessary Crabgrass control as needed Irrigation to bring turf out of dormancy before start of use</td>
<td>Irrigate Fertilizer application Crabgrass control as needed</td>
<td>Irrigate Crabgrass control as needed</td>
<td>Topdress as necessary Seed Fertilizer application Crabgrass control as needed Irrigate to bring turf out of dormancy before use Seed</td>
<td>Seed Fertilizer application Crabgrass control as needed</td>
<td>Seed Fertilizer application Crabgrass control as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall:</strong> Fertilizer application Overseed during use Irrigate as necessary Deep aeration</td>
<td>Irrigate as needed Topdress as necessary</td>
<td>Irrigate as necessary Seed Fertilizer application Biostimulant application Deep aeration (Earthquake)</td>
<td>Irrigate as necessary Seed Fertilizer application Biostimulant application Deep aeration (Earthquake)</td>
<td>Seed Fertilizer application Winter: Core aerate Seed Fertilizer application Winter:</td>
<td>Seed Fertilizer application Crabgrass control as needed Seed Fertilizer application Crabgrass control as needed Irrigate as necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Winter:</strong> Core aerate as necessary Fertilizer application</td>
<td>Fertilizer application Biostimulant application</td>
<td>Fertilizer application Biostimulant application</td>
<td>Fertilizer application Biostimulant application</td>
<td>Crabgrass control as needed Seed Fertilizer application Crabgrass control as needed Irrigate as necessary</td>
<td>Fertilizer application Crabgrass control as needed Seed Fertilizer application Crabgrass control as needed Irrigate as necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Brooks Field**

**Spring:** Deep aeration (Earthquake) Seed Fertilizer application Broadleaf weed control as needed Biostimulant application Irrigate as necessary

**Summer:** Fertilizer application Biostimulant application as necessary Crabgrass control as needed Irrigation to bring turf out of dormancy before start of use

**Fall:** Fertilizer application Overseed during use Irrigate as necessary Deep aeration

**Winter:** Core aerate as necessary Fertilizer application