

SportsField

MANAGEMENT

July 2026

Vol. 42 No. 7

The Official Publication of the Sports Field Management Association

Park and Recreation Month **18** | Adult Rec League Fields **24**

Lightning Safety **28** | Field Painting **34**

Schools and Parks Football FOY

Robin S. Wilson earns top honors for
Windham School District HS Football
Field by "following the science"



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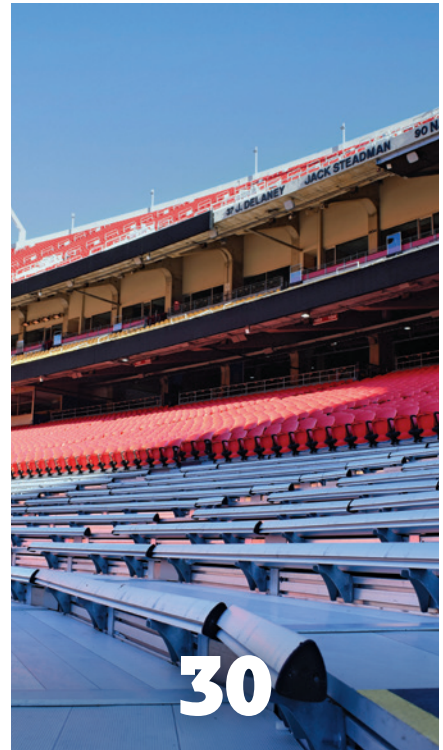
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Editor's Note



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At 7,242 feet, Black Elk Peak is the highest point in South Dakota. It is also the highest elevation between the Rocky Mountains and the Pyrenees Mountains in France. Surrounded by Custer State Park, Black Elk Peak attracts hikers of all ages.

Five years ago, my family and I trekked up Black Elk Peak during our summer vacation. To this day, it is one of my son's favorite memories. That hike served as a valuable lesson that I think we can all relate to.

The shorter route to the summit was closed that day, so our only trail option was a more circuitous route. Almost two hours into our hike, we stopped for a water break at the top of a ridge. We ended up chatting with some of the hikers who were headed in the same direction as us, as well as some returning from the summit who pointed out Black Elk Peak far in the distance. It looked small and remote.

At that point, it set in that we have a long way to go. It was a hot summer afternoon, we had already spent the morning kayaking, and we could have turned back. But we had set a goal, so we kept going.

A couple hours later, near the summit, despite the more vertical rocky terrain, my son had a youthful burst of energy and raced ahead. When we joined him at the summit, we could see not only South Dakota, but also



Wyoming, Montana, Nebraska and North Dakota.

But we didn't stop there. We decided to climb the stairs and ladders of the old fire tower that sits atop Black Elk Peak.

I think that moment showed my son that even when you think you have reached your goals, you can aim higher.

And it can serve as a reminder to us all that no matter the challenges we overcome, and no matter how many miles we have traveled, there is more on the horizon to explore. There are more hills to climb, and more summits to stand upon.

So, when you reach one peak, look to the horizon for the next adventure and blaze your own trail forward. **SFM**

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President's Message



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Alpha Jones, CSFM

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Before the sun rises; before the heat settles in; and before the first camp, practice or tournament of the day begins, sports field managers across the country are already at work. The arrival of the summer's heat has ushered in the World Cup competition and the country's 250th birthday celebration. In this same summer's heat, many of our colleagues are preparing fields on the global stage while others are managing the nonstop demands of local leagues, summer camps and fireworks.

No matter the level, expectations remain high and the need to protect ourselves from heat, fatigue and injury has never been more important.

In the middle of that intensity, it becomes easy to push through fatigue, skip a step, or simply not hydrate properly. But the truth is simple: the work cannot continue if the worker is not protected. Safety is not a suggestion. It is a responsibility.

Many in this profession know the risks that come with equipment, weather, chemicals, long hours, and the pressure to "just get it done." Injuries rarely happen in dramatic moments. More often, they show up in the small decisions: lifting too quickly, rushing around equipment, skipping hydration, working alone, or pushing through exhaustion because the schedule demands it.

But the safest operations are built the same way safe fields are maintained, through preparation, awareness and care.

This month is a reminder that your safety is as important as the safety you create for others. The athletes who trust the surface also trust the people who prepare it. That same trust includes the assumption that we take care of ourselves with the same professionalism we bring to every field, every day.

Being smart on the job is not a sign of slowing down. It is a sign of leadership.

Using proper equipment, taking breaks, communicating with teammates, respecting weather conditions, and following established procedures are essential. They protect your health, your crew, your facility and your community.

As we move through the heart of summer, I want to acknowledge the dedication it takes to maintain high standards during the most demanding stretch of the year. Your commitment keeps games safe, seasons on track, and communities playing. But that commitment must include protecting the people doing the work.

The game begins with us. That means ensuring that every member of this profession goes home safely at the end of the day. **SFM**

— Alpha Jones, CSFM

Supporting Professionals at Every Stage

One of the greatest strengths of the Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) is its commitment to supporting professionals at every stage of their careers. Whether someone is exploring the profession as a student, pursuing certification, seeking mentorship, applying for financial assistance, or looking to expand their professional network, SFMA offers programs designed to help members learn, grow and succeed.

As we look ahead to the second half of 2026, many SFMA program applications will open in July, providing members with new opportunities to engage, develop professionally and invest in their futures.

CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM)

The Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) designation remains the profession's premier credential. The CSFM program recognizes individuals who have demonstrated advanced knowledge, experience and commitment to excellence in sports field management. Earning the CSFM designation signifies a dedication to professionalism and ongoing learning while helping distinguish recipients as leaders within the industry.

Turfgrass Science Certification

Developed in partnership with educational institutions and industry stakeholders, and hosted by iCEV, the Turfgrass Science Certification introduces students and emerging professionals to foundational concepts in turfgrass management and sports field operations. The certification helps build workforce readiness and introduces future professionals to career opportunities within the industry.

Turfgrass Management 101 Certificate

For those entering the profession or seeking a stronger foundation in sports field management, SFMA offers introductory educational resources and certificate opportunities designed to support career development and professional growth.

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

One of SFMA's most impactful member-development initiatives is its Mentorship Program. The program pairs experienced sports field managers with students and emerging professionals, creating opportunities for career guidance, leadership development, problem-solving, and knowledge sharing. Mentorship relationships help new professionals navigate career

decisions while ensuring valuable industry knowledge is passed on to future generations. The program continues to strengthen connections across the profession and build a more engaged and supportive community.

SAFE FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS

Through the Foundation for Safer Athletic Fields for Everyone (SAFE), SFMA provides scholarships and grants that support education, professional development, and workforce growth. Many application periods traditionally open during the summer and provide valuable opportunities for students and professionals alike. SAFE awards multiple scholarships annually to students pursuing careers in sports field management, turfgrass science, and related disciplines. These scholarships help support educational goals while encouraging the next generation of industry leaders.

■ **Paul Zwaska Scholarship:** Supports students pursuing careers in sports field management and helps expand opportunities for future industry leaders.

■ **Gary Vanden Berg Internship Grant:** Helps support students who complete internships within the profession, helping offset expenses while encouraging hands-on learning and real-world experience.

■ **Terry Mellor Continuing Education Grant:** Provides financial assistance for members seeking continuing education opportunities, including attendance at the SFMA Conference and Exhibition.

■ **Leo Goertz Membership Grant:** Designed to introduce new professionals to the association, this grant provides recipients with national SFMA membership and encourages greater participation within the profession.

■ **Darian Daily Legacy Scholarship:** Supports dependents of SFMA members who are pursuing higher education and honors the legacy of one of the association's most dedicated supporters.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION PROGRAMS

SFMA continues to recognize excellence throughout the profession through several nationally recognized awards programs.

■ **Field of the Year Awards:** Recognize outstanding natural grass sports fields that demonstrate excellence

in playability, safety, appearance and management practices. The program highlights the expertise and dedication of sports field professionals across a variety of facility types and competition levels.

■ **Innovative Awards:** Recognize SFMA commercial partners whose products, equipment, services and technologies positively impact sports field management. The program highlights advancements that help professionals improve safety, efficiency, sustainability and field performance.

■ **Founders Awards:** SFMA's highest honors recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to the association and the profession throughout their careers. These awards celebrate leadership, service, and lasting impact on sports field management.

LOOKING AHEAD

Members are encouraged to explore the wide range of opportunities available through the SFMA. Whether pursuing certification, applying for a scholarship or grant, participating in the Mentorship Program, or seeking recognition through one of SFMA's awards programs, there has never been a better time to get involved.

There are also exciting developments on the horizon. Registration and housing information for the 2027 SFMA Conference and Exhibition in Tampa, Florida will be available in the coming months, and members should keep an eye out for the debut of a new SFMA apparel store, providing fresh opportunities to showcase pride in the profession both on and off the field.

Together, these programs reflect SFMA's commitment to supporting its members, strengthening the profession, and investing in the future of sports field management. **SFM**

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Windham School District High School Football Field

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sponsors Carolina Green, World Class Athletic Surfaces and EPS.



WHEN I ARRIVED AT THE Windham School District in 2016, our primary high school athletic field — home to our football, lacrosse and field hockey teams — was really struggling. Transitioning from a fully outsourced grounds care program to a one-person, in-house grounds' department was a big change. However, this has allowed me to build a program and long-term plan focused on science-based sports field management approaches reflective of Division I athletics programs. Bringing this field back to life and keeping it strong has been a genuine labor of love. We've battled seasons with little water (due to a complete well failure), significant property damage/repair, serving repeatedly as a landing area for Medivac and other helicopters, and dealing with significant New England weather. My primary focus has always been safe, playable fields for student athletes. Each step of this field's transformation has been rooted in science-based field management practices, enhancing safety and playability and minimizing injury risk, under heavy seasonal use. Caring for this field also provides me with unique educational opportunities. I actively use the field's ongoing improvement as a teaching tool for the larger school community, elevating the science of sports field turf management, fostering deeper appreciation for the complex care required to maintain safe, high-quality natural surfaces. Resourcefulness is particularly critical given the unique public school funding challenges in New Hampshire, ranking 50th in the nation for the state's portion of funding of public schools. All improve-

ments have been accomplished with a budget that is primarily supported through our local school district budget. Although I have poured countless hours into this job, this field's success truly stands as a testament to the powerful network and resources I lean on every day. As a department of one, navigating the sports turf industry has presented unique challenges, but I've found incredible strength in collaboration. The support and wisdom of groups like SFMA, NESTMA, and Women In Turf; the steadfast reliability of my local sales professionals; and the generosity of field experts who have mentored me since entering this career have been essential for my professional growth. While I am grateful to be the steward of this field, there is a large stakeholder group that has come together to make it a true source of pride for our high school and community. This field has become a gathering space for our most prominent games, hosting more than 5,000 spectators, including our beloved annual "Black Out Childhood Cancer" fundraiser. It serves as a setting for large outdoor community events and welcomes the next generation of athletes and families, hosting town league games for younger students. None of this would be possible without such strong local support. Our school board, students, community members, staff and families champion this field as a vital point of pride for our entire community. We carry the Field of the Year title with true Jaguar pride!

– Robin S. Wilson, grounds manager





Level and category of submission:

Schools and Parks Football

Field manager:

Robin S. Wilson

Title:

Grounds manager

Education:

Bachelor's degree in Sports Management

Original facility construction:

2009

Turfgrass:

Kentucky bluegrass and perennial rye

Overseed:

Overseeding occurs once a month from June to October, primarily between the hash marks and sideline coach box areas. Hand seeding of goal mouths happens every other week from August to October, and again from April to June. Dormant seeding takes place in November. I use a 50/50 blue/rye mix with wear tolerate and fast germinating seed.

Rootzone:

Loam

Soil Amendments:

Humic acid, kelp, topdressing sand

SportsField Management (SFM): Congratulations on the Field of the Year win. What are you most proud of with this win?

Robin S. Wilson: I am incredibly proud of earning this award for the Windham community and my turfgrass partners. Since I took this job in 2016, the parents, student-athletes, administration, and school board have consistently supported the program I have put in place. However, that program would not have been successful without my turf partners, who help to bring a strong foundation in turfgrass science and a commitment to excellence to our field. I am also proud to share this with my mentor and friend, Kim Britton, who took me under her wing more than 26 years ago. Her introduction to the turf industry and its people have truly shaped my career, and I certainly would not be here without her guidance and support. Lastly, I'm proud to share this with the Women in Turf family, whose support and encouragement pushed me to step beyond my comfort zone.

SFM: What were the biggest challenges you have faced with the winning field, and how have you approached those challenges?

Wilson: The level of field use is our greatest challenge. During the fall season alone, this one field supports three high school football teams and four youth football teams for games. In addition, the field is home to two high school field hockey teams that use the field for both games and daily practices. On top of that, the field is also consistently used for daily physical education classes and large community events, resulting in near-constant traffic and wear throughout the season. Two factors have helped us manage those challenges. First, we are fortunate to have strong support from the athletic director and coaches. Our coaches are flexible with practice locations, and make a conscious effort to avoid high-wear areas whenever possible. Second, turfgrass science plays a critical role. Effective soil management has been essential — going beyond N, P and K to provide the nutrients and microorganisms needed to maintain healthy soils. Using high-quality seed and overseeding whenever the schedule allows has also been an important key to sustaining field quality.

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SFM: Can you share a little about your overall management approach to the winning field and what you feel have been the most important aspects to getting this field to an award-winning level?

Wilson: Following the science! A grass plant is a living, breathing organism with basic needs: water, air, sunlight and nutrients. Advances in high-quality grass seed and soil agronomy have been a key factor in the success of our fields. By selecting wear-tolerant, drought-tolerant, and disease-resistant seed and establishing it in soil that provides the proper nutrients and beneficial microorganisms, we have given our turf the best opportunity to grow strong and perform at its highest level.

SFM: Please tell us about your crew, and anything else you would like us to know about your organization and the fields/facilities that you manage?

Wilson: Although most field operations labor is outsourced, I have the full responsibility of directing, training, managing and holding all contracted partners accountable for meeting expectations for this field. Ensuring consistent execution, safety and high-performance playing surfaces for our student athletes and community partners, under extreme field-use demands, is my top priority. Working with multiple partners and contractors has its challenges, but I am grateful for the opportunity to share what I have learned with others to make this field the best it can be.

SFM: Can you share a bit of insight into what the Field of the Year application process was like for you, as well as any tips you might have for other sports field managers?

Wilson: Sun Roesslein challenged me to apply for Field of the Year after a fantasy football loss. So, that's my first tip — don't lose!

Second, don't be afraid to ask for help. What I love about this industry is how we show up for one another — sharing advice, lending support, and helping each other succeed. Those connec-



tions are the core of what helps us all to be successful.

Last, as sports turf managers, it can be easy to focus on problems and not see the success day to day. Taking weekly images and tracking the progression over time during this process was truly enlightening. Seeing the data confirm what I observed each day has helped me to make better, more informed decisions. Applying for Field of the Year was a helpful reminder to pause and appreciate the evolution of our Windham, N.H., athletic fields. This process also helped me to step back to recognize not only my own professional growth, but also the immense growth of our field and industry as a whole. **SFM**



JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ



CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS TURFGRASS PROBLEM?

PROBLEM:

Dead weeds in skinned area

TURFGRASS AREA:

Parks and rec field

LOCATION:

Northeastern United States

TURFGRASS VARIETY:

Kentucky bluegrass and perennial rye

Answer on page 33

John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International

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PARK AND RECREATION MONTH 2026:

NRPA Celebrates 'The Power Of'

By Vitisia Paynich

As people across the country partake in summer activities — outdoors at their local parks and day camps or indoors at their nearby recreation facilities and senior centers — park and recreation professionals are ensuring that community members have a fun and memorable summer season. Parks and recreation serves our communities year-round, but the month of July is a time for celebrating these dedicated agencies whose work helps to make life better for all.

DEFINING "THE POWER OF"

This Park and Recreation Month, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) shines a bright light on "The Power Of" parks and recreation, which offers myriad benefits beyond traditional recreational entertainment. What's more, this signature theme embodies the power of play, nature, community, belonging, well-being, and the professionals who bring these experiences to fruition.

For NRPA's part, the nonprofit organization, comprising more than 68,000 members, supports agencies by helping them to effectively communicate the power of what connects us:

■ **The Power Of Connection:** Parks and recreation provides spaces where relationships grow, cultures meet and communities bond.

■ **The Power Of Play:** From playgrounds to programs to youth sports, play fuels creativity, joy and lifelong learning.

■ **The Power Of Community:** Public spaces offer room for everyone to gather, celebrate and heal.

■ **The Power Of Nature:** Access to nature restores, inspires and improves quality of life.

■ **The Power Of Belonging:** Welcoming parks and programs provide spaces where everyone feels valued.

■ **The Power Of Well-being:** Parks and recreation advances health, resilience and shared community benefits.

"Parks and recreation has the unique ability to meet people where they are and connect them to something bigger than themselves," said Cort Jones, NRPA director of content marketing. "Through the power of play, nature, sports, community, belonging and well-being, park and recreation professionals create spaces where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. That's the power we're celebrating this Park and Recreation Month."

THE POWER OF A PHOTOGRAPH

To commemorate Park and Recreation Month, NRPA hosts an annual photo contest whereby agencies nationwide submit a photo that best illustrates the annual theme for a chance to be featured on the cover of its official publication, "Parks & Recreation" magazine. Out of a broad pool of sub-

missions, Howard County (Maryland) Recreation and Parks (HCRP) department achieved top honors as the 2026 Park and Recreation Month Cover Contest winner. While HCRP's photo submission highlighting its new girls' flag football league scored big in the first round of judging, it's the story behind the photograph that sealed the agency's win.

Located southwest of Baltimore, HCRP serves nearly 350,000 community members, provides 7,000 events and programs, and oversees about 10,000 acres that includes 50 local parks. During its inaugural year, the girls' flag football league not only fulfilled a community need, but also raised the bar for successfully getting high school-age girls to participate in one of the fastest-growing sports in the United States and around the world.

As author Paula Jacoby-Garrett writes in "Parks & Recreation" magazine's July cover story, "The focus in year one was simple: give interested students a chance to learn, play



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and build confidence in the game.” More importantly, HCRP created a program that welcomes, unifies and captivates young female athletes, serving as a blueprint for other park and recreation agencies and school districts to follow.

“Through initiatives such as its girls’ flag football league, HCRP continues to elevate the standard for community engagement,” Jacoby-Garrett added. That is the Power Of play and belonging!

JOINING THE CELEBRATION

Want to participate in Park and Recreation Month, but aren't sure where to start? Or do you simply want to promote the different ways your park and recreation staff serve community neighbors and friends? Following are some tips to ease you into the process:

■ **Tell your park and recreation story.** Consider how your agency or organization connects to your community members, such as through play, nature and well-being, and use that as your starting point. Highlight a project or initiative that further supports “The Power Of” theme. Next, share your story by reaching out to media outlets (local cable/television or hometown newspaper) or your state park and recreation association.

■ **Flex your social media muscle.** Now that you have your story, spread the word by posting on social media and include a photo featuring your team. Be sure to include the hashtags #ThePowerOf and #ParkAndRecMonth2026.

■ **Celebrate your staff.** As the saying goes, “It takes a village.” Serving the community is definitely a team effort, so why not thank your hardworking staff on your webpage or blog, or give a heartfelt shout-out to colleagues during a public event? It also helps patrons to put a face to those professionals who are providing these valuable services.

■ **Make it a community affair.** If time and budget allow, host an event to celebrate Park and Recreation Month either in a recreation center or park setting. Remember, it's about bringing folks together and appreciating our communities.

■ **Access the Park and Recreation Month Outreach Toolkit.** NRPA offers a handy resource (<https://www.nrpa.org/events/july/toolkit/>) to assist you with your Park and Recreation Month outreach.

MAKING IT OFFICIAL

What better way to bring wider attention to the work that park and recreation professionals do than to proclaim July as Park and Recreation Month in your city or town? This official declaration enables your community and local officials to formally recognize parks and recreation and the long-term benefits the field provides to your residents. To learn more about how you can begin the proclamation process, visit <https://www.nrpa.org/events/july/proclamation-tips/>.



NRPA'S PARK AND RECREATION MONTH

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

While the month of July celebrates the park and recreation field along with the communities served, July 17 commemorates Park and Recreation Professionals Day. On this day, we recognize all the public servants who build strong, vibrant and resilient communities through the power of parks and recreation.

This is also an opportunity for agencies to invite local residents and avid park enthusiasts to a special event where agency leaders can introduce the public to their team of dedicated park and recreation professionals. NRPA encourages you to show your support by promoting Park and Recreation Professionals Day on your social media and using the hashtag #NRPAParkandRecDay.

SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE

As public servants, we are always working behind the scenes to plan, strategize and anticipate what we can do to improve the health and well-being of our patrons. How do we bring more fun and joy to their lives and create more welcoming spaces for people of all abilities and from different backgrounds? We sometimes do this essential work with little fanfare or self-promotion. It's time to change that mindset and celebrate your park and recreation successes by inviting others to celebrate alongside you!

Although Park and Recreation Month lasts just 31 days, the bonds formed and memories shared between your agency staff and community members in July will endure for a lifetime. **SFM**

Vitisa Paynich is executive editor of Parks & Recreation magazine and director of publishing and editorial at NRPA.



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NRPA recognizes excellence in parks and recreation

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) announced the recipients of this year's NRPA Innovation Awards, Spotlight Awards, and Scholarships and Fellowships. The awards will be presented during the 2026 NRPA Annual Conference in Philadelphia in September.

INNOVATION AWARDS

NRPA Innovation Awards acknowledge park and recreation agencies nationwide that have improved and strengthened their communities through innovative practices in park design, health and well-being, environmental resilience and parks for all.

The recipients of this year's awards are as follows:

■ **Innovation in Health and Well-being Award:** Cities of San Carlos and Belmont Parks and Recreation for Teen Wellness Retreat, San Carlos and Belmont, California

■ **Innovation in Equity Award:** Brooklyn Center Parks and Recreation for Reciprocal Swim Lessons, Brooklyn Center, Minnesota

■ **Innovation in Environmental Resilience Award:** Forest Preserves of Cook County for Seed Amplification Program, River Forest, Illinois

■ **Innovation in Park Design Award:** Finlay Park, City of Columbia Parks and Recreation, Columbia, South Carolina



Finlay Park, Columbia, South Carolina

SPOTLIGHT AWARDS

NRPA Spotlight Awards are presented to individuals to honor their efforts — both professional and personal — in the field of parks and recreation.

The following individuals are recognized with NRPA Spotlight Awards:

■ **National Distinguished Professional Award:** Jill Geller, CPRE, parks, recreation and libraries director, Roseville, California

■ **Dirk Richwine Professional Mentoring Award:** Kate Meacham, CPRE, parks and recreation director, Allen, Texas

■ **Robert W. Crawford Young Professional Award:** Angel Ferrara, CPRP, director of parks and recreation, Unified Government of Wyandotte County, Kansas City, Kansas

■ **Robert M. Artz Advocate Award:**

Jono Miller, advisory board member for Sarasota County PARC and ESLOC Boards, Sarasota, Florida

SCHOLARSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

NRPA Scholarships and Fellowships provide honorees with the opportunity to attend and explore the operation of the field at the NRPA Annual Conference.

Congratulations to the award recipients in the following categories:

Young Professional Fellowships:

■ Maria Contreras, Waukegan (Illinois) Park District

■ Claryce Free, CPRP, AFO, Temple (Texas) Parks and Recreation

■ Danielle Kugler, St. Marys (Pennsylvania) Parks and Recreation

■ Kaitlyn Schech, Kent County (Delaware) Parks and Recreation

Diversity Scholarships:

■ Lisa Lewis, Richland County (South Carolina) Recreation Commission

■ Amarre Negussie, Des Moines (Iowa) Parks and Recreation

Student Scholarships:

■ Camrahn Jamison, University of North Carolina Greensboro

■ Abigail Jones, Appalachian State University

"Congratulations to these outstanding awardees who are shaping the future of parks and recreation with passion and purpose," said Kristine Stratton, NRPA president and CEO. "Their work is a powerful reflection of the power that parks and recreation has in communities nationwide, and of the dedication professionals bring to this work every day. We look forward to celebrating these inspiring leaders in Philadelphia during the 2026 NRPA Annual Conference." **SFM**

Invest in Your Future: Join SFMA Today

The Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) is the recognized leader in championing the sports field industry and its professionals.



MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

SFMA has specific membership categories for every professional in the sports field management industry.

■ **Sports field manager:** If you are primarily responsible for managing or maintaining sports fields.

■ **Sports field manager associate:** If you are primarily responsible for managing or maintaining a sports field(s) and your organization already has an SFMA sports field manager member employed.

■ **Affiliate:** If you are indirectly or on a part-time basis involved in the maintenance/management of sports fields (coaches, athletic directors, volunteers, etc.).

■ **Academic:** If you are in teaching, extension or research.

■ **Student:** If you are a full-time student.

■ **Commercial:** If you work for a company engaged in a commercial enterprise providing services and/or products to the sports field management profession (consultants, architects, designers, contractors, management companies, distributors and manufacturers, etc.).

■ **Commercial associate:** If you are the second person (or more) from a commercial company (must first have an SFMA commercial member at their company before this lower-dues category can be selected).

■ **Retired:** If you are retired and no longer seeking full-time employment within the scope of activities of any SFMA membership category, and have been a member for a minimum of five years, you may become a non-voting member of SFMA and are not eligible to hold elective office.

THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT REASONS TO JOIN SFMA

1. **Job security:** SFMA's programs and services proactively enhance your value to your employer.

2. **Career success:** SFMA's education and information help prepare you to take that next step in your career.

3. **Recognition of your professionalism:** In addition to the individual recognition you receive because of your good



work, SFMA's advocacy with groups such as athletic directors, parks and recreation directors, coaches and parents enhances the image of the entire profession.

BENEFITS YOU RECEIVE AS AN SFMA MEMBER

- A network of peers who share their best practices.
- Opportunities for education.
- Quick access to information and resources.
- A monthly electronic newsletter that communicates association and industry information.
- Access to the Member's Only section of *sportsfieldmanagement.org*, which has a real-time membership directory and hundreds of technical educational resources.
- Access to Michigan State's Turfgrass Information File, a resource for up-to-date technical information.
- Ability to enter your field in the nationally recognized Field of the Year awards program.
- Opportunity to become a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) and to have your facility certified as environmentally responsible.
- Significant savings on registration to SFMA's annual and regional conferences, and discounts to other organizations' education.
- Opportunity to participate in volunteer leadership positions.
- Opportunity to join one of SFMA's affiliated chapters for a strong local network. (Each chapter sets its own local dues.)
- Purchase SFMA branded apparel.
- *SportsField Management Magazine* each month.
- The ability to apply for scholarships (students only).
- Discounted exhibitor booth at the annual conference (commercial members only). **SFM**

For more information, visit:

<https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/why-join-stma/>



The Fastest-Growing User Groups in Parks: **GROWNUPS**

By Mary Helen Sprecher

Photo courtesy of Willians
Huerta on Pexels.com

Park and recreational fields are getting a lot of new users these days and not just by youth athletes — although they were once youth athletes.

Now, they're adults. Some are right out of high school or college and some have been in the workforce for a number of years. All have something in common, though. They remember fondly their days of Little League baseball or softball, high school soccer or college football — and they're nowhere near ready to sit quietly and let the lunchbox crowd have all the fun.

Ready to serve this public are adult sport and social clubs, which administer leagues, organize teams, create schedules, keep track of scores — and of course, throw end-of-season parties at local watering holes.

And they're proliferating rapidly; in fact, you'd be hard pressed not to be able to locate at least one such organization in every major city across the country.

Parks and recreation facilities are some of the most popular places for clubs to play. Among the most popular sports being offered today are as follows:

- **Softball**
- **Baseball**
- **Small-sided soccer** (Small-sided formats of any field sport are good fits for adults as they require less running and fewer team members.)
- **Running**
- **Disc golf**
- **Traditional golf**
- **Flag football**
- **Grass court or beach volleyball** (if rec centers are available, indoor volleyball is often offered)
- **Kickball**
- **Pickleball**
- **Tennis**
- **Water polo**
- **Futsal**
- **3x3 basketball**
- **Table tennis**

Many clubs offer options, such as drop-in play or leagues that cater to specific skill levels. Others also offer bar games

such as darts, as well as mind games like chess or backgammon. Local clean-up activities to pick up litter and work on community gardens are also popular.

Proponents of such clubs say they serve the dual purpose of providing an outlet for physical activity and offering opportunities for making social connections. Both are equally important, particularly to adults who, upon graduating from high school or college, suddenly find themselves without scheduled activities, and feel isolated and lonely.

A NATURAL FIT FOR PARKS

Organizers of sport and social clubs say parks are a natural fit for such activities; in fact, many park officials will outsource all adult activities to such clubs in order to be able to devote staff time to youth programming and other duties.

Because youth activities, particularly in the summer, take place during the daytime, park facilities can host adult play in the evenings, after work hours. On weekends, play may be held in mornings or at midday; however, it will become necessary to work around youth schedules as well.

The great news: Parks get a lot of use, and successful leagues tend to be self-perpetuating, attracting new participants and generating positive publicity for parks, for the programs and for the area. Additionally, adjacent businesses, such as restaurants and bars, tend to benefit from the groups who come to play — as well as those who come to watch.

The not-so-great news: Park facilities experience more wear, which means the park field management staff needs to work with the league organizers to rotate play among different fields or facilities, as necessary. And while many parks are adding synthetic fields, many grass fields remain, and need to be cared for so as to avoid overuse.

TECHNOLOGY ON THE RISE

Some of the technologies coming into play to make maintenance easier in the face of increased use of fields include autonomous line-marking machines. Increasingly, several parks are pooling their funds to purchase these, and then share them to mark fields, rather than using workers to do so.

Other park staff members are using drones to scan fields for trouble spots, such as muddy or skinned areas. Waterwise irrigation systems water fields according to a schedule but shut off automatically when precipitation is



Photo courtesy of
Jaxon Matthew Willis
on Pexels.com



Photo courtesy
of HNP, LLC



Photo courtesy of
Stantec Sport Group

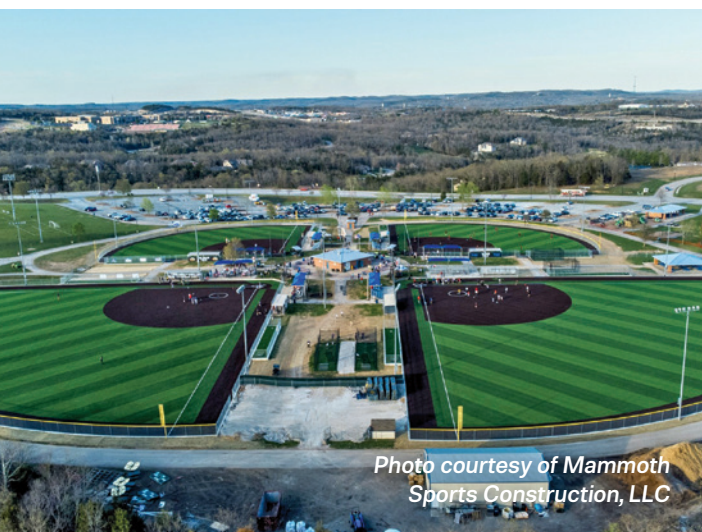


Photo courtesy of Mammoth
Sports Construction, LLC



Photo courtesy of
Verde Design, Inc

sensed. LED sports lighting systems are also replacing the old high-intensity discharge (HID) fixtures and are providing cost savings, as well as better color rendition and ability to avoid issues such as glare and light trespass.

Expect all these technologies (and more) to increase in use as the cost continues to come down.

QUESTIONS TO ASK PRIOR TO WORKING WITH SPORTS LEAGUES

While adult sports and social leagues offer many benefits, field managers should work with park and recreation departments to carefully evaluate user patterns in order to avoid any problems. Questions to ask include the following:

- What days and times do you anticipate scheduling play?
- Which sports will use which facilities and when?
- How many fields, courts and other facilities will be needed?
- For which sports will fields need to be marked?
- If fields show wear, will the sport and social club agree that play will have to be moved to other areas — or perhaps delayed until fields can recover?
 - Since fields will need to be maintained on a regular basis (mowed, fertilized, watered, etc.), the schedule of play will need to be adapted. Does the sport and social club understand and agree to this?
- Where will users park and when will they be parking there?
- Are restrooms available onsite? If not, will the sport and social club be responsible for supplying portable toilets and keeping them in usable shape?
- How late will play run? Will it be held far enough from homes so that noise or lighting will not be a problem?
- If users bring children, who will be responsible for watching them?
 - Will the club be in charge of purchasing all necessary equipment and bringing it to the site if it is not already in place? (Examples might be volleyball nets, flags and belts for flag football, etc.)
 - Who will be in charge of signing up registrants, handling money, organizing teams, creating schedules, etc.?
 - How will the income be shared?
 - Will the park manager and field manager be able to look at the adult league schedule in advance to make sure there are no conflicts with any other events scheduled at the park? (Remember that parks often host not only youth sports and programs but community festivals, fairs and other large events; those should be noted in advance so that there are no problems once the sports season is underway.)



- How will the sports event schedule change on holidays when there may be an uptick of families coming in to use the park?
- Will users agree to remove any litter generated and place it into proper receptacles, rather than leaving it behind?
- What happens in case of rainouts or other weather events?
- Who bears the liability if a player is injured? Is the adult sport and social club insured in case of such events?
- Does the sport and social club agree to tell the field manager if they notice problems with the facilities?
- Will the league provide referees or officials to games or will games be self-refereed?

These are only the start of the questions. There may be others, depending upon the specific location of the park and its facilities, as well as the activities planned.

Overall, adult sport and social leagues can be a win/win for parks and for those who participate in them, as well as for organizers. However, it is essential to ask all questions up front and to make careful plans that take into consideration the needs of all user groups — youth and adult — and to ascertain the park facilities will be a good fit for the activities planned. **SFM**

Mary Helen Sprecher wrote this article on behalf of the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA). For more information, see ASBA's Sports Fields: Construction and Maintenance Manual, available in both PDF and hard copy at www.sportsbuilders.org and mouse over the top blue toolbar reading "Resources." Other resources available from ASBA include:

- Courts & Recreational Surfaces: Construction and Maintenance Manual
- Tennis Courts: Construction & Maintenance Manual
- Running Tracks: A Construction and Maintenance Manual
- Indoor Wood Sports Surfacing: Installation & Maintenance Manual
- Pickleball Courts: Construction & Maintenance Manual
- Padel Courts: Installation & Maintenance Manual



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LIGHTNING SAFETY GUIDE

for Sports and Special Events

LIGHTNING POSES A SIGNIFICANT RISK to outdoor sports and special events, endangering participants, spectators and staff. Given the unpredictable nature of thunderstorms, it is essential to have a comprehensive lightning safety plan in place to protect everyone involved.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), in partnership with the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4) and the University of Southern Mississippi, recently released the *Lightning Safety Guide for Sports and Special Events*, which provides practical, scalable guidance for venue owners, operators, and event organizers.

According to CISA, the Lightning Safety Guide outlines critical measures and considerations to ensure safety and reduce the risks associated with lightning strikes, including tear-away pages on lightning safety considerations for small and large events. The preparation, education, and clear procedures outlined in the guide will minimize lightning-related injuries and disruptions, creating a safer environment for outdoor events.

The following tips are excerpted from the *Lightning Safety Guide for Sports and Special Events*:

LIGHTNING DETECTION SYSTEM CONSIDERATIONS

With modernized technology, it is no longer necessary to rely only on observation to determine where lightning is occurring. End-users can quickly access where the closest lightning strike is located, where lightning activity is occurring, how it is evolving, and the chances of it occurring at a specific location by a certain time.

There are a variety of lightning detection methods, ranging from ground-based to satellite-based lightning detection networks. Venue managers and event coordinators have sophisticated data-driven resources readily available to help better inform lightning-based decisions for outdoor events. Whether lightning data is provided by venue-specific lightning detection infrastructure or mobile software applications, there is a spectrum of options to receive critical, high-quality, and real-time lightning information and alert notifications at a range of costs.

When considering lightning detection systems, venue managers should carefully assess key features to ensure the system meets alerting, interface, coverage, and integration needs. Venue managers should also consider the need for real-time augmentation with support from a professional meteorologist or weather specialist.

LIGHTNING-SAFE STRUCTURES

Although the best defense is to avoid lightning conditions altogether, that is not always possible. Prior to an event, venue managers should identify safe locations and understand how long it will take to get people to safety.

Venue managers should assign two key players for every event: a designated Weather Safety Official and a designated Authorized Decision-maker. The designated Weather Safety Official is responsible for monitoring weather conditions (including lightning) to provide the Decision-maker with as much lead time as possible. The designated Authorized Decision-maker is responsible for determining when and how the venue's lightning safety plan is initiated, including delays, cancellations, and shelter-in-place or evacuation orders. Depending on event needs and staffing, these responsibilities may be done by the same person.

LIGHTNING SAFETY PLANS

Lightning safety plans are not one-size-fits-all. For example, the lightning safety plan for a recreational swimming facility will differ from a nearby sports stadium despite the likelihood of these venues being affected by the same lightning occurrence.

The lightning safety radius for a venue should be based upon multiple factors:

- Size of venue
- Number and demographic of the patrons
- Speed of the inbound lightning risk
- Decision time needed for event stoppage
- Time needed for egress from the spectator areas
- Proximity of suitable available lightning shelters
- Completion time needed for evacuation

- Ingress into a lightning shelter

The varying scope and scale of outdoor events may also require information and decision support services to help guide the appropriate lightning safety response.

Venue managers may consider:

- Professional onsite or remote meteorologist
- Grounding solutions with the installation of lightning rods
- Subscription to a lightning data notification service (perhaps multiple for redundancy)
- Onsite lightning detection infrastructure system

Further, venue managers/event coordinators with fixed staffing may consider annual lightning (or general weather) safety training as a force multiplier to enhance lightning forecasts, detection, decision-making, and safety response efforts.

A lightning safety plan should outline ways to allocate resources based on the forecast or current lightning threat level. These may include pre-assembly of staff, increased information dissemination, the opening of shelters, and minute-by-minute monitoring.

In addition, the unpredictable nature of lightning demands that safety plans account for the anticipation of lightning within a predetermined safety radius rather than waiting for the lightning to occur within a venue's safety radius.

A lightning safety plan should integrate seamlessly with existing infrastructure and safety systems. This integration ensures that lightning safety measures provide continuity with other safety protocols, eliminating conflicts or disruptions.

RESUMING AN EVENT

In addition to determining trigger points associated with the response to a threat of lightning, venue managers also identify when and how an event will be resumed or canceled. NOAA recommends the following criteria for resuming an event.

If the venue is consulting with a professional meteorologist who is using real-time cloud-to-cloud and cloud-to-ground lightning data, the event may resume if ALL the following conditions are met:

- Lightning has moved beyond 8 miles of the venue.
- The storm motion is taking the lightning activity away from the venue.
- The threat of new lightning strikes within 8 miles of the venue has ended.



Photo credit - ©Adobe Stock/
Limitless Production

If the venue does not consult with a professional meteorologist who is using real-time lightning data, the venue will wait 30 minutes after no thunder or lightning is observed before resuming activities.

THE LIGHTNING SAFETY GUIDE FOR SPORTS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

These are just a few brief excerpts from the *Lightning Safety Guide for Sports and Special Events*. The full guide is a comprehensive, 33-page resource that covers the science of lightning, environmental factors, risk assessment, protective action planning, detection and prediction, communication, event cancellation or resumption, staff training and much more. It also includes Safety Operation Plans specific to various event sizes, as well as government support and resources for lightning safety.

To access/download the full guide, visit https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/2026-05/Lightning_Safety_Guide_508_05122026.pdf

For more information on lightning safety from the National Lightning Safety Council, visit <http://lightningsafety-council.org/>. **SFM**



THE NEXT ERA OF STADIUM INFRASTRUCTURE

How stadiums are turning flexibility into revenue

Arrowhead Stadium

With North American stadiums in the global spotlight for World Cup 26, many venue owners are making investments that extend far beyond the pitch. The upgrades tied to hosting one of the world's largest sporting events are accelerating a broader transformation already underway across sports and entertainment venues, where operational agility, premium hospitality and year-round functionality have become central to modern stadium design.

Increasingly, venue operators are looking beyond single-event solutions in favor of infrastructure that can support a wider range of audiences, event formats and revenue opportunities. From international soccer matches and NFL games to concerts and large-scale entertainment events, today's stadiums are expected to transition seamlessly between uses, while continuing to elevate the fan experience.

"Stadium operators are no longer thinking about infrastructure as something fixed around a single tenant or event," said Mike Mendoza, director of business development for Sightline Commercial Solutions. "Instead, flexible seating systems, premium hospitality sections and standing-room environments are becoming long-term solutions that help venues adapt to event demands and make better use of existing space."

TURNING UNDERUSED AREAS INTO PREMIUM REVENUE

One of the clearest examples of this shift can be seen in how venues are reclaiming underutilized space. Field-level seating, loge environments and modular hospitality concepts are allowing operators to introduce new premium inventory without major structural expansion.

At Inter&Co Stadium in Orlando, a lower-level seating area beneath the scoreboard was transformed into a supporters-only section known as "The Terrace," incorporating premium swivel seats and tables while maintaining unobstructed sightlines.

Houston's Shell Energy Stadium took a similar approach by introducing field-level seating built on modular platforms to create an exclusive sideline environment capable of supporting everything from professional soccer to concerts and live entertainment.

This demand for convertible premium environments has also contributed to the emergence of modular hospitality concepts that allow venues to create customizable VIP spaces ranging from intimate lounge seating to larger social environments. Depending on venue needs, these

installations can function as permanent or portable solutions.

“What we’re seeing across venues is that flexibility is increasingly tied to stronger monetization strategies and better fan experiences,” said Mendoza. “The goal is no longer just adding capacity; it’s creating infrastructure that can evolve alongside various events, audiences and operational priorities.”

THE SHIFT TOWARD SOCIAL VIEWING

Changing fan behavior is also influencing how stadiums are designed and utilized. Many spectators increasingly value social experiences that allow them to gather, move freely and remain connected to the action without necessarily occupying a traditional fixed seat for the duration of an event. As a result, venues are seeing growing demand for standing-room sections, drink rails and concourse-adjacent viewing environments that support a more casual and communal atmosphere.

At Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, an underutilized concourse area on the 200 level of the west end zone was transformed into a series of private and semi-private viewing environments known as the AT&T Lofts. The renovation incorporated custom glass guardrail systems alongside drink rail installations to create a hospitality-focused environment.

“Drink rail systems can easily be integrated into everything from concourses and club decks to loge seating areas and standing-room sections,” said Mendoza. “In addition to creating places for spectators to gather, they allow venues to activate locations that may not have previously generated ticket revenue.”

STADIUMS BUILT FOR CONSTANT CHANGE

While premium hospitality and social viewing environments continue to reshape the spectator experience, other infrastructure investments are focused on helping venues transition more efficiently between events.

At Arrowhead Stadium, preparations for the FIFA World Cup required additional sideline



Mercedes-Benz Stadium



Hard Rock Stadium

clearance to meet international field dimensions. Rather than permanently altering the seating bowl, 13 rows of concrete stadia were replaced with a demountable aluminum seating system that can be installed or removed as event requirements change.

Similar approaches have been implemented at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California, and SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles, where portions of existing concrete seating were removed to create additional field clearance before being supplemented with demountable seating systems that can be deployed as needed.

“Every event brings its own distinct set of requirements for field dimensions, seating capacity, layout and broadcast operations,”



Levi's Stadium

Mendoza added. “Demountable systems enable facilities to expand usability, transition seamlessly between events and optimize revenue potential.”

INFRASTRUCTURE BEYOND THE FAN EXPERIENCE

Adaptable seating and hospitality environments represent only part of the broader infrastructure transformation taking place inside today's stadiums. Accessibility improvements, broadcast accommodations and operational enhancements are also becoming increasingly important as venues prepare for more diverse programming demands.

At Busch Stadium in St. Louis, ADA-compliant platforms and railing systems help create more inclusive viewing environments while complementing the venue's architectural character. Meanwhile, at the University of Washington's Husky Stadium, a freestanding two-tier camera platform provides elevated broadcast sightlines for soccer matches and other live events. Similar



Inter&Co Stadium

field-access and broadcast infrastructure upgrades have also been incorporated at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami to better support large-scale productions and sideline operations.

As venues continue preparing for the demands of global events, many of the infrastructure decisions being made today are expected to influence stadium operations long after the event concludes. Across the industry, the focus is shifting toward adaptable environments capable of supporting a broader mix of events, audiences and revenue models.

“The venues that will thrive long-term are the ones designed to evolve,” said Mendoza. “The real goal is creating infrastructure that remains valuable as audience expectations, event demands and venue operations continue to change.” **SFM**

Article and photos provided by Sightline Commercial Solutions (www.sightlinecommercial.com).

JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ



ANSWER

From page 16

The dead weeds on this athletic field are the result of this school baseball field being abandoned after the season was over due to lack of staff, allowing Mother Nature to have her way. Before the next year's season, glyphosate was applied to the skinned area in order to kill weeds and undesirable grasses that had grown into the clay. It has been proven over and over that year-round maintenance on fields is less expensive compared to renovations like this. Even if the fields are maintained at a minimal level during the offseason, overall, it is less expensive and much easier to maintain fields as compared to a total renovation like shown here. After the weeds and undesirable grasses are killed, the clay must be tilled and the dead roots and organic matter removed. The field should also be laser graded to get the elevations back to correct levels, as

well as rolling the surface to firm it all up. Renovation is a time-intensive and costly process as compared to maintaining the field year round.

Photo submitted by Matt Tobin, sales representative for Pioneer Athletics

John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International

If you would like to submit a photograph for John Mascaro's Photo Quiz, please send a high-resolution digital photo to John Mascaro at john@turf-tec.com. If your photograph is selected, you will receive full credit. All photos become property of SportsField Management magazine and the Sports Field Management Association.

SFMA Field Painting Resource Center

THE NEW SPORTS FIELD MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (SFMA) FIELD PAINTING RESOURCE CENTER is a one-stop hub designed to bring together valuable field painting resources from throughout the industry — all in one easy-to-find place.

According to SFMA, athletic field painting is a key part of the art and science of athletic field management. It goes beyond appearance by helping create precise boundaries and accurate markings that support fair play and confident calls on the field.

“Whether you’re looking to sharpen your skills, explore best practices, or stay current with industry tools, this resource center is here to help,” SFMA stated.

SFMA Resource Centers are available through the Canvas learning platform via the SFMA Member Portal (under “Courses”). These ongoing resources allow members to re-

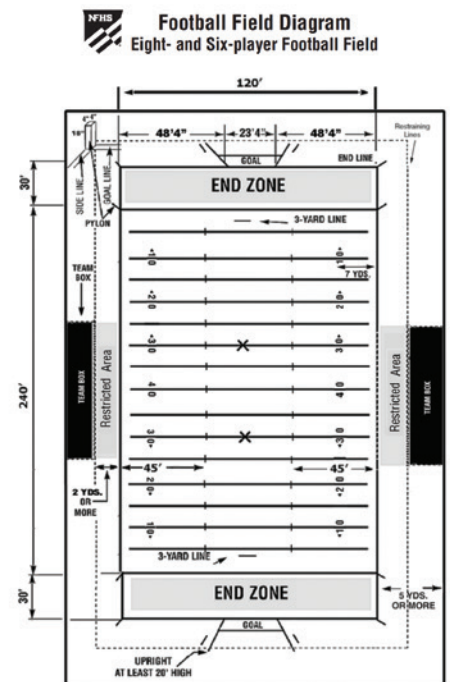
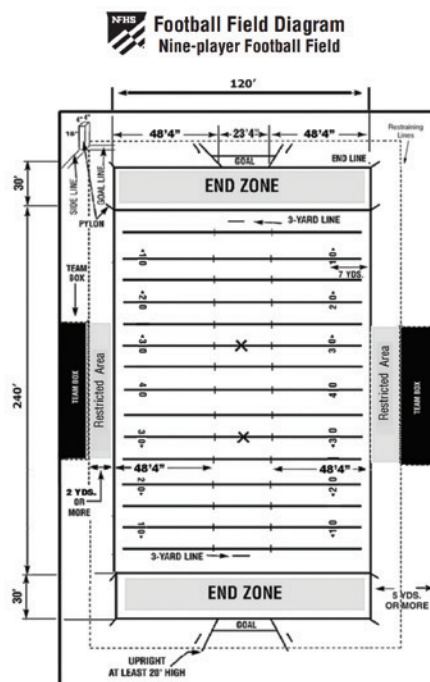
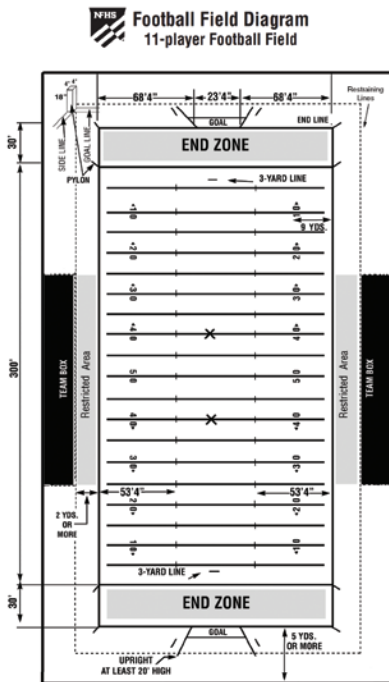


Photo by Ryan Storey

turn any time for information on a specific topic or subtopic. The information contained within is intended as a guideline for the tasks, equipment and materials described.

From outlining boundaries and goal areas to adding logos and sponsor graphics, athletic field painting combines technical skill with an eye for detail. It requires specialized equipment, high-quality paint, and knowledge of both turf types and sport-specific regulations. Ultimately, well-executed athletic field painting enhances the visual impact of the field while meeting the strict standards of competitive play.

The Field Painting Resource Center provides a range of information for a crucial part of maintaining the professional appearance and functionality of athletic fields. **Some of the topics covered include:**



Note: By state association adoption, the dimensions of the field may be altered.

- Aerosol
- Appearance and functionality of athletic fields
- Athletic field paint comparisons
- Athletic field painting tips
- Autonomous
- Basic field layout guide
- Basic steps
- Chalk
- CO₂ painters
- Diagnostics
- Equipment maintenance
- Field marking diagrams and tools
- High-pressure or airless painters
- Low-pressure or bulk painters
- Optimizing athletic field paint applications on bermudagrass
- Paint removal tips
- Paint system setup
- Painting temporary logos on synthetic fields
- Pre-mixed box paint

- Spray guns
- Sprayer tips/nozzles
- Stencil creation
- Stencil layout
- Turfgrass health
- And much more.

"SFMA's Resource Centers and Canvas learning platform provide members with year-round access to practical, industry-specific education designed to help professionals grow their knowledge and advance their careers," said SFMA Education Manager Jennifer McLendon. "From specialized topics such as synthetic turf management, field painting, and turfgrass math to leadership development, mentorship resources, and on-demand professional development courses, these tools allow members to learn at their own pace and access trusted information when they need it most."

"For anyone considering membership, these exclusive educational resources represent a significant value by providing continuous learning opportunities, expert-driven content, and a direct connection to the knowledge and best practices shaping the future of the sports field management profession." **SFM**



Project EverGreen, ScottsMiracle-Gro and NE-SFMA team up

Project EverGreen, ScottsMiracle-Gro's "Keep It Real" initiative and members of the New England Sports Field Management Association (NE-SFMA) partnered to restore and revitalize the baseball field at the Yawkey Boys & Girls Club of Roxbury (Massachusetts).

The project marked Project EverGreen's first GreenCare for Communities renovation in the city of Boston and transformed a well-loved but aging field into a safer, more functional, and environmentally healthier green space for local families, aspiring athletes, and neighborhood residents.

The renovation was led by NE-SFMA members who volunteered a full day away from their regular responsibilities to improve the field. These professionals manage and maintain athletic fields across New England and have brought the same level of expertise used on premier sports facilities to benefit young athletes in Roxbury. Their collective efforts helped ensure the field is safer, more durable and better able to serve the community for years to come.

"Great fields do more than support play, they help athletes perform safely and communities thrive," said Tom Barry, CSFM, of Greens Farms Academy and a NE-SFMA board director. "This project was a meaningful way for our members to give back, applying their professional expertise to create a field that Roxbury residents can enjoy and be proud of for generations."

Beyond the field improvements, the project highlighted the important role healthy natural green spaces play in supporting the well-being of communities. Well-maintained athletic fields encourage physical activity and teamwork while also helping cool surrounding neighborhoods, improve air quality and support stormwater management.

"Healthy green spaces create healthier communities," said Cindy Code, executive director of Project EverGreen. "This renovation showcased the incredible generosity of the sports field management profession. NE-SFMA members donated their time, knowledge and talents to create a better playing experience for local youth. Their commitment demonstrates how skilled professionals can make a lasting impact far beyond the facilities they manage every day."

The renovation was made possible through the collective efforts and volunteer support of Project EverGreen, ScottsMiracle-Gro, NE-SFMA and community partners committed to creating greener, healthier and more connected neighborhoods.

John Sass, senior vice president of the lawns business unit and chief creative officer at ScottsMiracle-Gro, said natural grass is essential for safer play and healthier communities.

"From reducing injuries with a softer, more forgiving surface to supporting overall well-being, real grass continues to outperform artificial turf where it matters most, which is why we're investing in natural fields for the next generation through 'Keep It Real,'" said Sass.

The "Keep It Real" initiative underscores the importance of playing surfaces that support performance, safety and development, from local community fields to the highest levels of the game. To date, the initiative has supported more than 2,000 children nationwide by providing opportunities to play on natural turf fields, helping young athletes develop their skills and strengthen connections with their communities.

Green spaces like the athletic field at the Yawkey Boys & Girls Club help cool neighborhoods, improve air quality, manage stormwater and create safe places for recreation and connection.

The 26,319 square feet of grass on the baseball field and surrounding trees sequester nearly 20,000 pounds of carbon from the air annually in the Roxbury neighborhood. That is comparable to the emissions produced by

driving an average gas-powered vehicle approximately 25,000 miles or the energy used by a typical homeowner over a two-year period.

Since 2008, Project EverGreen's GreenCare for Communities initiative has renovated parks and public green spaces totaling more than 200 million square feet of living green space nationwide.

Project scope highlights:

- The infield was surveyed and reshaped to create a smooth, level playing surface.
- New home plate, pitching rubber and a complete set of bases were installed.
- Clean, consistent edges between the grass and infield were defined for a professional appearance.
- New infield material was added and leveled to improve playability and drainage.
- High-use areas, including the batter's boxes and pitcher's mound, were reinforced for durability.
- The outfield was revitalized through aeration, overseeding and a full-season fertilization plan.

DLF grass varieties chosen for major 2026 soccer tournament venues

As preparations intensified for the 2026 international soccer tournament throughout North America, attention turned beneath the players' cleats to the playing surfaces themselves.

The expanded tournament, running from June 11 to July 19, 2026, features 48 national teams and 104 matches spread across 16 host cities in the United States, Mexico, and Canada. For grounds teams and turf specialists, the scale of the event created unprecedented demands on stadium surfaces, particularly in venues transitioning from artificial turf or adapting to difficult climate conditions.

Among the turfgrass varieties selected for the event are several developed by DLF, which are featuring in the playing surfaces at both Estadio Azteca in Mexico City and BC Place in Vancouver.



At Estadio Azteca, preparations included a historic change in turf strategy. The stadium, situated 7,350 feet (2,240 meters) above sea level, converted to cool-season grass for the first time ahead of the tournament.

While the venue previously relied on kikuyu grass, DLF varieties have regularly been used for overseeding during cooler periods. The newly installed surface now incorporates a full cool-season blend designed specifically for the altitude and climate conditions of Mexico City. The system includes Champion GQ perennial ryegrass blend, composed of SR 4700 (A-LIST), Aspiration, and Tetrasport (4turf), alongside Competition Grade Kentucky bluegrass varieties Sombrero and Granite.

The stadium is scheduled to host five matches during the tournament, including the opening match on June 11.

The transition reflects a broader trend across North America, where venues are adapting turf systems to suit local cli-

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mate conditions and the demands of elite-level soccer in mid-summer conditions.

In Vancouver, meanwhile, one of the tournament's most technically challenging turf projects took shape inside BC Place.

The indoor stadium, previously fitted with permanent artificial turf, installed a natural grass surface using sod grown on plastic by local producer Bos Sod Farms Inc. The installation took place May 9–10, with the sod laid on top of a newly constructed 20 cm sand layer.

The hybrid sod blend was seeded in June 2025 using DLF perennial ryegrass varieties Gator Cinco and SR 4700, before being overseeded with SR 4700 in spring 2026.

For sod producer Bert Bos, the project demanded an unusually precise growing process. “Sod grown on plastic adds a different dimension,” Bos said. “The sod must be spoon-fed because nutrients can leak through perforations in the plastic and lead to uneven growth.”

Bos said the decision to use DLF varieties came down to turf quality and durability.

“I wanted to buy from a local supplier. I was looking for a top NTEP variety for overall quality and high wear tolerance. SR4700 ranked very high and was among the top performers for wear tolerance.”

According to Bos, tournament officials were highly satisfied with the final result at BC Place. “They mentioned that it was as good as it gets, and that BC Place was one of the best installs.”

The 2026 tournament has placed unusual focus on stadium agronomy, with several host venues replacing artificial surfaces with natural grass specifically for the event. Indoor stadiums, retractable roofs, climate-control systems, and regional climate differences have all added complexity to field preparation efforts.

For turf managers, the challenge is not only aesthetic but performance-driven: producing surfaces capable of handling intense match schedules while meeting expectations for ball roll, footing, recovery, and player safety on soccer's biggest stage.

According to DLF, in both Mexico City and Vancouver, the selected turf systems highlight how modern grass breeding and sod technology are increasingly central to elite sport infrastructure.

GMA appoints new CEO

The Grounds Management Association (GMA) in the UK announced the appointment of Jason Booth as its next chief executive officer, following a comprehensive and competitive recruitment process.

Booth brings more than 12 years' experience within GMA, during which he has held a range of senior roles and made a significant contribution to the organization's development. His deep understanding of GMA's work and membership places him in a strong position to lead the organization into its next phase.

As part of a planned and orderly transition, current CEO Geoff Webb will remain in post until March 2027, with Booth formally assuming the role in April 2027. This approach will ensure continuity and stability while supporting a smooth leadership handover.

“We are delighted to appoint Jason as our next CEO,” said Martyn Ward, chair of the board for the GMA. “He brings a wealth of experience, a strong track record of leadership, and a deep understanding of both our organization and the needs of our members. The board is confident he is the right person to lead GMA forward. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Geoff for his continued leadership and his commitment to ensuring a seamless transition.”

Commenting on his appointment, Booth said, “I'm incredibly proud to be stepping into the role of CEO at GMA. Having spent the past 12 years here, this is a very meaningful moment for me. The GMA, our members and the wider grounds management sector is something I care deeply about.

“Over the last decade, I've had the privilege of working with colleagues and getting to know many of our members, and those experiences have shaped how I see the organization and its future,” Booth added. “Supporting our members will continue to be at the heart of everything we do. I look forward to building on our strong foundations and working together to deliver even greater value in the years ahead.”

Said Webb, “It has been a privilege to serve as CEO of the GMA and to work with such a dedicated team and engaged membership. I'm proud of what we've achieved together and confident that, in Jason, the organization has a leader who understands its values, its strengths and its future potential. I look forward to supporting a smooth transition in the months ahead.” **SFM**



2026

JULY 15

MPSFMA DEMO DAY

M Health Fairview Sports Center, Falcon Heights, Minnesota

<https://mpsfma.org/meetinginfo.php>

JULY 23

NEW ENGLAND SFMA DEWOLF MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

Brookmeadow Country Club, Canton, Massachusetts

<https://theturfzone.com/nesfma/?ascat=76&sub=event&pub=10372>

JULY 28

RUTGERS TURFGRASS RESEARCH FIELD DAY – GOLF & FINE TURF

North Brunswick, New Jersey

<https://sfmanj.org/>

JULY 29

RUTGERS TURFGRASS RESEARCH FIELD DAY – LAWN, LANDSCAPE & SPORTS TURF

Freehold, New Jersey

<https://sfmanj.org/>

SEPTEMBER 29-OCTOBER 1

2026 NRPA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

<https://conference.nrpa.org/>

OCTOBER 20-23

EQUIP EXPO

Louisville, Kentucky

<https://www.equipexposition.com/>

NOVEMBER 8-11

ELEVATE (NALP)

Tampa, Florida

<https://www.landscapeprofessionals.org/ELEVATE>

NOVEMBER 8-11

TRANSFORM, THE PGMS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Tampa, Florida

<https://pgms.org/>

NOVEMBER 11-12

SALTEX 2026

Birmingham, UK

www.saltex.org.uk

DECEMBER 1-4

AMERICAN SPORTS BUILDERS ASSOCIATION TECHNICAL MEETING

Tampa, Florida

<https://sportsbuilders.org/page/UpcomingEvents>

DECEMBER 7-10

IRRIGATION SHOW AND EDUCATION WEEK

Las Vegas, Nevada

<https://irrigation.org/IA>

2027

FEBRUARY 1-4

SFMA CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

Tampa, Florida

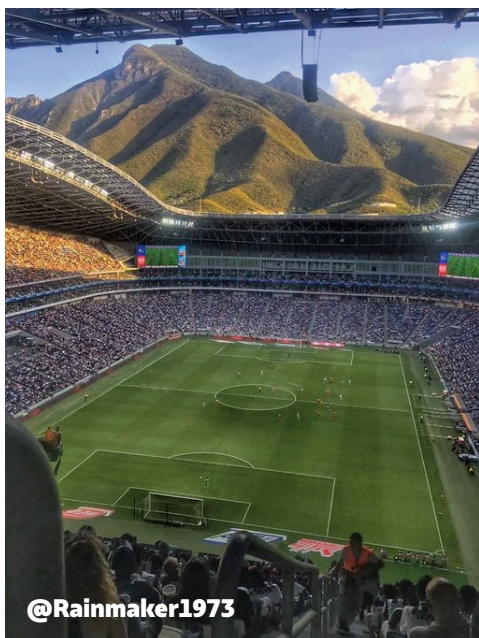
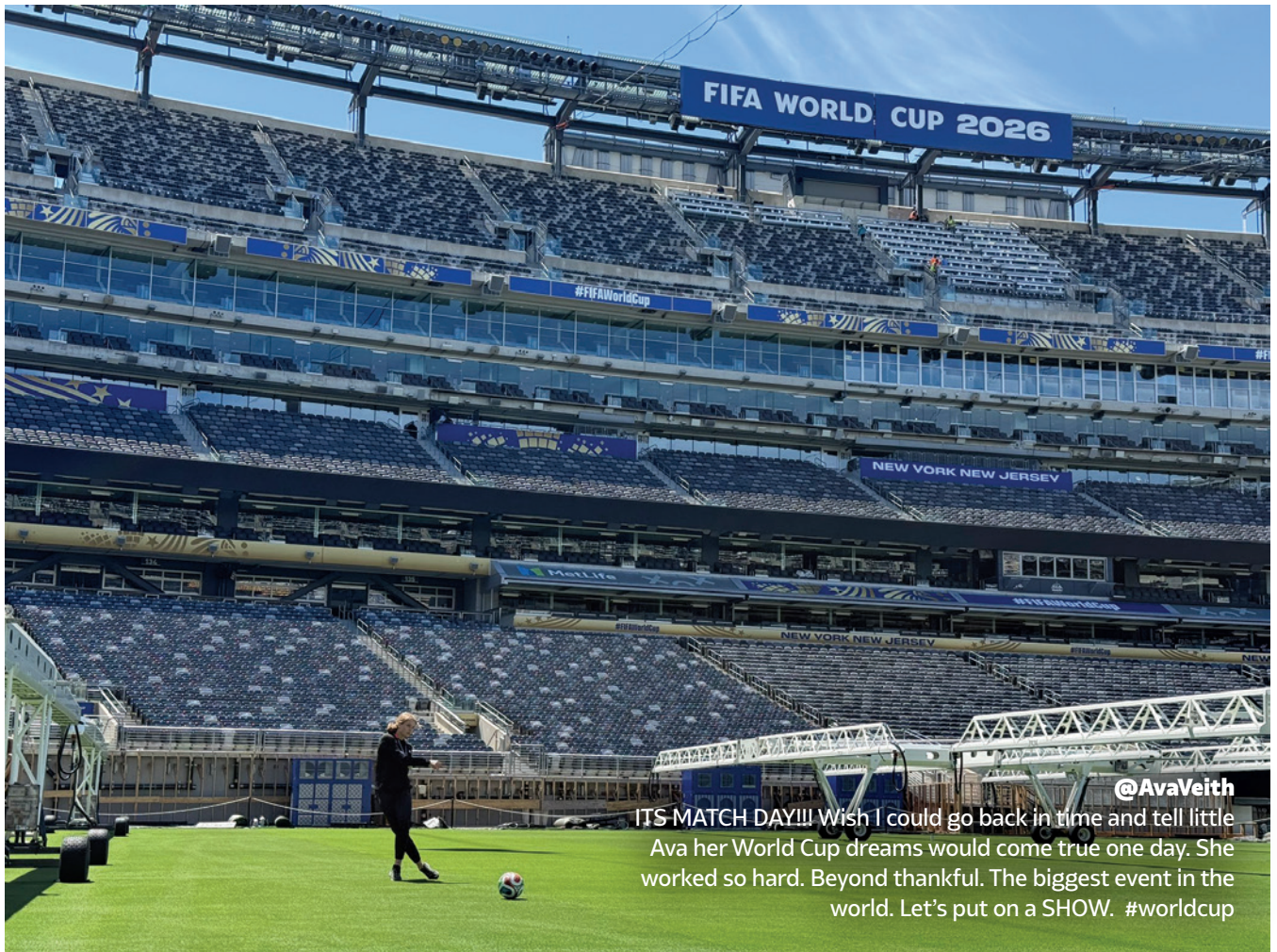
<https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/conference/>

FEBRUARY 15-18

TPI 2027 INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE AND FIELD DAY

Amelia Island, Fernandina Beach, Florida

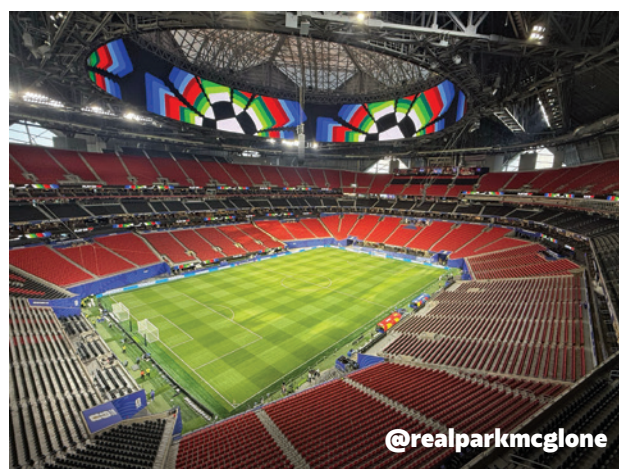
<https://turfgrasssod.org/event/tpi-2027-international-education-conference/> **SFM**





@NE_STMA

The world's spotlight is shining bright on Boston this month. Gratitude to @ryanbjorn, his crew, and NE-SFMA volunteers at Boston Stadium and beyond for demonstrating the excellence, commitment, and professionalism that is sports field management. Well done all!



@ATurfMan

On Monday we will welcome the @BelRedDevils to their home base during World Cup 2026. Can't express enough how proud I am of the effort the crew has put in to get here!







Redexim Sandstorm topdresser

Redexim announced the launch of the Sandstorm, a self-powered topdresser that works without a tractor or hydraulic connection. Simply hitch it to a utility vehicle and spread. It has a 28-cubic-foot capacity and can spread up to 39 feet, so you can cover more ground with fewer refills while staying light on turf.

With its own engine, it operates independently of a tractor or hydraulic system. Just hitch it to a utility vehicle and get to work. The Sandstorm is compatible with a wide range of vehicles, including the Toro Workman, John Deere ProGator and Cushman Truckster XT.

“With many turf managers relying heavily on utility vehicles and not always having immediate access to tractors, the Sandstorm provides a practical and efficient solution that fits into their maintenance programs,” said Jason Jones, Redexim sales manager North America. “The launch of the Sandstorm topdresser is particularly exciting for the North American market because it aligns with the day-to-day operational realities our customers face.”

The Sandstorm’s design keeps weight low while distributing material evenly. Its ribbed belt and hopper shape help prevent build-up, so sand, moist and heavy materials move freely.

The Vision X Pro digital display allows you to control belt speed, spinner speed, driving speed and gate opening from your seat. Save up to 20 profiles for repeatable results across different surfaces and changing conditions.

The Sandstorm has a maximum spreading width of 39 feet and a maximum spreading thickness of 0.6 inch. It weighs 1,687 pounds empty, and has a maximum working speed of 16 mph.

Husqvarna Automower 560 EPOS

Husqvarna is showcasing a new autonomous commercial robotic mower designed for large-scale turf maintenance in municipal and institutional settings.

The new Automower 560 EPOS uses satellite-based technology to create virtual mowing boundaries, eliminating the need for buried perimeter wires. According to the company, the mower is intended for use in parks, schools, universities, office parks and government properties.

According to Husqvarna, the mower can maintain up to 1.5 acres in a 24-hour period and is designed to operate alongside aeration, construction and turf renovation activities without disruption. The unit includes a floating cutting system for dense grass and uneven terrain, along with a pivoting front axle designed to improve traction on slopes up to 50%.

The mower also features integrated radar sensing and compatibility with an optional AI-powered Vision accessory intended to improve object detection and avoidance. Operators can monitor and manage units remotely through Husqvarna Fleet Services.

“With the Automower 560 EPOS, we’re not just introducing a new model we’re advancing the standard for autonomous turf care,” said Gent Simmons, president of Husqvarna Forest and Garden, North America. “This solution reflects where the industry is going delivering smarter, more adaptable, and more sustainable ways to manage large, complex landscapes at scale.”

Additional features include GPS-enabled theft protection, remote start capability, warning lights for operation in public areas and a hose-washable chassis designed to simplify maintenance. **SFM**



SFMA Affiliated Chapters Contact Information

Arizona SFMA: www.azsfma.org

Colorado SFMA: www.csfma.org

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Intermountain Chapter STMA: Dan Farnes
(dan@rafttriversod.com)

Iowa SFMA: www.iowastma.org

Kentucky Sports Field Management Association:
www.kysfma.org

Keystone Athletic Field Managers Org.
(KAFMO): www.kafmo.org

Mid-Atlantic SFMA: www.masfma.org

Michigan SFMA: www.misfma.org

Minnesota Park and Sports Field Management
Association: www.mpsfma.org

Mo-Kan STMA: <https://mokansfma.org/>

Nebraska SFMA:
<https://nebraskaturfgrass.com/about-nesfma>

New England STMA: www.nestma.org

North Carolina SFMA: <https://ncsfma.org/>

Northern California SFMA: www.norcalstma.org

Ohio Turfgrass Foundation: www.ohioturfgrass.org

Oklahoma STMA: oksfmasecretary@gmail.com

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Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey:
www.sfmanj.org

Southern California SFMA: www.socalsfma.com

South Carolina SFMA: www.scsfma.org

Tennessee Valley SFMA: www.tvstma.org

Texas SFMA: www.txstma.org

Virginia SFMA: www.vsfma.org

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Drought Monitoring

Q: As you know, all of North Carolina is suffering in this drought. Do you have any management advice to help us get through this period?

A: In North Carolina, we have been in some level of drought since late winter. I cannot remember any time in the last 20 years that we entered a drought so early in the year. By June, the entire land area along the eastern coast from Florida to Virginia was in a drought. With rapidly receding lake levels, some North Carolina towns have implemented irrigation restrictions to conserve water, and I anticipate that number will continue to climb this summer.

When it comes to drought tolerance, bermudagrass is amazing grass. Without adequate water from either rainfall or irrigation, it will roll its leaf blades to conserve moisture and send its roots deeper into the soil to find water. During an extended drought, leaf tissue may die and drop from the plant, although the grass will generally recuperate from its stolons and rhizomes once it receives adequate water.

Less frequent, longer irrigations throughout the year will assist in establishing a deeper, more viable root system. The deeper the root system, the greater the volume of soil from which the plant can pull water during a dry-down. Apply enough water to wet the soil in the rootzone and then don't water again until about 30% of the turf shows signs of wilt.

Check your irrigation system frequently to ensure it applies water uniformly and is in good working order. Poor design or installation, broken heads, and busted valves can all contribute to an inefficient system. While checking your system, determine how long the zones must run to put out half an inch of water. This will come in handy when setting your watering times throughout the year. If you have dry spots, you may want to apply a commercial wetting agent to those locations so the soil absorbs water uniformly.

In the absence of rainfall and irrigation, fields will become firmer, show more signs of wear, and have a reduced ability to recover from use. Once a drought hits, use the highest mowing height possible. If a field cannot be irrigated, mow as infrequently as possible and as high as possible. If a field is super dry, most people won't even notice a 2-inch mowing height. Furthermore, if your fields are crispy, it is not the best time to apply fertilizer or spray for weeds. Delay as many trips across the field as possible.

Be a good citizen and follow mandated water restrictions; you do not want the wrath of an angry, concerned citizen because you broke the rules. If irrigation is allowed, water late at night or early in the morning to maximize efficiency and minimize evaporation. Run the system long enough to moisten the upper six to eight inches of soil; roughly an inch of water for a loamy soil.

Recuperation from wear and damage will be dramatically slower than when adequate water is available. This is a good justification to limit the use of the field. If this is not possible, at least keep the decision-makers informed of the damage that may result from excessive use. This is also a good time to draft a contingency plan for your facility. From reduced use to total closure, consider both the long-term damage that can be done to your field and the safety of the user groups.

At this point, there is only so much you can do. Without adequate water, no amount of fertilization, wetting agents or soil amendments will do much good. **SFM**



Grady Miller, Ph.D.

Professor and Extension Turf Specialist
North Carolina State University

Questions?

Send them to Grady Miller at North Carolina State University, Box 7620, Raleigh, NC 27695 or e-mail grady_miller@ncsu.edu

2027 SFMA Conference

February 1-4, 2027

The 2027 Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) Conference and Exhibition will be held in Tampa, Florida.

SportsField Management magazine will once again be podcasting live from the conference, and will also present the 2026 *SportsField Management* Rising Star Award winners during the event. The January 2027 issue of *SportsField Management* will be the show directory distributed at the event.

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