

agronomic aspects of the visit, the preparation of a detailed written report, as well as *all* related expenses such as transportation, food, and lodging. (Often, similar consulting services charge a basic fee plus all expenses incurred on a visit.) Second, the direct costs for the salaries, travel, and expenses of the agronomists, when combined with the other costs of TAS like

maintenance of the corresponding regional offices, represents a total yearly TAS cost to the USGA of approximately \$2.5 million. TAS revenues annually run in the \$1.6 million range. Thus, the USGA provides a regular TAS subsidy in the neighborhood of almost \$1 million. The point is not to bore you with USGA accounting procedures or belabor the USGA's finan-

cial commitment to the program, but to highlight TAS's relative economic value to subscribing courses.

This analysis, hopefully, provides some worthwhile historical perspective about the costs of golf course maintenance and the Turf Advisory Service. These numbers bear testimony that TAS represents a wise and cost-effective investment for your golf course to make.

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

Staying on Course

Think and work long-term to achieve sustainable success.

by JOHN H. FOY

A COMMONLY USED buzzword today is "sustainable." It is used in conjunction with various practices or principles such as development, agriculture, and resource management. In this context, sustainable could be defined simply as a pattern of activity that can be supported indefinitely. Given the opportunity and adequate time, golf course superintendents can apply the principles of sustainable resource management and help ensure that future generations continue to enjoy the game and the diverse collection of flora and fauna that inhabit our courses.

It should be obvious that consistent leadership and adherence to sound programs are vital ingredients in achieving a sustainable system. Especially in the management of a golf course, several months or even years can be required for the full impact and desired results of changes in management to be realized. Quick fixes seldom result in permanent improvements.

During the summer and fall of 1995, we experienced quite a few weather extremes. A prolonged period of high daytime and nighttime temperatures, along with severe drought, caused widespread turf loss at facilities in the northern portion of the country. In Florida, tropical storm/hurricane activity exceeded all previous records. During July, August, and September, more than 50 inches of rainfall was recorded in most areas of South Florida. The average *annual* rainfall for West Palm Beach, Florida, is 62 inches.

As one would imagine, producing and maintaining healthy turf growth and good quality course conditioning was difficult. With the return of the winter-season golfers to courses that have had problems, rumors of superintendent changes, naturally, circulate.

The South Florida area has long been notorious for "musical chairs" in regard to superintendent jobs. Along with a volatile political scene and excessively high demands for perfect course conditioning, fast growth in the number of courses over the years has resulted in high numbers of job changes. During the ten years that I have worked in Florida, tenure of three years or less seems to be the norm for many superintendents. Today, while new course construction has slowed, budget-cutting at some facilities has resulted in superintendents losing their jobs to help *save* money. A flooded applicant market has not helped matters, either. Unfortunately, other Green Section agronomists across the country are reporting that this lack of tenure for superintendents is not unique to South Florida.

Although a much shorter job tenure seems to be a trend in businesses today, in my opinion, this is a very bad situation for the turfgrass/golf management industry. With regular changes in course superintendents, the likelihood of achieving long-term success is greatly diminished. Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which is an important aspect of sustainable resource management, can serve to illustrate my point.

Monitoring is one of the primary components of an IPM program. In addition to establishing pest threshold levels and scouting a site for pest activity, the tracking of environmental conditions is necessary to determine when and where control measures should be implemented. The effectiveness of control measures also should be evaluated as part of the monitoring process. The accumulation of only two or three years of data is not sufficient to evaluate pest and environmental patterns at a site. Further, most superintendents agree that it takes at least a couple of years to develop a good understanding of the various characteristics of a course.

Far too often today, the *quick fix* solution of changing superintendents is the response to a temporary problem, even in cases that are weather-related and out of the hands of the golf course superintendent. Particularly given the current environmental concerns about golf courses, we must be more far-sighted in management decisions. For successful sustainable resource management, *staying on course* is essential. This is as true of a superintendent's tenure as it is with that of the course leadership and overall club management.

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