



THE NEWSLETTER

August 2016

of the **Golf Course Superintendents Association of New England, Inc.**

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Drought Conditions Impact Golf Courses throughout Massachusetts; Superintendents Faced with Managing Dwindling Water Supplies and Usage Restrictions, With Little or No Relief in Sight

This story was originally published on August 5th by the Massachusetts Golf Association

Norton, MA — While the dry and warm weather pattern so far this season has been conducive to playing golf and many outdoor activities, the extended lack of rainfall is posing challenges for golf facilities and golf course superintendents throughout the State.

Don Hearn, Executive Director of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of New England (GCSANE) has been working directly with superintendents across the state to determine and help manage the impact of these drought conditions.

“Some have said it is the worst dry spell they’ve experienced,” said Hearn. “There are clubs that have ample water supply, but an inadequate system for delivery, while others have good delivery systems but are forced to reduce irrigation because their supply has been reduced.”

Don D’Errico, Golf Course Superintendent at Spring Valley Country Club, and member of the Board of Directors of GCSANE offered his perspective. “Many members at our club have commented that they have never seen the ponds so low on the golf course. They have also expressed their concerns with the lack of available water to maintain the turf.”

The USGA’s Green Section and its experts in turf management are closely monitoring the situation both in New England and throughout the entire Northeast region.

“As water supplies are depleted, any issues with water quality can be magnified” cautioned **Jim Skorulski**, Northeast Region Senior Agronomist with the USGA.

Businesses across the region – including golf course facilities – received notice from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection that a Drought Watch for the Central and Northeast Regions and Drought Advisory for the Connecticut River Valley and Southeast Regions had been declared.



Drought conditions and high heat are impacting golf courses across New England.



The reason for the declaration was in part due to the fact that “as of June 30, 2016 precipitation, streamflow, and groundwater elevations were below normal throughout most areas of Massachusetts.”

Golf facilities that are permitted by the DEP are required to implement a Drought Management Plan that restrict water usage beyond what they are allowed to use under normal conditions. Facilities that are registered with DEP are currently not required to restrict water usage.

“We encourage all golf courses to take appropriate measures to conserve water,” said **Duane LeVangie**, Water Management Act Program Chief for the DEP. “We also encourage golf facilities to review their existing permits or registrations and drought plans and to contact our office should there be any question as to how the current conditions may apply to their facility.”

LeVangie also noted that, “it will likely take a significant amount of rain over a period of time to affect the current Watch and Advisory condition.”

The DEP Drought Advisory Task Force will meet next on August 11th to re-assess conditions statewide and consider possible adjustments to the current drought levels.

Information produced by the DEP shows that over 140 public water suppliers in the state have imposed water use restrictions as of August 1st. Those restrictions in many systems have banned automatic irrigation systems entirely or have limited their use to 1 day per week.

Golf course superintendents statewide are managing water restrictions; either as imposed by the DEP or as their local groundwater and surface water supplies dictate.

“We ask for the cooperation and patience from golfers as the drought conditions continue,” said Skorulski. “Golfers who adhere to cart traffic rules developed by their superintendent will signifi-

(Continued)

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Drought Conditions (cont)

cantly reduce the injury to drought stressed fairways and primary rough areas.”

As the drought continues, golfers can expect course conditions to reflect the seasonal color variation that are common in the summer and magnified this year with the lack of rainfall.

While turf that is brown may appear to be dead, it is actually temporarily dormant and the result of a naturally occurring survival response by the plant. Color aside, the playing conditions offered by dry or dormant turf can offer a unique and appealing element to the game as topography, bounce and roll are of greater influence on shot making.

D'Errico noted that his members have been able to benefit from the changing conditions of his Sharon layout. “There have been literally no complaints regarding the appearance of the course with all of the browning and thinning turf throughout the property and they have actually commented on how fun, interesting and enjoyable the course is to play with the variety of different shot-making options available,” said D'Errico. “I feel that a serious dry spell gives golf course superintendents a fantastic opportunity to prepare a golf course in an environmentally responsible manner, all the while providing the best playing surfaces to their customers.”

Skorulski concurs that while this is a stressful time for turf and superintendents, there is a silver lining for golfers. “The drought offers a unique opportunity to manage golf courses with less water and for golfers to play firm fairway surfaces,” said Skorulski. “Enjoy the extra ball roll and remain patient while hoping normal precipitation patterns return soon.”

Additional Resources:

Golf Course Superintendents Association of New England

Contact: donhearn@gcsane.org

Golf Course Superintendents of America

USGA Green Section

Contact: jskorulski@usga.org

USGA Green Section Water Resource Site

Massachusetts DEP Water Management Act Program

Contact: duane.levangie@state.ma.us

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PYTHFUL or BLISSFUL?



Thoughts From Your Executive Director by Don Hearn

Something I've thought about for a while is how so many staff members at our clubs and courses could use an upgrade of their wardrobe. Don't misunderstand what I just wrote. I know very well the majority of our people are hardworking, dedicated and knowledgeable in their jobs and are not shopping in a dumpster, but some do not dress in a way that exudes professionalism and an attitude of caring about what they're doing.

We've all heard the cliché "Do not judge a book by its cover", "Clothes don't make the person", and other such sayings. That's the way the world should work, but not how I believe the world does work. Try as I do to not make a judgement based on how someone looks or dresses, it's a difficult bar for me to reach. Unfortunately, I don't believe I'm out of the mainstream. Because of this I would like to strongly suggest you take a look at how your staff are dressed, then look around the property to see how people in other departments are dressed. In some cases, you'll see golf shop staff in matching colors. Other times you'll see them in the same type of garb, but the colors are at the option of the wearer. The kitchen staff are usually dressed in matching tops and pants. Many times bartenders are wearing a golf shirt with the club's logo or a shirt and tie. The tennis staff are usually in white shorts and polo shirt. Those at the pool usually have a logoed tee or polo shirt and matching trunks.

When you see staff photos of those working at major tournaments, invariably they are in matching pants and shirts. This makes the group look professional and creates an air of a well-disciplined team maintaining the property. If you took a group photo of your team, would you be proud to post it in the clubhouse or locker rooms at your club or course? Or would you rather not? If you wouldn't be proud of how your team would look, maybe it's time to make a change.

I realize most of our staff are doing jobs that require getting dirty. Some jobs are real dirty, such as working in a trench to repair an irrigation break, installing sod, drainage work and many other on-course activities.

I know it's not an easy task to set aside money for staff uniforms since the expense to provide clothing head-to-toe for all can be substantial. Why not start by purchasing logoed tee shirts for short-term or "summer" employees? If money is tight, add more each year like shorts or pants in year two. Sweatshirts the next year, and so on. I believe full-time staff should be dressed in club-supplied shirts, pants and shorts, jackets – lightweight and winter weight, sweatshirts, rain suits, caps. All should be logoed.

Since I'm no longer a practicing superintendent, I've taken special note of the course conditions that other superintendents provide on a daily basis. I admire the beauty of courses more now than ever. I appreciate and understand how hard it is to provide the wonderful conditions so many golfers enjoy. I also shake my head when I hear golfers complain about the unranked bunkers; the unfilled fairway

divots; the slow, grainy, or "untrue" greens; the lack of yardage markers; the slow pace of play; the brown turf, particularly this year, that requires a movement of the ball to a "fair" lie; and other piddling impediments to a good round of golf. What's most bothersome is how little so many know as to what it takes to produce these beautiful pieces of land called golf courses.

Last year I had a discussion with an active, thirty-year club member who had no idea clubs employed equipment managers or technicians. He had no idea of the different types of mowers needed to mow the different areas of the course. He thought "The course just got mowed." He was shocked when I explained how the beautiful course at which he is a member was prepared for play each day. I've since had discussions about the details of what it takes to prepare for the position of superintendent, the staffing needed, the day-to-day requirements of "getting the job done." I know he's "all ears" when I fill in these details of what it takes to handle the challenges of a golf course superintendent.

To all of you – you have my deepest respect and admiration.

N.E.S.S.



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Summer Irrigation Update & Maintenance Checklist *by Tom Hoffer*

The summer of 2016 will be remembered as one of the driest and warmest on record. Due to the lack of rain and warm temps, everyone's irrigation system has been tested to the limit, and sometimes beyond! Here are a few maintenance tips to help you get through the rest of the summer and have a successful 2017 irrigation season.

1. Perform an irrigation system audit. This dry weather has exposed the weaknesses of many of the irrigation systems in the ground and may help justify the purchase of an audit kit. They are fairly inexpensive and will give you hard data to show your owner/board how efficient, or inefficient, your irrigation system is. You can also contact an irrigation consultant to perform a distribution audit for you.



2. Whether you perform an audit or not, it's important to check the rotation of all rotors and ensure proper nozzle discharge. This is the year when any and all irrigation inefficiencies show up. A rotor not turning and clogged or incorrect nozzles will immediately show up as brown turf. Simply cleaning the pebbles from a clogged nozzle or inserting the proper nozzle to increase or decrease throw to the next rotor will significantly improve water coverage and distribution.
3. Improper rotor spacing is also a prime culprit in irrigation inefficiencies. This can be much harder to address, but should be reviewed if irrigation performance is sub-par.



4. Clean all satellites and inspect all internal components for mice, ants, and spiders/cobwebs. Mice love to chew on wires and cables and ants find face plates to be very accommodating living quarters this time of year. Keeping your satellites free of these pests and their nests will increase the life span of your satellite components.



5. Check the grounding of your central and field components. This summer has been the worst I've seen as far as lightning damage. The lack of rainfall, and resulting moisture deficit in the soil, has severely diminished many grounding networks' effectiveness. But the best time to check grounding is during dry periods, so take advantage of this weather pattern. A best practice would be to check a subset of your ground points each year on a rotating basis. At a minimum, check your central grounding, and ensure that it falls within manufacturer specifications, typically 10 ohms or less. If your resistance is higher than the manufacturer's recommendation, then your system will see reduced protection from electrical surges.
6. Finally, test communication to field components on a regular basis. Make sure you are continually testing communication to all satellites, decoders, rotors, valves, etc. on a regular basis.

Tom Hoffer is the Irrigation Service Manager at Northeast Golf & Turf Supply.



Table Manners Tips By Don Hearn

The following twenty tips are some pretty good methods to use to keep up with accepted ways to handle yourself in various settings while sitting at a table. As you'll see, there are links throughout if you care to dive in for more about various related subjects. I'll have more tips in future columns.

TIP #1: Make Good Use of Your Napkin. Place your [napkin](#) in your lap immediately upon sitting down. Unfold it while it is in your lap.

TIP #2: Utensil Etiquette. In most situations, use the "outside-in" rule to tell which knife, fork, or spoon to use at the dinner table. Use utensils on the outside first and work your way in with each new course.

TIP #3: Removing Unwanted Food from your Mouth. Food is removed from the mouth in the manner in which it is put into the mouth. Food put into the mouth with a utensil is removed with a utensil. When fingers are used to eat food, the pit or bone is removed with fingers.

TIP #4: Excusing Yourself. Simply say "excuse me, please; I'll be right back" when leaving for the restroom. Leaving without a word is rude.

TIP #5: Cutting Food. Cut your food into only one or two bite-sized pieces at a time. I've also seen where this has been suggested to cut your food into three pieces at a time.

TIP #6: Electronic Devices. Turn off or silence all electronic devices before entering the restaurant. If you forgot to turn off your cell phone, and it rings, immediately turn it off. Do not answer the call. Do not text and do not browse the Internet at the table.

TIP #7: Seasoning Food. When at a dinner party or restaurant, proper table manners dictate that you taste your food before seasoning it.

TIP #8: Speaking While Eating. If you have more than a few words to say, swallow your food, [rest your fork on your plate](#), and speak before you resume eating.

TIP #9: Reaching. Items are within reach if they are within easy reach of your arm when you're leaning only slightly forward. Don't lean past the person sitting next to you (read more about [passing etiquette](#)).

TIP #10: Don't Drink with a Full Mouth. To avoid leaving food on the rim of the vessel, make sure the mouth is free of food and blot the lips with a napkin before taking a sip of a beverage.

TIP #11: Holding a Wineglass. White [wine](#) glasses are held by the stem, not the bowl. Red wine glasses may be held by the bowl.

TIP #12: Unfamiliar Food. (1) Wait until someone else starts to eat and follow suit. (2) Ask how the food should be eaten (fingers or fork, for example). (3) Avoid the food altogether.

TIP #13: Eating Quietly. Scraping a plate or loudly chewing is unpleasant to listen to and considered impolite. Smacking and slurping food are major mistakes and a sign of bad table manners.

TIP #14: Wayward Food. In formal dining the knife is used to push food against the fork. At informal meals, a knife or a piece of bread is used as a pusher, for example, to push salad onto a fork.

TIP #15: Elbows. The "no elbows on the table" rule applies only when you are actually eating. When no utensils are being used, putting your elbows on the table is acceptable.

TIP #16: Ordering Wine at the Right Price. Start by selecting a wine in the category you are interested in and find a wine at the price point you are comfortable with. Show the sommelier your selection and ask for his opinion, but place your finger on the price, rather than the name.

TIP #17: Something Caught in your Teeth. When food is caught between the teeth that is annoying or uncomfortable, wait to remove it privately.

TIP #18: Declined Credit Card. Do not call attention to the situation. If your card continues to be declined, and you do not have enough cash to pay, ask to pay by check, visit the nearest ATM, or return the next day with cash. If the restaurant declines these suggestions, you have no option but to return to the table and throw yourself on the mercy of your companions. Repay their kindness within 24 hours, repaying them in cash.

TIP #19: Approaching the Table in a Restaurant. When being seated, if the maitre d' leads the group to the table, the guests should follow the maitre d' and the host should follow the guests. If the maitre d' does not lead the group, the host should lead.

TIP #20: Sneezing, Coughing, Blowing your Nose. When sneezing or coughing at the table is unavoidable, cover your nose or mouth with a napkin and proceed as quietly as possible. Except in an emergency, don't use a napkin to blow your nose. Leave the table and use a handkerchief instead.

What might you expect? *by Brian Vinchesi*

This column first appeared in the July 2016 issue of Golf Course Industry Magazine

Are you like many other golf courses at the moment, finally getting to the point with your membership/board that a new or upgraded irrigation system is a possibility or necessity? The number of new irrigation systems being installed on existing courses is certainly on the rise. Since the economy tanked in 2008 and the golf business was hit hard, many courses put off making any course improvements, including new irrigation systems. Now in 2016, this pent up demand is quickly resulting in new irrigation systems. If your course is thinking about a new irrigation system, you need to start your planning now. Plotting three to four years ahead is not too soon to start and not uncommon. A shortage of qualified golf course irrigation installation contractors available to install your new system may occur as quickly as next year. More golf irrigation work will add new golf irrigation contractors to the market, but that is not necessarily a good thing as the contractor is the most essential part of any irrigation system installation and they come from experience.

If you're about to start an irrigation system project, here are some things you need to think about so that your designer can give you what you want. For piping: PVC, HDPE or a combination of the two? Today's systems can be all PVC, all HDPE or PVC mainlines with HDPE laterals so there are no solvent weld cemented joints.

Probably the biggest decision in today's irrigation system is field

controllers versus decoder/2-wire. The systems are quite different and you need to make your decision based on which of the two meets your management style and provides a comfort level in terms of reliability and functionality. Today you can mix them a bit – you can install remote interfaces on the golf course to connect the wire paths to, which reduces the amount of wire needed from the maintenance facility. You then radio from the central computer to the remote interfaces.

For years, greens were full-circle sprinklers, then in order to keep the greens drier designs were full circles with part-circle sprinklers out for the surrounds. This morphed into parts in and parts out so greens could be watered completely separate from the surrounds. Now, there is a trend back to full circle on the greens and part circles out for the surrounds. Your choice will be somewhat dependent on how you're treating the approach, as full circles at the front of the greens may not be possible. You also need to decide if you want your bunker faces irrigated.

Consider installing equipment that provides information that helps you make smarter decisions when it comes to irrigating more efficiently and saving water. Weather stations seem to have outlived their usefulness given the availability of weather apps. Portable and dedicated soil moisture sensors provide more timely and accurate data that can be reacted to more quickly. These sensors also can

(Continued)

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What Might You Expect? (CONTINUED)

graph trends and when programmed correctly provide alarms to bring problems to your attention. Tipping bucket rain gauges spread throughout the golf course can provide local area (several holes) rain measurements that can then adjust your irrigation schedule based on the amount of rain that fell for specified areas of the golf course.

Take a good look at your hand watering needs. For many years, pump stations have been a small pressure maintenance pump and two or three main pumps depending on the required flow; all the same horsepower. Now consider a pressure maintenance pump, the main pumps and a jockey pump sized just for hand watering and any other constant demands such as green cooling systems or waterfalls on its own VFD drive. Avoid purchasing a pump station that requires a main pump to operate for low flows such as hand watering.

With a proposed new system you need to budget, budget, and budget. Make sure your budget includes all the potential components of your irrigation system project. This includes rock excavation, design fees, permitting, lightning protection systems, renovation costs, paving repair, boring costs, electrical updates and extended warranties or service contracts. If you're a few years off, build in an escalation cost per year for price increases.

Today's systems are getting more expensive each year, but money spent now will pay for itself over many years in terms of water and energy savings. Unfortunately, as more courses are looking to install irrigation systems, the cost of labor is on the rise, so the sooner you can get an idea of your project schedule, the better off you are. A system that is to be installed in the fall of any given year should be bid out in January or February of that year to secure a place on a good irrigation contractor's schedule.

Brian Vinchesi, the 2015 Irrigation Association Industry Achievement Award winner, is President of Irrigation Consulting, Inc., a golf course irrigation design and consulting firm with offices in Pepperell, Massachusetts and Huntersville, North Carolina that designs golf course irrigation systems throughout the world. He can be reached at bvinchesi@irrigationconsulting.com or 978-433-8972 or followed on twitter @bvinchesi.

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Our condolences to Dave Clement and his family on the recent passing of his wife Shirley.

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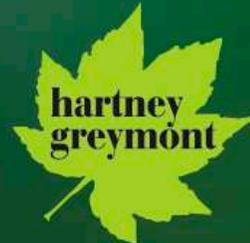
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