

# Best Management Practices for Ohio Golf Courses



# BMP Best Management Practices

## Best Management Practices Planning Guide & Template



*In partnership with the PGA TOUR*

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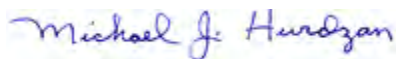
## Foreword

As a lifelong golfer and golf course architect, I have taken personal and professional interest in environmental matters on the golf course that began when I was a turf student and was required to read the book *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson. Throughout my architectural career, I focused on long-term sustainable programs with each course I was involved in and creating environmentally sustainable areas to live and recreate. It is with great pride and enthusiasm I endorse this monumental work of the Ohio chapters of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America to formalize *Best Management Practices for Ohio Golf Courses*.

This manual is a culmination of efforts between industry, state agencies and academia in Ohio. Input from golf course superintendents, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Department of Agriculture and The Ohio State University's turfgrass scientists and researchers, provided the content for this ground breaking document. The BMP's will provide Ohio golf courses guidelines to become more sustainable and resource conserving.

Intuitively it makes sense that the Ohio Golf Course Superintendents should take the leadership role in this massive effort, for they have dedicated their life and career to working cooperatively with the environment and focusing on long term sustainability. I applaud their initiative and I am honored to provide this endorsement of this extraordinary and selfless effort.

Sincerely,



Michael Hurdzan, Ph.D.

## Acknowledgement



## Who We Are/ Acknowledgments

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### Golf Course Superintendents Association of America

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) is the professional association for the men and women who manage and maintain the game's most valuable resource — the golf course. Today, GCSAA and its members are recognized by the golf industry as one of the key contributors in elevating the game and business to its current state.

Since 1926, GCSAA has been the top professional association for the men and women who manage golf courses in the United States and worldwide. From its headquarters in Lawrence, Kansas, the association provides education, information and representation to more than 17,000 members in more than 72 countries. GCSAA's mission is to serve its members, advance their profession and enhance the enjoyment, growth and vitality of the game of golf.

### Environmental Institute for Golf

The Environmental Institute for Golf (EIFG) fosters sustainability by providing funding for research grants, education programs, scholarships and awareness of golf's environmental efforts. Founded in 1955 as the GCSAA Scholarship & Research Fund for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, the EIFG serves as the association's philanthropic organization. The EIFG relies on the support of many individuals and organizations to fund programs to advance stewardship on golf courses in the areas of research, scholarships, education, and advocacy. The results from these activities, conducted by GCSAA, are used to position golf courses as properly managed landscapes that contribute to the greater good of their communities. Supporters of the EIFG know they are fostering programs and initiatives that will benefit the game and its environment for years to come.

### United States Golf Association

The United States Golf Association (USGA) provides governance for the game of golf, conducts the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open as well as 10 national amateur championships, two state team championships and international matches, and celebrates the history of the game of golf. The USGA establishes

equipment standards, administers the Rules of Golf and Rules of Amateur Status, maintains the USGA Handicap System and Course Rating System, and is one of the world's foremost authorities on research, development and support of sustainable golf course management practices.

## Acknowledgments

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## **Additional Acknowledgement**

The development of the *Best Management Practices for Ohio Golf Courses* was made possible by superintendents in the state of Ohio, the Central Ohio Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Greater Cincinnati Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Miami Valley Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Northern Ohio Golf Course Superintendents Association and the Northwest Ohio Golf Course Superintendents Association.

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Additional thanks go to the turfgrass scientists and researchers at The Ohio State University for donating their time and expertise in preparing this document.

Thank you to Ohio's state regulatory agencies for reviewing the draft version of this document and providing comments.

Finally, thank you to Mark Jordan, CGCS and Dr. Michael Hurdzan. Both gentlemen were a great source of guidance and inspiration in preparation of this document.

## Acronyms

<i>BT</i>	<i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i>
BMAP	Basin Management Action Plan
BMP	Best Management Practice
Bo	boron
C	carbon
Ca	calcium
COGCSA	Central Ohio Golf Course Superintendents Association of America
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
CHEMTREC	Chemical Transportation Emergency Center
Cl	chlorine
CMC	chemical mixing center
Cu	copper
CWA	Clean Water Act
DCIA	directly connected impervious area
DO	dissolved oxygen
ECe	electrical conductivity saturated paste method/unit
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESP	exchangeable sodium percentage
ET	evapotranspiration
Fe	iron
FRAC	Fungicide Resistance Action Committee
FWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Services
GCSAA	Golf Course Superintendents Association of America
GCGCSA	Greater Cincinnati Golf Course Superintendents Association of America
H	hydrogen
HRAC	Herbicide Resistance Action Committee
IPM	integrated pest management
IRAC	Insecticide Resistance Action Committee
K	potassium
LED	light emitting diodes
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
Mg	magnesium
MVGCSA	Miami Valley Golf Course Superintendents Association of America
Mn	manganese
Mo	molybdenum
N	nitrogen
NEMA	National Electrical Manufacturers Association
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NWOGCSA	Northern Ohio Golf Course Superintendents Association of America
OEPA	Ohio Environmental Protection Agency

ODA	Ohio Department of Agriculture
ODNR	Ohio Department of Natural Resources
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
OSU	The Ohio State University
O	oxygen
P	phosphorus
PPE	personal protective equipment
PM	preventative maintenance
PPM	parts per million
QA/QC	quality assurance/quality control
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
RUPs	restricted-use pesticides
S	SULFUR
SAR	sodium absorption ratio
SARA	Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act
SDS	safety data sheets
TDS	total dissolved solids
TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load
TVA	Tennessee Valley Authority
USACOE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USGA	United States Golf Association
VFD	variable frequency drive
VOC	volatile organic compounds
WQC	Water Quality Certification
Zn	zinc



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## Introduction



## Introduction

Golf courses are typically about 96% recreational open spaces of grasslands, woods or water bodies. These lands are functionally excellent at harvesting and storing water that falls on them, eliminating or reducing erosion, sequestering carbon and nitrogen, and improving the chemical and physical properties of soils. These spaces are also biologically diverse habitats for plants and animals ranging from large native species to soil microorganisms.

Further, these parcels of Mother Earth are carefully managed by individuals who, by the nature of their career choice, care about and understand natural life systems and the environment. Their training includes biological sciences, chemistry, horticulture, soils, environmental sciences, and many related disciplines, uniquely qualifying them for their duties. Their professional organization offers an optional certification program and a wide variety of continuing education courses for recertification and professional improvement. Golf course superintendents are excellent resource and environmental managers.



It is precisely for these reasons that the Ohio Chapters of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America has undertaken the arduous task of preparing this template for suggested Best Management Practices (BMP). This is an information-rich document intended to allow a committee of industry and government interests, working together, to craft BMP guidelines that are tailored to and make sense for their state or local area. These guidelines are not meant to become rules, ordinances or laws, but are rather informational materials to assist developing policies for resource conservation.

Not all golf courses can retrofit their facilities to meet all of the BMP suggested. The intent, therefore, should be to establish a performance baseline for each course, and then measure future performance or progress against that individual baseline. The very diversity of golf course sites means each one is a unique blend of soils, microclimate, vegetative types, construction methods and materials, irrigation water quality and quantity, maintenance budgets, and intended purpose. No two golf courses are alike, so no comprehensive, one-size-fits-all series of BMP are necessarily applicable.

Golf courses, for the most part, are self-sustaining businesses paid for by user groups. Therefore, not all courses have the same resources of manpower, money or materials to work with to achieve a market competitive product. This is a major reason why golf courses are closing at a far greater rate than new ones are being built. To further burden an economically stressed golf facility is not the intent of these BMP; it is quite the opposite. Carefully adopted BMP can potentially improve the financial sustainability of the golf course, as well as the environmental sustainability. This is why industry and government interests must cooperatively and intelligently select which BMP will achieve the greatest benefit for everyone.

Although prepared by the Golf Course Superintendents, these BMP should not be intended exclusively for golf courses. They can be universally applied to parks, athletic fields, lawns and gardens, government facilities, or any other plant-based area. In fact, even though golf courses make up only a small percentage of the total lawn and grassy areas in the nation, they can set the standard for quality care by their example. Golf courses should be seen as leaders for recommending these proven Best Management Practices.

Michael J. Hurdzan, Ph.D.

## **What are BMPs**

BMPs are methods or techniques found to be the most effective and practical means of achieving an objective, such as preventing water quality impacts or reducing pesticide usage. Due to many efforts aimed to reduce water usage, protect water quality and enhance the surrounding environment, much of this document focuses on water quality. Additional priority topics of the document relate to pesticide and nutrient use, as well as cultural practices and energy conservation. Furthermore, the importance of pollinator protection is also addressed and discusses practices which will aid in pollinator health and pollinator habitat expansion.

## Using this Document

The *Best Management Practices for Ohio Golf Courses* document was created utilizing the newest science-based information and data. At the time of publication, the information included in this document was the latest available. Some sources and regulations are updated and may change periodically; the reader should make every effort to identify the latest change. This document will be amended regularly as sources and regulations are updated.

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# Planning, Design and Construction

## *Preface*



The construction phase of any industry's infrastructure poses the greatest risk of ecosystem alteration. With proper planning and design, golf facilities can be constructed and maintained with minimal impact to existing wildlife and their habitat. Furthermore, facilities should be designed and constructed to maximize energy efficiency.

## *Regulatory Issues*

Local and state regulations may be in place in your location. Early engagement among developers, designers, local community groups, and permitting agencies is essential to designing and constructing a golf facility that minimizes environmental impact and meets the approval process.

## *Planning*

### **Principles**

Proper planning will minimize expenses resulting from unforeseen construction requirements. Good planning provides opportunities to maximize/integrate environmentally favorable characteristics into the property. This often requires the involvement of golf course architects, golf course superintendents, civil engineers, soil scientists, agronomists, irrigation designers, ecologists, etc.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Assemble a qualified team
  - Golf course architect
  - Golf course superintendent
  - Clubhouse architect
  - Irrigation engineer
  - Environmental engineer
  - Energy analyst
  - Economic consultant

- Civil engineer
- Soil scientist
- Geologist
- Golf course builder
- Legal team
- Determine objectives
- Complete a feasibility study
  - Are needs feasible given existing resources?
  - Financial
  - Environmental
  - Water
  - Energy
  - Labor
  - Materials
  - Governmental regulatory requirements/restrictions
- Select an appropriate site that is capable of achieving the needs of stakeholders.
- Identify strengths and weakness of the selected site.
- Identify any rare, protected, endangered, or threatened plant or animal species on the site.

## ***Design***

### **Principles**

Proper design will meet the needs of the stakeholders, protect the locations environmental resources, and be economically sustainable. Design will also incorporate the compilation of site-appropriate turfgrass cultivars, blends or mixtures which will ideally require less input while maintaining a healthy and diverse turf. For more information, see [Selecting Turfgrasses for Lawns](#).

### **Best Management Practices**

- Retain a qualified golf course superintendent/project manager at the beginning of the design and construction process to integrate sustainable maintenance practices in the development, maintenance, and operation of the course.
- Design the course to minimize the need to alter or remove existing native landscapes. The routing should identify the areas that provide opportunities for restoration.
- Design the course to retain as much natural vegetation as possible. Where appropriate, consider enhancing existing vegetation through the supplemental planting of native vegetation/materials next to long fairways, out-of-play areas, and along water sources supporting fish and other water-dependent species.

- Design out-of-play areas to retain or restore existing native vegetation where possible. Nuisance, invasive, and exotic plants should be removed and replaced with native species that are adapted to that particular site.
- Greens
  - Select a location that has adequate sunlight to meet plant specific needs and provides sufficient drainage.
  - Choose a green size and sufficient number of hole locations that is large enough to accommodate traffic and play damage, but not so large that it is not sustainable with your resources.  
Select an appropriate root-zone material as designated by the USGA.
  - Consider the number of bunkers as it relates to resources available for daily maintenance.
  - Greens should be irrigated separately from surrounding turf.
  - Select a turf species/variety that meets the needs of the stakeholders while adhering to the principle of “right plant, right place.”
- Plant only certified turfgrass.
- Decide whether bunkers will contain drainage.
- Consider bunker entry and exit points. Consider wear patterns and create adequate space for ingress/egress points on greens, tees, fairways, and bunkers.
- Select the proper color, size, and shape of bunker sand that meets your needs.
- Define play and non-play maintenance boundaries.

## ***Construction***

### **Principles**

Construction should be completed with care to minimize environmental impact and financial ramifications caused by poor construction techniques. Detailed plans will be utilized by a qualified golf course builder to ensure proper methods are followed and specifications are met. For further information, please see [An Environmental Approach to Golf Course Development](#). 2008. American Society of Golf Course Architects.



*Figure 1. Schedule construction to allow for the most efficient progress of the work, while optimizing environmental conservation and resource management. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

### **Best Management Practices**

- Conduct a pre-construction conference with stakeholders.
- Construction should be scheduled to maximize turfgrass establishment and site drainage.
- Use environmentally sound construction techniques.
- Use soil stabilization techniques to minimize soil erosion and maximize sediment containment.
- Maintain a construction progress report and communicate the report to the proper permitting agencies.
- Use only qualified contractors who are experienced in the special requirements of golf course construction.
- Schedule construction and turf establishment to allow for the most efficient progress of the work, while optimizing environmental conservation and resource management.
- Temporary construction compounds should be built in a way that minimizes environmental impacts.
- Seek professional assistance from an environmental specialist to design an appropriate water sample collection strategy.
- Determine what sites will be analyzed and use reputable equipment and qualified technicians.
- Demonstrate responsible land and water use practices based on water data.
- Define data values appropriately based on the associated BMP used to protect water quality.

- Record observations of fish, wildlife, and general pond conditions. (all copied from 'Water Quality Monitoring and Management-Sampling Parameter, Collection, and Analysis)

## **Grow-in**

### **Principles**

Turfgrass establishment is a unique phase in turfgrass growth, which can require greater quantities of water and nutrients than established turfgrasses. To this end, the establishment phase should be considered carefully to minimize environmental risk. Practices such as soil testing should be performed prior to seeding to determine the required amount of nutrients needed.



*Figure 2. For proper turfgrass establishment, use appropriate seeding methods based on site conditions. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

### **Best Management Practices**

- The area to be established should be properly prepared and cleared of pests (weeds, pathogens, etc.).
- Ensure erosion and sediment control devices are in place and properly maintained.
- Sprigs should be “knifed-in” and rolled to hasten root establishment.
- Sod should be topdressed to fill in the gaps between sod pieces. This hastens establishment and provides a smoother surface.
- Use appropriate seeding methods for your conditions. When using sod, nutrient applications should be delayed until sod has sufficiently rooted.
- When using sprigs, application rates for nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium should correspond to percent ground cover (i.e., increasing rate as ground coverage increases.)

- Slow-release nitrogen or light, frequent soluble-nitrogen sources should be used during grow-in.
- Nutrients should be applied — in either foliar or granular formulations — to the turf surface. Incorporating nutrients into the root zone does not result in more rapid establishment and increases environmental risk.
- Mow as soon as the sod has knitted-down, when sprigs have rooted at the second to third internode, and seedlings have reached a height of one-third greater than intended height-of-cut. This will hasten establishment.

## ***Erosion and Sediment Control***

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources has implemented a statewide [Rainwater and Land Development manual](#) which are the standards for Ohio's stormwater management and land development, as well as urban stream protection. The Ohio DNR establishes guidelines for erosion and sediment control throughout Ohio. The guidelines found in the Rainwater and Land Development manual promote proper erosion and sediment control practices during construction, which will improve water quality of site runoff. The standards set forth in the manual are not requirements themselves, for in Ohio, responsibility of regulating storm water is held by both local and state authorities. The Ohio EPA administers state regulations which require storm water permits for construction sites.

### **Principles**

- Soil carried by wind and water erosion transports contaminants with it. Contaminants can dislodge, especially on entering water bodies, where they can cause pollution.
- Erosion and sediment control is a critical component of construction and grow-in of a golf course.
- Depending on location of golf course, it may lie in a community with locally specific stormwater requirements. Be sure to verify stormwater requirements with local authorities.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Develop a working knowledge of erosion and sediment control management. Each state has its own specifications including types of acceptable structures, materials, and design features.
- Develop and implement strategies to effectively control sediment, minimize the loss of topsoil, protect water resources, and reduce disruption to wildlife, plant species, and designed environmental resource areas.
- Hydro-seeding or hydro-mulching offer soil stabilization.

## **Wetlands**

### **Principles**

- Most states consider wetlands as “waters of the state,” a designation that carries significant legal ramifications. Furthermore, permitting requirements for wetlands can have multiple overlapping jurisdictions of federal, state, and local agencies. At the federal level alone, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE), EPA, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and maritime agencies may all be involved.
- Anyone who wishes to discharge dredged or fill material into the waters of the U.S., regardless of whether on private or public property, must obtain a Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and a Section 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC) from the state.
- Anyone who wishes to discharge dredged or fill material into isolated wetlands in Ohio must obtain an [Isolated Wetland Permit from Ohio EPA](#).
- The 401 Water Quality Certification and Isolated Wetland Permitting Section review applications for projects that propose the placement of fill or dredged material into waters of the State, including streams, lakes and wetlands. The section also reviews required mitigation of issued permits and performs wetland research.
- Isolated wetlands are not connected to other surface waters. For this reason, they are not classified as waters of the United States by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Nevertheless, they are waters of the State of Ohio and are therefore regulated by the Ohio EPA, Division of Surface Water, Section 401 Wetlands and Streams Permitting Section
- Wetlands act both as filters for pollutant removal and as nurseries for many species of birds, insects, fish, and other aquatic organisms. The biological activity of plants, fish, animals, insects, and especially bacteria and fungi in a healthy, diverse wetland is the recycling factory of our ecosystem.
- When incorporated into a golf course design, wetlands should be maintained as preserves and separated from managed turf areas with native vegetation or structural buffers. Constructed or disturbed wetlands may need to be permitted to be an integral part of the stormwater management system.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Ensure that proper permitting has been obtained before working on any wetlands.
- Ensure that wetlands have been properly delineated before working in and around any wetlands.
- Retain riparian corridors along waterways to protect water quality and provide food, nesting sites, and cover for wildlife.

## ***Drainage***

### **Principles**

- Adequate drainage is necessary for growing healthy grass.
- A high-quality BMP plan for drainage addresses the containment of runoff, adequate buffer zones, and filtration techniques in the design and construction process to achieve acceptable water quality.
- Drainage of the golf course features is only as good as the system's integrity. Damaged, improperly installed, or poorly maintained drainage systems will result in inferior performance that negatively impacts play and increases risks to water quality.

### **Best Management Practices**

- When constructing drainage systems, pay close attention to engineering details such as subsoil preparation, the placement of gravel, slopes, and backfilling.
- Internal golf course drains should not drain directly into an open waterbody, but should discharge through pretreatment zones and/or vegetative buffers to help remove nutrients and sediments.
- Drainage should discharge through proper drainage and stormwater management devices, for example, vegetative buffers, swales, etc.
- The drainage system should be routinely inspected to ensure proper function.



Figure 3. When constructing drainage systems, pay close attention to engineering details such as subsoil preparation, the placement of gravel, slopes, and backfilling. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.

## ***Surface Water: Stormwater, Ponds, Lakes***

### **Principles**



- Stormwater is the conveying force behind nonpoint source pollution.
- Controlling stormwater on a golf course is more than preventing the flooding of facilities and play areas. In addition to controlling the amount and rate of water leaving the course, stormwater control also involves storing irrigation water, controlling erosion and sediment, enhancing wildlife habitat, removing waterborne pollutants, and addressing aesthetic and playability concerns. Keep in mind that not all stormwater on a golf course originates there; some may be from adjoining lands, including residential or commercial developments.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Stormwater treatment is best accomplished by a “treatment train” approach, in which water is conveyed from one treatment to another by conveyances that themselves contribute to the treatment.
- Eliminate or minimize as much directly connected impervious area (DCIA) as possible.
- Use vegetated swales to slow and infiltrate water and trap pollutants in the soil, where they can be naturally destroyed by soil organisms.
- Use depressed landscape islands in parking lots to catch, filter, and infiltrate water, instead of letting it run off. When hard rains occur, an elevated stormwater drain inlet allows the island to hold the treatment volume and settle out sediments, while allowing the overflow to drain away. These may require improved soil media or additional drainage.
- Maximize the use of pervious pavements, such as brick or concrete pavers separated by sand and planted with grass. Special high-permeability concrete is available for cart paths or parking lots.
- Disconnect runoff from gutters and roof drains from impervious areas, so that it flows onto permeable areas that allow the water to infiltrate near the point of generation.
- Utilize local or state stormwater manuals.

### ***Maintenance Facilities***

#### **Principles**

The maintenance facilities must incorporate BMP to minimize the potential for contamination of soil and water resources. The pesticide mixing and storage facility, the equipment wash pad, and the fuel center are focal points. Additional information can be found in the 'Maintenance Operations' section.

#### **Best Management Practices**

- Design and build pesticide storage structures to keep pesticides secure and isolated from the surrounding environment.
- Store pesticides in a roofed concrete or metal structure with a lockable door.

- Construct floors of seamless metal or concrete sealed with a chemical-resistant paint.
- Ensure that flow from floor drains do not discharge directly to the ground water resources, and that drains are not connected to the sanitary sewer line or septic system.
- Equip the floor with a continuous curb to retain spilled materials.
- Do not store pesticides near burning materials or hot work (welding, grinding), or in shop areas.
- Provide storage for personal protective equipment (PPE) where it is easily accessible in the event of an emergency, but do not store in the pesticide storage area.
- Provide adequate space and shelving to segregate herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides.
- Use shelving made of plastic or reinforced metal. Keep metal shelving painted.
- Provide appropriate exhaust ventilation and an emergency wash area.
- Always place dry materials above liquids, never liquids above dry materials.
- Never place liquids above eye level.
- Locate operations well away from groundwater wells and areas where runoff may carry spilled pesticides into surface waterbodies.
- Do not build new facilities on potentially contaminated sites.
- An open building must have a roof with a substantial overhang (minimum 30° from vertical, 45° recommended) on all sides.
- In constructing a concrete mixing and loading pad, it is critical that the concrete have a water-to-cement ratio no higher than 0.45:1 by weight. The sump should be small and easily accessible for cleaning.
- Ensure that workers always use all personal protection equipment as required by the pesticide label and are provided appropriate training. Assess the level of training and supervision required by staff.
- Any material that collects on the pad must be applied as a pesticide according to the label or disposed of as a (potentially hazardous) waste according to state laws and regulations.  
Clean up spills immediately!
- Always store nitrogen-based fertilizers separately from solvents, fuels, and pesticides, since many fertilizers are oxidants and can accelerate a fire. Ideally, fertilizer should be stored in a concrete building with a metal or other type of flame-resistant roof.
- Always store fertilizers in an area that is protected from rainfall. The storage of dry bulk materials on a concrete or asphalt pad may be acceptable if the pad is adequately protected from rainfall and from water flowing across the pad.
- Sweep up any spilled fertilizer immediately.
- Do not wash equipment unnecessarily.
- Clean equipment over an impervious area, and keep it swept clean.
- Brush or blow equipment with compressed air before, or instead of, washing.
- Use spring shutoff nozzles.
- Use a closed-loop recycling system for wash water.

- Recycle system filters and sludge should be treated and disposed appropriately.
- Each piece of equipment to have a designated parking area, thus oil or other fluid leaks can be easily spotted and attributed to a specific machine so that it can be repaired.
- Use solvent-recycling machines or water-based cleaning machines to cut down on the use of flammable and/or toxic solvents.
- Use a service to remove the old solvents and dispose of them properly.
- Design storage to keep pesticides secure and isolated from the environment.



*Figure 4. Construct floors of seamless metal or concrete sealed with a chemical-resistant paint. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

## **External Certification Programs**

### **Principles**

- Golf-centric environmental management programs or systems can help golf courses protect the environment and preserve the natural heritage of the game.
- These help people enhance the natural areas and wildlife habitats that golf courses provide, improve efficiency, and minimize potentially harmful impacts of golf course operations.
- Golf courses can gain valuable recognition for their environmental education and certification efforts.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Obtain and review materials to ascertain whether the facility should seek certification.
- Work with staff to establish facility goals that lead to certification.
- Establish goals to educate members about the certification program.

## ***Wildlife Considerations***

### **Principles**

- Golf courses occupy large land areas, generally in urban areas, providing critical links between urban and rural/natural environments.
- Maintaining wildlife habitat on golf courses better maintains biological diversity, which is especially important in the urban environment.
- Most golfers enjoy observing non-threatening wildlife as they play the game.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Identify the different types of habitat specific to the site.
- Identify the habitat requirements (food, water, cover, space) for identified wildlife species.
- Identify species on the site that are considered threatened or endangered by the federal or state government, including species the state deems “of special concern.”
- Preserve critical habitat.
- Identify and preserve regional wildlife and migration corridors.
- Design and locate cart paths to minimize environmental impacts. Construct the paths of permeable materials, if possible.
- Avoid or minimize crossings of wildlife corridors. Design unavoidable crossings to accommodate wildlife movement.
- Remove nuisance and exotic/invasive plants and replace them with native species that are adapted to a particular site.
- Maintain clearance between the ground and the lowest portion of a fence or wall to allow wildlife to pass, except in areas where feral animals need to be excluded.
- Retain dead tree snags for nesting and feeding sites, provided they pose no danger to people or property.
- Construct and place birdhouses, bat houses, and nesting sites in out-of-play areas.
- Plant butterfly gardens around the clubhouse and out-of-play areas.
- Retain riparian buffers along waterways to protect water quality and provide food, nesting sites, and cover for wildlife.
- Minimize stream or river crossings to protect water quality and preserve stream banks.

# Irrigation

## *Preface*



The supplemental use of water for course play and non-play areas is essential to supporting healthy turfgrass and landscape plant health. It is also necessary to sustaining optimal course playability, aesthetics, marketability, and club membership participation.

The purpose of this section is to identify best management practices related to water use that conserve and protect water resources. Keep in mind, while new technology makes many tasks easier or less labor-intensive, the principles discussed in this section are important to understand and apply to protect water quality, quantity and surrounding natural resources.

Additionally, irrigation BMP may provide an economic, regulatory compliance, and environmental stewardship advantage to those who consider them part of their irrigation management plan. BMP are not intended to increase labor or place an undue burden on the owner/superintendent. If applied appropriately, BMP can help stabilize labor cost, extend equipment life, and limit repair and overall personal and public liability.

The monetary investment in non-structural BMP costs is negligible to implement in a daily course water-use plan. Other advantages include: reduced administrative management stress, improved employee communication and direction, and effective facilities training procedures.

Several benefits of adopting BMP are:

- Conserving the water supply
- Protecting existing water quality
- Maintaining optimal ball roll and playing conditions
- Saving water and electricity
- Increasing pump and equipment longevity
- Demonstrating responsible environmental stewardship
- Retaining knowledgeable and effective employees

## ***Water Management Approaches***

### **Conservation and Efficiency**

Conservation and efficiency considers the strategic use of appropriate course and irrigation design, plant selection, computerized and data-integrated scheduling, and alternative water quality/supply options that maximize plant health benefits and reduce the potential for negative impacts on natural resources.

### **Resource Protection**

Resource protection is an integrated approach that includes irrigation practices as part of the course design, pesticide and nutrient practices, and regulatory compliance measures and structural measures as they concern environmental stewardship and policy.

## ***Regulatory Considerations***

### **Principles**

- Golf course owners are responsible for contacting federal, state, and local water use authorities at the pre-and post-construction phase to determine annual or specific water consumption (water rights), permitting guidelines, and other requirements allowed by regulators.
- Superintendents have a responsibility to adhere to water-quality standard rules regarding groundwater and surface water flows resulting from the removal of water for irrigation use.
- Drought conditions in Ohio can be accessed through the National Integrated Drought Information System through the [U.S. Drought Portal](#). Additional regional sources can be found through the [Midwest Drought Early Warning System](#).

### **Best Management Practices**

- Design and/or maintain a system to meet site's peak water requirements under normal conditions and also be flexible enough to adapt to various water demands and local restrictions.
- Develop an annual water budget for the golf course.
- Look for ways to increase efficiency and reduce energy use associated with irrigation systems and practices.
- Demonstrate good stewardship practices by supplementing watering only for the establishment of new planting and new sod, hand watering of critical hot spots, and watering-in of chemicals and fertilizers (if permissible).
- Protect aquatic life and impairment of water systems by adhering to state and local water withdrawal allocations (gallons/day).
- Design an irrigation system that delivers water with maximum efficiency.

## ***Irrigation Water Suitability***

### **Principles**

- Golf course designers and managers should endeavor to identify and use alternative supply sources to conserve freshwater drinking supplies, promote plant health, and protect the environment.
- The routine use of potable water supply is not a preferred practice; therefore, municipal drinking water should be considered only when there is no alternative.
- Studies of water supplies are recommended for irrigation systems, as are studies of waterbodies or flows on, near, and under the property. These may be helpful to properly design a course's stormwater systems, water features, and to protect water resources.
- When necessary, sodic water system treatment options should be included in the budget to address water quality and equipment maintenance.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Use alternative water supplies/sources that are appropriate and sufficiently available to supplement water needs.
- Use salt-tolerant varieties of turf and plants to mitigate saline conditions resulting from an alternative water supply or source, if necessary.
- Amend sodic water systems appropriately (with gypsum or an appropriate ion) to minimize sodium buildup in soil.
- Flush with freshwater or use amending materials regularly to move salts out of the root zone and/or pump brackish water to keep salts moving out of the root zone.
- Monitor sodium and bicarbonate buildup in the soil using salinity sensors.
- Routinely monitor shallow groundwater table of freshwater for saltwater intrusion or contamination of heavy metals and nutrients.
- Reclaimed, effluent, and other non-potable water supply mains must have a thorough cross-connection and backflow prevention device in place and operating correctly.
- Post signage in accordance with local utility and state requirements when reclaimed water is in use.
- Account for the nutrients in effluent (reuse/reclaimed) water when making fertilizer calculations.
- Monitor reclaimed water tests regularly for dissolved salt content.
- Where practical, use reverse-osmosis filtration systems to reduce chlorides (salts) from saline groundwater.
- Monitor the quantity of water withdrawn to avoid aquatic life impairment.
- Identify appropriate water supply sources that meet seasonal and bulk water allocations for grow-in and routine maintenance needs.

## ***Water Conservation and Efficient Use Planning***

### **Principles**

- Document actual watering practices, especially to show savings in water use over averages. Communication should be maintained with water managers, golf course members, and the public to explain what you are doing and why.
- Potable water supplies in many areas of the United States are limited, and demand continues to grow. Seek solutions that maintain the quality of golf while using less water.
- BMP and educational programs are necessary to change the public's mind-set toward the inevitable changes in water-related issues.
- Some courses are being designed using a "target golf" concept that minimizes the acreage of irrigated turf. Existing golf courses can make an effort to convert out-of-play areas turf to naturally adapted native plants, grasses, or ground covers to reduce water use and augment the site's aesthetic appeal.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Selecting drought-tolerant varieties of turfgrasses can help maintain an attractive and high-quality playing surface, while minimizing water use.
- Non-play areas may be planted with drought-resistant native or other well-adapted, noninvasive plants that provide an attractive and low-maintenance landscape.
- Native plant species are important in providing wildlife with habitat and food sources. After establishment, site-appropriate plants normally require little to no irrigation.
- The system should be operated to provide only the water that is actually needed by the plants, or to meet occasional special needs such as salt removal.
- If properly designed, rain and runoff captured in water hazards and stormwater ponds may provide supplemental water under normal conditions, though backup sources may be needed during severe drought.
- During a drought, closely monitor soil moisture levels. Whenever practicable, irrigate at times when the least amount of evaporative loss will occur.
- Control invasive plants or plants that use excessive water.





*Figure 5. Selecting drought-tolerant varieties of turfgrasses can minimize water use.  
Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

## ***Irrigation System Design***

### **Principles**

- A well designed irrigation system should operate at peak efficiency to reduce energy, labor and natural resources.
- Irrigation systems should be properly designed and installed to improve water use efficiency.
- An efficient irrigation system maximizes water use, reduces operational cost, conserves supply and protects water resources.



*Figure 6. Properly designed and installed irrigation systems improve water use efficiency. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

### **Best Management Practices**

- Design should account for optimal distribution efficiency and effective root-zone moisture coverage. Target 80% or better Distribution Uniformity (DU).
- Design should allow the putting surface and slopes and surrounds to be watered independently.
- The design package should include a general irrigation schedule with recommendations and instructions on modifying the schedule for local climatic soil and growing conditions. It should include the base ET rate for the particular location.
- The application rate must not exceed the infiltration rate, ability of the soil to absorb and retain the water applied during any one application. Conduct saturated hydraulic conductivity tests periodically.
- The design operating pressure must not be greater than the available source pressure.
- The design operating pressure must account for peak-use times and supply line pressures at final buildout for the entire system.
- The system should be flexible enough to meet a site's peak water requirements and allow for operating modifications to meet seasonal irrigation changes or local restrictions.
- Turf and landscape areas should be zoned separately. Specific use areas zoned separately; greens, tees, primary roughs, secondary roughs, fairways, native, trees, shrubs, etc.
- Design should account for the need to leach out salt buildup from poor-quality water sources by providing access to freshwater.

- Only qualified specialists should install the irrigation system.
- Construction must be consistent with the design.
- The designer must approve any design changes before construction.
- Construction and materials must meet existing standards, laws and criteria.
- Prior to construction, all underground cables, pipes, and other obstacles must be identified and their locations flagged.
- Permanent irrigation sprinklers and other distribution devices should be spaced according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Space should be based on average wind conditions during irrigation.
- For variable wind directions, triangular spacing is more uniform than square spacing.
- Distribution devices and pipe sizes should be designed for optimal uniform coverage.
- The first and last distribution device should have no more than a 10% difference in flow rate. This usually corresponds to about a 20% difference in pressure.
- Distribution equipment (such as sprinklers, rotors, and micro-irrigation devices) in a given zone must have the same precipitation rate.
- Heads for turf areas should be spaced for head-to-head coverage.
- Water supply systems (for example, wells, and pipelines) should be designed for varying control devices, rain shutoff devices, and backflow prevention.
- Water conveyance systems should be designed with thrust blocks and air-release valves.
- Flow velocity must be 5 feet per second or less.
- Pipelines should be designed to provide the system with the appropriate pressure required for maximum irrigation uniformity.
- Pressure-regulating or compensating equipment must be used where the system pressure exceeds the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Equipment with check valves must be used in low areas to prevent low head drainage.
- Isolation valves should be installed in a manner that allows critical areas to remain functional.
- Manual quick-coupler valves should be installed near greens, tees, know quick drying areas and bunkers so these can be hand-watered during severe droughts.
- Install part-circle heads along lakes, ponds, and wetlands margins.
- Use part-circle or adjustable heads to avoid overspray of impervious areas such as roadways and sidewalks.
- Update multi-row sprinklers with single head control to conserve water and to enhance efficiency.
- Incorporate multiple nozzle configurations to add flexibility and enhance efficiency/distribution.
- Ensure heads are set at level ground and not on slopes.

## ***Irrigation Pumping System***

### **Principles**

- Pump stations should be sized to provide adequate flow and pressure. They should be equipped with control systems that protect distribution piping, provide for emergency shutdown necessitated by line breaks, and allow maximum system scheduling flexibility.
- Variable frequency drive (VFD) pumping systems should be considered if dramatically variable flow rates are required, if electrical transients (such as spikes and surges) are infrequent, and if the superintendent has access to qualified technical support.
- Design pumping systems for energy conservation.

### **Best Management Practices**

- The design operating pressure must not be greater than the available source pressure.
- The design operating pressure must account for peak-use times and supply-line pressures at final buildout for the entire system.
- Maintain the air-relief and vacuum-breaker valves by using hydraulic-pressure-sustaining valves.
- Install VFD systems to lengthen the life of older pipes and fittings until the golf course can afford a new irrigation system.
- An irrigation system should also have high- and low-pressure sensors that shut down the system in case of breaks and malfunctions.
- Pumps should be sized to provide adequate flow and pressure.
- Pumps should be equipped with control systems to protect distribution piping.
- System checks and routine maintenance on pumps, valves, programs, fittings, and sprinklers should follow the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Monitor pumping station power consumption.
- Monthly bills should be monitored over time to detect a possible increase in power usage.
- Compare the power used with the amount of water pumped. Requiring more power to pump the same amount of water may indicate a problem with the pump motor(s), control valves, or distribution system.
- Quarterly checks of amperage by qualified pump personnel may more accurately indicate increased power usage and thus potential problems.



*Figure 7. Pumps should be sized to provide adequate flow and pressure. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

## ***Irrigation System Program and Scheduling***

### **Principles**

- Irrigation scheduling must take plant water requirements and soil intake capacity into account to prevent excess water use that could lead to leaching and runoff.
- Plant water needs are determined by evapotranspiration (ET) rates, recent rainfall, recent temperature extremes and soil moisture.
- Irrigation should not occur on a calendar-based schedule, but should be based on ET rates and soil moisture replacement.
- An irrigation system should be operated based only on the moisture needs of the turfgrass, or to water-in a fertilizer or chemical application as directed by the label.
- Responsible irrigation management conserves water, reduces nutrient and pesticide movement.
- Time-clock-controlled irrigation systems preceded computer-controlled systems, and many are still in use today. Electric/mechanical time clocks cannot automatically adjust for changing ET rates.
- Frequent adjustment is necessary to compensate for the needs of individual turfgrass areas.

### **Best Management Practices**

- The reliability of older clock-control station timing depends on the calibration of the timing devices; this should be done periodically, but at least quarterly.

- An irrigation system must have rain sensors to shut off the system after 0.25 inch of rain is received. Computerized systems allow a superintendent to call in and cancel the program if it is determined that the course has received adequate rainfall.
- Install control devices to allow for maximum system scheduling flexibility.
- Generally, granular fertilizer applications should receive 0.25 inch of irrigation to move the particles off the leaves while minimizing runoff.
- Irrigation quantities should not exceed the available moisture storage in the root zone.
- Irrigation rates should not exceed the maximum ability of the soil to absorb and hold the water applied at any one time.
- Irrigation schedule should coincide with other cultural practices (for example, the application of nutrients, herbicides, or other chemicals).
- Account for nutrients in effluent supply when making fertilizer calculations.
- Irrigation should occur in the early morning hours before air temperatures rise and relative humidity drops.
- Base plant water needs should be determined by ET rates, recent rainfall, recent temperature extremes, and soil moisture.
- Use mowing, verticutting, aeration, nutrition, and other cultural practices to control water loss and to encourage conservation and efficiency.
- Visually monitor for localized dry conditions or hot spots to identify poor irrigation efficiency or a failed system device.
- Use predictive models to estimate soil moisture and the best time to irrigate.
- Avoid use of a global setting; make adjustments to watering times per head.
- Base water times on actual site conditions for each head and zone.
- Adjust irrigation run times based on current local meteorological data.
- Use computed daily ET rate to adjust run times to meet the turf's moisture needs.
- Manually adjust automated ET data to reflect wet and dry areas on the course.
- Use soil moisture sensors to assist in scheduling or to create on-demand irrigation schedules.
- Use multiple soil moisture sensors to reflect soil moisture levels.
- Install soil moisture sensors in the root zone for each irrigation zone to enhance scheduled timer-based run times.
- Place soil moisture sensors in a representative location within the irrigation zone. Install a soil moisture sensor in the driest irrigation zone of the irrigation system.
- Wired soil moisture systems should be installed to prevent damage from aeration.
- Periodically perform catch-can uniformity tests.
- Reducing dry spots and soil compaction improves water infiltration, which in turn reduces water use and runoff in other areas.
- Install emergency shutdown devices to address line breaks.

## ***Turf Drought Response***

### **Principles**

- The presence of visual symptoms of moisture stress is a simple way to determine when irrigation is needed.
- Use a soil moisture meter to determine moisture needs of greens and tees.
- Managers of golf greens cannot afford to wait until symptoms occur, because unacceptable turf quality may result.
- Be prepared for extended drought/restrictions by developing a written drought management plan.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Waiting until visual symptoms appear before irrigating is a method best used for low-maintenance areas, such as golf course roughs and, possibly, fairways.
- Use soil moisture meters to determine moisture thresholds and plant needs.
- Irrigating too shallowly encourages shallow rooting, increases soil compaction, and favors pest outbreaks.
- For golf greens and tees, the majority of roots are in the top several inches of soil.
- For fairways and roughs, use infrequent, deep irrigation to supply sufficient water for plants and to encourage deep rooting.
- Proper cultural practices such as mowing height, irrigation frequency, and irrigation amounts should be employed to promote healthy, deep root development and reduce irrigation requirements.
- Create a drought management plan for the facility that identifies steps to be taken to reduce irrigation/water use and protects critical areas, etc.
- Use appropriate turfgrass species adapted to the location of the golf course being managed.

## ***Irrigation System Quality***

### **Principles**

- Irrigation system maintenance on a golf course involves four major efforts: calibration or auditing, preventive maintenance (PM), corrective maintenance, and record keeping.
- Personnel charged with maintaining any golf course irrigation system face numerous challenges. This is particularly true for courses with older or outdated equipment.
- Good system management starts with good preventive maintenance (PM) procedures and recordkeeping. Maintaining a system is more than just fixing heads.

- Corrective maintenance is simply the act of fixing what is broken. It may be as simple as cleaning a clogged orifice, or as complex as a complete renovation of the irrigation system.
- As maintenance costs increase, the question of whether to renovate arises. Renovating a golf course irrigation system can improve system efficiencies, conserve water, improve playability, and lower operating costs.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Respond to day-to-day failures in a timely manner, maintain the integrity of the system as designed, and keep good records.
- System checks and routine maintenance on pumps, valves, programs, fittings, and sprinklers should follow the manufacturer's recommendations.
- The system should be inspected daily for proper operation by checking computer logs and visually inspecting the pump station, remote controllers, and irrigation heads. A visual inspection should be carried out for leaks, misaligned or inoperable heads, and chronic wet or dry spots, so that adjustments can be made.
- Systems need to be observed in operation at least weekly. This can be done during maintenance programs such as fertilizer or chemical applications where irrigation is required, or the heads can be brought on-line for a few seconds and observed for proper operation. This process detects controller or communications failures, stuck or misaligned heads, and clogged or broken nozzles.
- Check filter operations frequently. An unusual increase in the amount of debris may indicate problems with the water source.
- Even under routine conditions, keeping filters operating properly prolongs the life of an existing system and reduces pumping costs.
- Keep records of filter changes, as this could be an early sign of system corrosion, well problems, or declining irrigation water quality.
- Application/distribution efficiencies should be checked annually. Implement a PM program to replace worn components before they waste fertilizer, chemicals, and water.
- Conduct a periodic professional irrigation audit.
- Document equipment run-time hours. Ensure that all lubrication, overhauls, and other preventive maintenance are completed according to the manufacturer's schedule.
- Gather together all of the documentation collected as part of the PM program, along with corrective maintenance records for analysis.
- Correctly identifying problems and their costs helps to determine what renovations are appropriate.
- Collecting information on the cost of maintaining the system as part of system overall evaluation, allows for planning necessary upgrades, replacement etc. and to compare after changes are made.
- Use rain sensors to shut-off aeration equipment during rain events.





*Figure 8. System checks and routine maintenance on pumps, valves, programs, fittings, and sprinklers should follow the manufacturer's recommendations. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

## ***Pond Location and Design***

### **Principles**

- Understanding natural lake processes and accommodating them in the design and management of a pond can create significant aesthetic value and reduce operational costs.
- Lakes and ponds have several distinct defining characteristics. Their size, shape, and depth may all affect how they respond to various environmental inputs.
- Most golf courses plan their lakes and water hazards to be a part of the stormwater control and treatment system. This usually works well for all concerned. However, natural waters may not be considered treatment systems and must be protected.
- Lakes and ponds may be used as a source of irrigation water. It is important to consider these functions when designing and constructing the ponds.

- Reclaiming as much runoff from the golf course watershed for irrigation purposes should be considered during design.
- Careful design may significantly reduce future operating expenses for lake and aquatic plant management.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Consult with a qualified golf course architect, working in conjunction with a stormwater engineer, to develop an effective stormwater management system that complies with the requirements of the water management district/department or other permitting agency.
- When constructing drainage systems, pay close attention to engineering details such as subsoil preparation, the placement of gravel, slopes, and backfilling.
- Where practical, internal golf course drains should discharge through pretreatment zones and/or vegetative buffers to help remove nutrients and sediments.
- Studies of water supplies are needed for irrigation systems, and studies of waterbodies or flows on, near, and under the property are needed to properly design a course's stormwater systems and water features, and to protect water resources.
- Peninsular projections and long, narrow fingers into ponds may prevent water mixing. Ponds that are too shallow may reach high temperatures, leading to low oxygen levels and promoting algal growth and excess sedimentation.
- In shallow or nutrient-impacted ponds, the use of aeration equipment may be required to maintain acceptable dissolved oxygen (DO) levels in the water.

### ***Pond Use and Maintenance***

#### **Principles**

- Successful pond management should include a clear statement of goals and priorities to guide the development of the BMP necessary to meet those goals. Some of the challenges facing superintendents in maintaining the quality of golf course ponds are as follows:
  - Low DO
  - Sedimentation
  - Changes in plant populations
  - Nuisance vegetation
  - Maintenance of littoral shelves
  - Vegetation on the lakeshore
- Each pond has regions or zones that significantly influence water quality and are crucial in maintaining the ecological balance of the system. It is important for the manager to understand their function and how good water quality can be maintained if these zones (riparian zone, littoral zone, limnetic zone, and benthic zone) are properly managed.

- Surface water sources can present problems with algal and bacteria growth. Algal cells and organic residues of algae can pass through irrigation system filters and form aggregates that may plug emitters.
- Pond leaks should be controlled and managed properly.
- Use an expert in aquatic management to help develop and monitor pond management programs.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Use leak controls in the form of dike compaction, natural-soil liners, soil additives, commercial liners, drain tile, or other approved methods.
- Maintain a riparian buffer to filter the nutrients and sediment in runoff.
- Reduce the frequency of mowing at the lake edge and collect or direct clippings to upland areas.
- Prevent overthrowing fertilizer into ponds. Practice good fertilizer management to reduce nutrient runoff into ponds, which causes algae blooms and ultimately reduces DO levels.
- Establish a special management zone around pond edges.
- Dispose of grass clippings where runoff will not carry them back to the lake.
- Encourage clumps of native emergent vegetation at the shoreline.
- Maintain water flow through lakes, if they are interconnected.
- Establish wetlands where water enters lakes to slow water flow and trap sediments.
- Maintain appropriate silt fencing and BMP on projects upstream to reduce erosion and the resulting sedimentation.
- Manipulate water levels to prevent low levels that result in warmer temperatures and lowered DO levels.
- Aerate ponds and dredge or remove sediment before it becomes a problem.

### ***Pond Water-Level Monitor***

#### **Principle**

Evaporation losses are higher in some regions than others and vary from year to year and within the year. However, evaporative losses could approach 6 inches per month during the summer. Aquatic plants are more difficult to control in shallow water.

#### **Best Management Practices**

- A pond should hold surplus storage of at least 10 percent of full storage.
- Provide an alternative source for ponds that may require supplemental recharge from another water source such as a well during high-demand periods.
- Estimated losses from evaporation and seepage should be added to the recommended depth of the pond.

## ***Metering***

### **Principles**

- Rainfall may vary from location to location on a course; the proper use of rain gauges, rain shut-off devices, flow meters, soil moisture sensors, and/or other irrigation management devices should be incorporated into the site's irrigation schedule.
- It is also important to measure the amount of water that is actually delivered through the irrigation system, via a water meter or a calibrated flow-measurement device.
- Knowing the flow or volume will help determine how well the irrigation system and irrigation schedule are working.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Calibrate equipment periodically to compensate for wear in pumps, nozzles, and metering systems.
- Properly calibrated flow meters, soil moisture sensors, rain shut-off devices, and/or other automated methods should be used to manage irrigation.
- Flow meters should have a run of pipe that is straight enough — both downstream and upstream — to prevent turbulence and bad readings.
- Flow meters can be used to determine how much water is applied.

## ***Irrigation Leak Detection***

### **Principles**

- Irrigation systems are complex systems that should be closely monitored to ensure leaks are quickly detected and corrected.
- Golf courses without hydraulic pressure-sustaining valves are much more prone to irrigation pipe and fitting breaks because of surges in the system, creating more downtime for older systems. A good preventive maintenance program is very important.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Monitor water meters or other measuring devices for unusually high or low readings to detect possible leaks or other problems in the system. Make any needed repairs.
- An irrigation system should also have high- and low-pressure sensors that shut down the system in case of breaks and malfunctions.
- The system should be monitored daily for malfunctions and breaks. It is also a good practice to log the amount of water pumped each day.

- Document and periodically review the condition of infrastructure (such as pipes, wires, and fittings). If the system requires frequent repairs, determine why these failures are occurring. Pipe failures may be caused not only by material failure, but also by problems with the pump station.
- Ensure that control systems provide for emergency shutdowns caused by line breaks and allow maximum system scheduling flexibility.

## ***Sprinkler Maintenance***

### **Principles**

- Good system management starts with good preventive maintenance (PM) procedures and record keeping. This can be done during maintenance programs such as fertilizer or chemical applications where irrigation is required, or the heads can be brought on-line for a few seconds and observed for proper operation.
- Maintaining a system is more than just fixing heads. It also includes documenting system- and maintenance-related details so that potential problems can be addressed before expensive repairs are needed. It also provides a basis for evaluating renovation or replacement options.
- Be proactive; if the system requires frequent repairs, it is necessary to determine why these failures are occurring.
  - Pipe failures may be caused not only by material failure, but also by problems with the pump station.
  - Wiring problems could be caused by corrosion, rodent damage, or frequent lightning or power surges.
  - Control tubing problems could result from poor filtration.

### **Best Management Practices**

- System checks and routine maintenance on pumps, valves, programs, fittings, and sprinklers should follow the manufacturer's recommendations.
- The system should be inspected routinely for proper operation by checking computer logs and visually inspecting the pump station, remote controllers, and irrigation heads.
- A visual inspection should be carried out for leaks, misaligned or inoperable heads, and chronic wet or dry spots, so that adjustments can be made or replaced.
- Flush irrigation lines regularly to minimize emitter clogging. To reduce sediment buildup, make flushing part of a regular maintenance schedule. If fertigrating, prevent microbial growth by flushing all fertilizer from the lateral lines before shutting down the irrigation system.
- Clean and maintain filtration equipment.
- Systems must be observed in operation at least weekly. This process detects controller or communication failures, stuck or misaligned heads, and clogged or broken nozzles.

- Check filter operations frequently. An unusual increase in the amount of debris may indicate problems with the water source.
- Even under routine conditions, keeping filters operating properly prolongs the life of an existing system and reduces pumping costs.
- Keep records of filter changes, as this could be an early sign of system corrosion, well problems, or declining irrigation water quality.
- Application/distribution efficiencies should be checked annually. Conduct a periodic professional irrigation audit at least once every five years. Implement a PM program to replace worn components before they waste fertilizer, chemicals, and water.
- Document equipment run-time hours.
- Ensure that all lubrication, overhauls, and other preventive maintenance are completed according to the manufacturer's schedule.
- Monitor pump station power consumption. Monthly bills should be monitored over time to detect a possible increase in power usage. Compare the power used with the amount of water pumped. Requiring more power to pump the same amount of water may indicate a problem with the pump motor(s), control valves, or distribution system. Quarterly checks of amperage by qualified pump personnel may more accurately indicate increased power usage and thus potential problems.
- Monitor and record the amount of water being applied, including system usage and rainfall. By tracking this information, you can identify areas where minor adjustments can improve performance. Not only is this information essential in identifying places that would benefit from a renovation, but it is also needed to compute current operating costs and compare possible future costs after a renovation.
- Document and periodically review the condition of infrastructure (such as pipes, wires, and fittings).



*Figure 9. A visual inspection should be carried out for leaks, misaligned or inoperable heads, and chronic wet or dry spots, so that adjustments can be made or replaced.  
Photo Credit: Ryan D'Autremont.*

## **System Maintenance**

### **Principles**

- Course owners/superintendents do routine maintenance to ensure water quality and responsible use of the water supply.
- System checks and routine maintenance include: pumps, valves, programs, fittings, and sprinklers.
- To ensure that it is performing as intended, an irrigation system should be calibrated regularly by conducting periodic irrigation audits to check actual water delivery and nozzle efficiency.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Irrigation audits should be performed by trained technicians.
- A visual inspection should first be conducted to identify necessary repairs or corrective actions. It is essential to make repairs before carrying out other levels of evaluation.

- Pressure and flow should be evaluated to determine that the correct nozzles are being used and that the heads are performing according to the manufacturer's specifications.
- Pressure and flow rates should be checked at each head to determine the average application rate in an area.
- Catch-can tests should be run to determine the uniformity of coverage and to accurately determine irrigation run times.
- Catch-can testing should be conducted on the entire golf course to ensure that the system is operating at its highest efficiency.
- Conduct an irrigation audit annually to facilitate a high-quality maintenance and scheduling program for the irrigation system.
- Inspect for interference with water distribution.
- Inspect for broken and misaligned heads.
- Check that the rain sensor is present and functioning.
- Inspect the backflow device to determine that it is in place and in good repair.
- Examine turf quality and plant health for indications of irrigation malfunction or needs for scheduling adjustments.
- Schedule documentation; make adjustments and repairs on items diagnosed during the visual inspection before conducting pressure and flow procedures.

### ***Preventive Maintenance***

- In older systems, inspect irrigation pipe and look for fitting breaks caused by surges in the system.
- Install thrust blocks to support conveyances.
- The system should be inspected daily for proper operation by checking computer logs and visually inspecting the pump station, remote controllers, and irrigation heads. A visual inspection should be carried out for leaks, misaligned or inoperable heads, and chronic wet or dry spots so that adjustments can be made.
- Maintain air-relief and vacuum-breaker valves.
- Systems need to be observed in operation at least weekly to detect controller or communication failures, stuck or misaligned heads, and clogged or broken nozzles.
- Check filter operations frequently; keeping filters operating properly prolongs the life of an existing system and reduces pumping costs.
- Keep records of filter changes, as this could be an early sign of system corrosion, well problems, or declining irrigation water quality.
- Application/distribution efficiencies should be checked annually.
- Conduct periodic professional irrigation audits.
- Document equipment run-time hours. Ensure that all lubrication, overhauls, and other preventive maintenance are completed according to the manufacturer's schedule.
- Monitor the power consumption of pump stations for problems with the pump motors, control valves, or distribution system.



- Qualified pump personnel should perform quarterly checks of amperage to accurately identify increased power usage that indicates potential problems.
- Monitor and record the amount of water being applied, including system usage and rainfall. By tracking this information, you can identify areas where minor adjustments can improve performance.
- Document and periodically review the condition of infrastructure (such as pipes, wires, and fittings). If the system requires frequent repairs, it is necessary to determine why these failures are occurring.
- Increase frequency of routine inspection/calibration of soil moisture sensors that may be operating in high-salinity soils.
- Winterize irrigation system to prevent damage.



*Figure 10. Replacement parts should have the same characteristics as the original components. Photo credit: Ryan D'Autremont.*

### **Corrective Maintenance**

- Replace or repair all broken or worn components before the next scheduled irrigation.
- Replacement parts should have the same characteristics as the original components.
- Record keeping is an essential practice; document all corrective actions.

## **System Renovation**

- Appropriate golf course renovations can improve system efficiencies, conserve water, improve playability, and lower operating costs.
- Correctly identify problems and their cost to determine which renovations are appropriate.
- Determine the age of the system to establish a starting point for renovation.
- Identify ways to improve system performance by maximizing the efficient use of the current system.
- Routinely document system performance to maximize the effectiveness of the renovation.
- Evaluate cost of renovation and its return on benefits both financial and management.

## ***Winterization and Spring Startup***

### **Principle**

Winterization of the irrigation system is important to protect the system and reduce equipment failures resulting from freezing.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Conduct a visual inspection of the irrigation system: inspect for mainline breaks, low pressure at the pump, and head-to-head spacing.
- Conduct a catch-can test to audit the system.
- Flush and drain above-ground irrigation system components that could hold water.
- Remove water from all conveyances and supply and distribution devices that may freeze with compressed air or open drain plugs at the lowest point on the system.
- Clean filters, screens, and housing; remove drain plug and empty water out of the system.
- Secure systems and close and lock covers/compartments doors to protect the system from potential acts of vandalism and from animals seeking refuge.
- Remove drain plug and drain above-ground pump casings.
- Record metering data before closing the system.
- Secure or lock irrigation components and electrical boxes.
- Perform pump and engine servicing/repair before winterizing.
- Recharge irrigation in the spring with water and inspect for corrective maintenance issues.
- Ensure proper irrigation system drainage design.

## ***Sensor Technology***

### **Principles**

- To prevent excess water use, irrigation scheduling should take into account plant water requirements, recent rainfall, recent temperature extremes, and soil characteristics.
- Irrigation management and control devices need to be installed correctly for proper irrigation management.
- Soil moisture sensors and other irrigation management tools should be installed in representative locations and maintained to provide the information necessary for making good irrigation management decisions.
- Rain gauges are necessary measurement tools to track how much rain has fallen at a specific site on the golf course. On some courses, more than one station may be necessary to get a complete measure of rainfall or evaporation loss. The use of soil moisture probes and inspections for visual symptoms such as wilting turf, computer models, and tensiometers may supplement these measurements. Computerized displays are available to help visualize the system.
- Predictive models based on weather station data and soil types are also available. These are relatively accurate and applicable, especially as long-term predictors of annual turf water requirements.
- Weather data such as rainfall, air and soil temperature, relative humidity, and wind speed are incorporated into certain model formulas, and soil moisture content is estimated. Models, however, are only as effective as the amount of data collected and the number of assumptions made.
- It is best to have an on-site weather station to daily access weather information and ET to determine site specific water needs.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Irrigation controllers/timers should be reset as often as practically possible to account for plant growth requirements and local climatic conditions.
- Properly calibrated flow meters, soil moisture sensors, rain shut-off devices, and/or other automated methods should be used to manage irrigation.
- Irrigation rates should not exceed the maximum ability of the soil to absorb and hold the water applied in any one application.
- Irrigation should not occur on a calendar-based schedule, but should be based on ET rates and soil moisture replacement.
- Computerized control systems should be installed on all new course irrigation systems to help ensure efficient irrigation application. These allow for timing adjustments at every head.
- Rain shut-off devices and rain gauges should be placed in open areas to prevent erroneous readings.
- Use multiple soil moisture sensors/meters for accuracy and to reflect soil moisture levels.



*Figure 11. Irrigation rates should be based on ET rates and soil moisture replacement.  
Photo credit: Ryan D'Autremont.*

## **Maintained Turf Areas**

### **Principle**

Courses should use well-designed irrigation systems with precision scheduling based on soil infiltration rates, soil water-holding capacity, plant water-use requirements, the depth of the root zone, and the desired level of turfgrass appearance and performance in order to maximize efficient watering.

### **Best Management Practices**

- The irrigation system should be designed and installed so that the putting surface, slopes, and surrounding areas can be watered independently.
- Account for nutrients in effluent supply when making fertilizer calculations.
- Install part-circle heads that conserve water and reduce unnecessary stress to greens and surrounds.
- Avoid use of a global setting; make adjustments to watering times per head.
- Base water times on actual site conditions for each head and zone.
- Adjust irrigation run times based on current local meteorological data.
- Use computed daily ET rate to adjust run times to meet the turf's moisture needs.
- Manually adjust automated ET data to reflect wet and dry areas on the course.

- Install rain switches to shut down the irrigation system if enough rain falls in a zone.
- Use soil moisture sensors to bypass preset or to create on-demand irrigation schedules.
- Permanent irrigation sprinklers and other distribution devices should be spaced according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Spacing should be based on average wind conditions during irrigation.
- Triangular spacing is more uniform than square spacing.
- Periodically perform catch-can uniformity tests.
- Reducing dry spots and soil compaction improves water infiltration, which in turn reduces water use and runoff in other areas.
- Irrigation should occur in the early morning hours before air temperatures rise and relative humidity drops.
- Base plant water needs on evapotranspiration rates, recent rainfall, recent temperature extremes and soil moisture.
- Use mowing, verticutting, aeration, wetting agents, nutrition, and other cultural practices to control water loss and to encourage conservation and efficiency.
- Depending on physical soil characteristics and turf type, using solid-tine aeration equipment in place of verticutting is an option.
- Slicing and spiking help relieve surface compaction and promote better water penetration and aeration.
- Visually monitor for localized dry conditions or hot spots to identify poor irrigation efficiency or a failed system device.
- Use predictive models to estimate soil moisture and the best time to irrigate.
- Install in-ground (wireless) soil moisture sensors or use hand-held moisture meters in the root zone for each irrigation zone to enhance scheduled timer-based run times.
- An irrigation system should also have high- and low-pressure sensors that shut down the system in case of breaks and malfunctions.
- Place soil moisture sensors in a representative location of the irrigation zone.
- Install soil moisture sensors in the driest irrigation zone of the irrigation system.
- Wireless soil moisture systems should be installed to prevent damage from aeration.

## ***Non-Play and Landscape Areas***

### **Principles**

- Map any environmentally sensitive areas such as sinkholes, wetlands, or flood-prone areas, and identify species classified as endangered or threatened by federal and state governments, and state species of special concern.
- Natural vegetation should be retained and enhanced for non-play areas to conserve water.

- The most efficient and effective watering method for non-turf landscape is micro-irrigation.
- Older golf courses may have more irrigated and maintained acres than are necessary. With the help of a golf course architect, golf professional, golf course superintendent, and other key personnel, the amount of functional turfgrass can be evaluated and transitioned into non-play areas.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Designate 50% to 70% of the non-play area to remain in natural cover according to “right-plant, right-place,” a principle of plant selection that favors limited supplemental irrigation and on-site cultural practices.
- Incorporate natural vegetation in non-play areas.
- Use micro-irrigation and low-pressure emitters in non-play areas to supplement irrigation.
- Routinely inspect non-play irrigation systems for problems related to emitter clogging, filter defects, and overall system functionality.

### ***Wellhead Protection***

#### **Principles**

- Wellhead protection is the establishment of protection zones and safe land-use practices around water supply wells in order to protect aquifers from accidental contamination. It also includes protecting wellheads from physical impacts, keeping them secure, and sampling wells according to the monitoring schedule required by the regulating authority, which is often a local health department or state department of environmental quality.
- When installing new wells, contact the regulating authority to determine the permitting and construction requirements and the required isolation distances from potential sources of contamination.
- Locate new wells up-gradient as far as possible from likely pollutant sources, such as petroleum storage tanks, septic tanks, chemical mixing areas, or fertilizer storage facilities.
- Licensed water-well contractors may be needed to drill new wells to meet state requirements, local government code, and water management districts’ well-construction permit requirements.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Use backflow-prevention devices at the wellhead, on hoses, and at the pesticide mix/load station to prevent contamination of the water source.
- Properly plug abandoned or flowing wells.
- Surround new wells with bollards or a physical barrier to prevent impacts to the wellhead.

- Inspect wellheads and the well casing at least annually for leaks or cracks; make repairs as needed.
- Maintain records of new well construction and modifications to existing wells.
- Obtain a copy of the well log for each well to determine the local geology and how deep the well is; these factors will have a bearing on how vulnerable the well is to contamination.
- Sample wells for contaminants according to the schedule and protocol required by the regulating authority.
- Never apply a fertilizer or pesticide next to a wellhead.
- Never mix and load pesticides next to a wellhead if not on a pesticide mix/load pad.

# Surface Water Management

## *Preface*



Although golf courses are typically large properties ranging in size from 60 to 200 acres, they are just one link in a stormwater management chain. Generally, a quantity of stormwater enters the golf course area, supplemented by what falls on the golf course proper, and then the stormwater leaves the golf course. Therefore, golf courses are realistically capable of having only a small impact on major stormwater flow. That impact should be to add only small increments of water over a given period of time. Engineers call this function “detention.”

When golf courses are designed and built, their drainage capability concept is guided by an average rainfall event of a given frequency. For example, typically, a golf course drainage system is designed to detain a two- or five-year rain event. In other words, when that rain event happens, the golf course will be able to be reasonably drained in a matter of hours, as excess water not absorbed by the soil flows through the drainage system, is temporarily held, and finally leaves the property. In some instances, golf courses and other recreational facilities are mandated to be designed to handle a 20-, 50- or 100-year rain event, which means the golf course must detain more water for perhaps a longer period of time. This ability to detain large amounts of water requires accurate engineering and extensive construction to prevent physical or financial damage to the facility. Incorporating water quality functions such as pollution settling in stormwater ponds may mean capturing and detaining a portion of runoff for an extended length of time, such as 24-72 hours.

Best Management Practices are intended to prolong the detention process as long as practical, harvest as much of the stormwater in surface or underground storage as reasonable, and to improve the quality of water leaving the property when possible.

## ***Stormwater Capture***

### **Principles**

- When the golf course is properly designed, rain and runoff captured in water hazards and stormwater ponds may provide most or all of the supplemental



water necessary under normal conditions, though backup sources may be needed during drought conditions.

- Capture systems should be considered part of the overall treatment.
- Stormwater capture is desirable where the lowest quality of water is needed to conserve potable water, maintain hydrologic balance, and improve water treatment.
- This practice uses natural systems to cleanse and improve water treatment.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Install berms and swales to capture pollutants and sediments from runoff before it enters the irrigation storage pond.
- Monitor pond water level for water loss (seepage) to underground systems. If seepage is occurring, it may be necessary to line or seal the pond or install pumps to relocate water.
- Install water-intake systems that use horizontal wells placed in the subsoil below the storage basin; use a post pump to filter particulate matter.
- A backup source of water should be incorporated into the management plan.
- Inspect irrigation pumps, filtration systems, conveyances and control devices to prevent/correct system issues.

### ***Regulatory Considerations***

#### **Principle**

Course owners and superintendents should investigate regulatory requirements that apply to the golf facility to protect surface and groundwater quality. Under the [Clean Water Act](#), each state is required to adopt water quality standards. Water quality standards are in place to help protect and improve the quality of the nation's surface water. More information on Ohio's water quality standards can be found at the [Ohio EPA's Water Quality Standards Program](#).

In certain instances, surface waterbodies may not be meeting Ohio's water quality standards. In these instances, the waterbodies may be subject to Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL). TMDL are prepared for waters which are deemed impaired based on the [Ohio Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report](#).

### **Best Management Practices**

- Aquatic management of plants may be regulated under construction permitting and regulatory licensing requirements. Consult with federal, state, and local water management agencies before managing golf course lakes and wetland areas.
- Consult with federal, state, and local water management agencies, and/or consult an approved management plan before performing cultural practices:

fertilization, installation of plants, hand removal of plants, or mechanical harvesting.

- The introduction of aquatic triploid grass carp, biological controls, aeration, and chemical controls (herbicide/algaecide) must be approved and monitored according to permit and licensing protocols and compliance.
- The disposal of sediments from surface water ponds (stormwater detention) may be subject to regulation.
- Golf course management may be affected by recommendations provided in watershed-specific Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) reports, mitigation, and watershed basin management action plans (BMAP).
- Wetlands are protected areas; consult with federal and state agencies before altering natural aquatic areas.
- Constructed wetlands should have an impervious bottom to prevent groundwater contamination.
- Studies of water supplies are needed for irrigation systems, including studies of waterbodies or flows on, near, and under the property to properly design a course's stormwater system and water features to protect water resources.

## ***Water Quality Protection***

### **Principle**

- An aquatic plant management strategy should address the intended uses of the waterbody to maintain water quality. Proper documentation of the site's physical attributes and location, the presence of invasive or weedy species, aesthetics, watershed and groundwater assessments, and other environmental considerations.
- Only licensed individuals or contractors should be allowed to select and apply aquatic pesticides.
- Contain sediments from areas under construction.
- Treat stormwater runoff, especially impervious areas with adequate settling.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Accommodate natural lake processes in the construction of lakes and ponds; include herbaceous and woody vegetation and emergent and submergent shoreline plants to reduce operational costs.
- Use integrated pest management (IPM) strategies and native or naturalized vegetation wherever practical.
- Apply appropriate herbicides to minimize damage to non-target littoral plantings.
- Maintain a narrow band of open water at the pond edge to control the expansion of plants into more desirable littoral plantings.
- Use appropriate aquatic herbicides to prevent turfgrass injury and to protect water quality and wildlife habitat.

- Irrigation should not directly strike or run off to waterbodies, and no-fertilization buffers should be maintained along water edges.
- Outline goals and priorities to guide the development of the BMP necessary to support the lake/aquatic management plan.
- Superintendents should sample designated waters in their area for the persistence of toxic herbicides and algaecides in the environment.
- Secondary environmental effects on surface water and groundwater from the chemical control of vegetation should be monitored and recorded.
- Apply fertilizer and reclaimed (reuse) irrigation/fertigation appropriately to avoid surface water and groundwater contamination.
- Apply copper products per label instructions to reduce the risk of impairing water quality and causing negative biological impacts.
- Identify position of property in relation to its watershed.
- Identify overall goals and validate concerns of the local watershed.
- Identify surface water and flow patterns.
- Indicate stormwater flow as well as existing and potential holding capacity.
- Indicate impervious surfaces, such as buildings, parking lots, or pathways.
- Indicate major drainages and catch basins that connect to local surface water bodies.
- Identify and understand depth to water tables and soil types.
- Locate and protect wellheads.

## ***Dissolved Oxygen***

### **Principles**

- Every golf course should have a plan to monitor the state of the environment and the effects the golf course may be having on the environment.
- Monitoring is used to determine whether outside events are changing the water quality entering the golf course, or whether the golf course is having a positive, neutral, or negative effect on water quality. It also provides a body of evidence on the golf course's environmental impact.
- A water-quality monitoring plan should be prepared to ensure the ongoing protection of groundwater and surface-water quality after construction has been completed. The same sites should be monitored during the preconstruction phase, although the monitoring plan can be modified based on site-specific conditions.
- Sampling parameters are determined based on golf course operation and basin-specific parameters of concern (these may be identified by local/state Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)
- Programs). Typically, samples should be analyzed for nutrients, pH and alkalinity, sediments, and suspended solids, dissolved oxygen (DO), heavy metals, and any pesticides expected to be used on the golf course.
- Ongoing, routine water sampling provides meaningful trends over time. A single sample is rarely meaningful in isolation.

- Post-construction sampling of surface-water quality should begin with the installation and maintenance of golf course turf and landscaping. Samples should be collected a minimum of three times per year.
- If there is no discharge on the scheduled sample date, samples should be taken during the next discharge event.
- Post-construction surface-water quality sampling should continue through the first three years of operation and during the wet and dry seasons every third year thereafter, provided that all required water-quality monitoring has been completed and the development continues to implement all current management plans. It may also be wise to sample if a significant change has been made in course operation or design that could affect nearby water quality.
- Sampling parameters should be determined based on golf course operation and any basin-specific parameters of concern (identified by the TMDL program or local regulators).
- The purpose of quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) is to ensure that chemical, physical, biological, microbiological, and toxicological data are appropriate and reliable. Data should be collected and analyzed using scientifically sound procedures.
- However, even if the data are only for proprietary use and are not reported to any regulatory agency, it is strongly recommended that a certified laboratory be used and all QA/QC procedures followed.
- Golf course management must have good data to make good decisions. If a golf course should ever want to produce data for an agency or go to court to defend the facility from unwarranted charges, those data must meet QA/QC standards to be defensible as evidence.



*Figure 12. Post-construction surface-water quality sampling should continue through a minimum of the first three years of operation. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

## **Best Management Practices**

- Establish DO thresholds to prevent fish kills (occur at levels of 2 ppm), for example, use artificial aeration (diffusers).
- Reduce stress on fish; keep DO levels above 3 ppm.
- Select algaecides containing hydrogen peroxide instead of copper or endothall to treat high populations of phytoplankton.
- Use IPM principles to limit excess use of pesticides.
- Spot-treat filamentous algae or frequently remove algae by hand to prevent lowering oxygen concentrations in water.
- Use dyes and aeration to maintain appropriate light and DO levels.
- Apply algaecides to small areas to prevent fish mortality; do not treat the entire pond at once.
- Coordinate construction/renovation activities to minimize the amount of disturbed area and possible risk of contamination via runoff.
- Plan construction/renovation activities in phases to limit soil disruption and movement.
- Sod, spring, or reseed bare or thinning turf areas.
- Mulch areas under tree canopies to cover bare soil.
- Avoid the use of trimmers along the edge of the water body.
- Mow lake and pond collars at a higher height to slow and filter overland flow to waterbodies.
- Remove excess sediments from pond to reduce irrigation system failures.
- Determine if dredged materials are toxic. If toxic avoid contact with turf.
- Locate littoral shelves at the pond's inlets and outlets to reduce problems with the playability and maintainability of a water hazard.
- Seek professional assistance from an environmental specialist to design an appropriate water sample collection strategy.
- Determine which sites will be analyzed, and use reputable equipment and qualified technicians.
- Demonstrate responsible land and water use practices based on water data.
- Define data values appropriately based on the associated BMP used to protect water quality.
- Record observations of fish, wildlife, and general pond conditions.

## ***Aquatic Plants***

### **Principles**

- Phytoplankton, which give water its green appearance, provide the base for the food chain in ponds. Tiny animals called zooplankton use phytoplankton as a food source.
- Large aquatic plants (aquatic macrophytes) can grow rooted to the bottom and supported by the water (submersed plants), rooted to the bottom or shoreline and extended above the water surface (emersed plants), rooted to the bottom with

their leaves floating on the water surface (floating-leaved plants), or free-floating on the water surface (floating plants). Different types of aquatic macrophytes have different functions in ponds.

- Plant life growing on littoral shelves may help to protect receiving waters from the pollutants present in surface water runoff, and a littoral shelf is often required in permitted surface water-retention ponds. Floating plants suppress phytoplankton because they absorb nutrients from the pond water and create shade.
- The use of aquatic plants to improve the appearance of a pond (aquascaping) can be included as part of the overall landscape design.
- Ponds may be constructed on golf courses strictly as water hazards or for landscape purposes, but they often have the primary purpose of drainage and stormwater management, and are also often a source of irrigation water.
- **Best Management Practices**
- Properly designed ponds with a narrow fringe of vegetation along the edge are more resistant to problems than those with highly maintained turf.
- In ponds with littoral plantings, problem plants should be selectively controlled without damaging littoral shelves.
- Encourage clumps of native emergent vegetation at the shoreline.
- A comprehensive lake management plan should include strategies to control the growth of nuisance vegetation that can negatively affect a pond's water quality and treatment capacity.
- Frequently remove filamentous algae by hand and/or frequently apply algaecide to small areas of algae (spot treatment).
- To reduce the risk of oxygen depletion, use an algaecide containing hydrogen peroxide instead of one with copper or endothall.

## ***Human Health Concerns***

### **Principles**

- The use of pesticides should be part of an overall pest management strategy that includes biological controls, cultural methods, pest monitoring, and other applicable practices, referred to altogether as IPM.
- Address areas where standing water may provide habitat for nuisance organisms.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Use IPM principles to address insects that may pose a hazard to human health.
- Drain areas of standing water during wet seasons to reduce insect populations.
- Use *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) products according to label directions to manage waterborne insect larvae.

## ***Floodplain Restoration***

### **Principles**

- Reestablishment of natural water systems helps mitigate flooding and control stormwater.
- Address high sediment and nutrient loads, vertical stream intensity and lateral stream migration evidenced by unstable banks. Should be evaluated in terms of historic and ideal channel and floodplain form and dimension.
- Land use decisions and engineering standards must be based on the latest research science available.
- Floodplains serve as temporary storage of flows that exceed the bank full channel.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Install stream buffers to restore natural water flows and flooding controls.
- Install buffers in play areas to stabilize and restore natural areas that will attract wildlife species.
- Install detention basins to store water and reduce flooding at peak flows.

## ***Stormwater, Ponds, and Lakes***

Stormwater is the conveying force behind what is called nonpoint source pollution. Nonpoint pollution, which is both natural and caused by humans, comes not from a pipe from a factory or sewage treatment plant, but from daily activity. Pollutants commonly found in stormwater include the microscopic wear products of brake linings and tires; oil; shingle particles washed off roofs; soap, dirt, and worn paint particles from car washing; leaves and grass clippings; pet and wildlife wastes; lawn, commercial, and agricultural fertilizers; and pesticides.

### **Principles**

- The control of stormwater on a golf course is more than just preventing the flooding of the clubhouse, maintenance, and play areas. In addition to controlling the amount and rate of water leaving the course, it involves storing irrigation water, controlling erosion and sediment, enhancing wildlife habitat, removing waterborne pollutants, and addressing aesthetic and playability concerns.
- Most golf courses plan their lakes and water hazards to be a part of the stormwater control and treatment system. However, natural waters of the state cannot be considered treatment systems and must be protected.
- Lakes and ponds may also be used as a source of irrigation water.
- It is important to consider these functions when designing and constructing the ponds. Peninsular projections and long, narrow fingers may prevent mixing.

Ponds that are too shallow may reach high temperatures, leading to low oxygen levels and promoting algal growth and excess sedimentation.

- Stormwater treatment is best accomplished by a treatment train approach, in which water is conveyed from one treatment to another by conveyances that themselves contribute to the treatment.

Source controls are the first car on the BMP treatment train. They help to prevent the generation of stormwater or introduction of pollutants into stormwater. The most effective method of stormwater treatment is not to generate stormwater in the first place, or to remove it as it is generated.

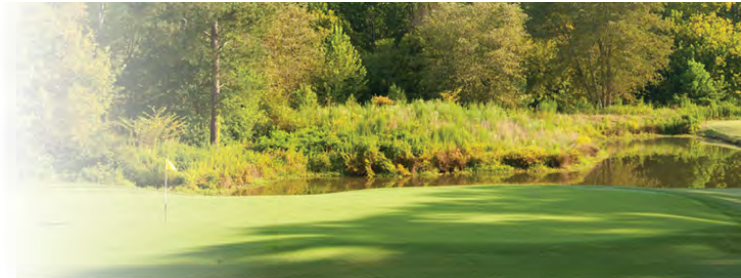
## **Best Management Practices**

- Install swales and slight berms where appropriate around the water's edge, along with buffer strips, to reduce nutrients and contamination.
- Design stormwater treatment trains to direct stormwater across vegetated filter strips (such as turfgrass), through a swale into a wet detention pond, and then out through another swale to a constructed wetland system.
- Ensure that no discharges from pipes go directly to water.
- Eliminate or minimize directly connected impervious areas.
- Use vegetated swales to slow and infiltrate water and trap pollutants in the soil, where they can be naturally destroyed by soil organisms.
- Use depressed landscape islands in parking lots to catch, filter, and infiltrate water, instead of letting it run off. When hard rains occur, an elevated stormwater drain inlet allows the island to hold the treatment volume and settle out sediments, while allowing the overflow to drain away. These may require improved soil media or additional design.
- Maximize the use of pervious pavements, such as brick or concrete pavers separated by sand and planted with grass. Special high-permeability concrete is available for cart paths or parking lots.
- Disconnect runoff from gutters and roof drains from impervious areas, so that it flows onto permeable areas that allow the water to infiltrate near the point of generation.
- Golf course stormwater management should include "natural systems engineering" or "soft engineering" approaches that maximize the use of natural systems to treat water.
- Use a treatment train approach.
- Institute buffers and special management zones.
- Utilize local or state stormwater manuals.



# Water Quality Monitoring and Management

## *Regulatory Considerations*



### Principle

Golf course owners and superintendents should investigate regulatory requirements that may exist in their location to protect surface and groundwater quality.

### Best Management Practices

- Aquatic management of plants may be regulated under construction permitting and regulatory licensing requirements. Consult with federal, state, and local water management agencies before managing golf course lakes and wetland areas.
- Consult with federal, state, and local water management agencies, and/or consult an approved management plan before performing cultural practices: fertilization; installation of plants; hand removal of plants or mechanical harvesting.
- The introduction of African tilapia and aquatic triploid grass carp, biological controls, aeration, and chemical controls (herbicide/algaecide) must be approved and monitored according to permit and licensing protocols and compliance.
- The reuse of sediments from surface-water ponds (stormwater detention) may be subject to regulation.
- Golf course owners are responsible for the reuse of sediment, the Total Maximum Daily Loading (TMDLs), mitigation, and watershed basin management action plans (BMAP).
- Wetlands are protected areas; consult with federal and state agencies before altering natural aquatic areas.
- Constructed wetlands should have an impervious bottom to prevent groundwater contamination.
- Studies of water supplies are needed for irrigation systems, including studies of waterbodies or flows on, near, and under the property are needed to properly design a course's stormwater system and water features to protect water resources.

## ***Site Analysis***

### **Principle**

Design an aquatic plant management strategy that addresses the intended uses of the waterbody to maintain water quality. Identify the site's physical attributes and location, the invasive or weedy species present, aesthetics, watershed and groundwater assessments, and other environmental considerations.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Accommodate natural lake processes in the construction of lakes and ponds; include herbaceous and woody vegetation and emergent and submergent shoreline plants to reduce operational costs.
- Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and native or naturalized vegetation wherever practical.
- Apply appropriate herbicides to minimize damage to non-target littoral plantings.
- Maintain a narrow band of open water at the pond edge to control the expansion of plants into more desirable littoral plantings.
- Use appropriate aquatic herbicides to avoid turfgrass injury.
- Irrigation should not directly strike or runoff to waterbodies and no-fertilization buffers should be maintained along edges.
- Outline goals and priorities to guide the development of the BMP necessary to support the lake/aquatic management plan.
- Superintendents should monitor designated waters in their area for the persistence of highly toxic herbicides and algaecides in the environment.
- Secondary environmental effects on surface water and groundwater from the chemical control of vegetation should be monitored and recorded.
- Apply fertilizer and reclaimed (reuse) irrigation/fertigation appropriately to avoid surface and groundwater contamination.
- Apply copper products per label instructions to reduce the risk of negative biological impacts and impairing water quality.
- Identify position of property in relation to its watershed.
- Identify overall goals and qualify concerns of the local watershed.
- Indicate surface water and flow patterns.
- Indicate stormwater flow as well as existing and potential holding capacity.
- Indicate impervious surfaces, such as buildings, parking lots, or pathways.
- Indicate major drainages and catch basins that connect to local surface water bodies.
- Identify and understand depth to water tables and soil types.
- Locate and protect wellheads.

## ***Water Quality Sampling Program***

### **Principles**

- Every golf course should have a plan to monitor the state of the environment and the effects the golf course may be having on the environment.
- Monitoring is the method used to determine whether outside events are impacting the water quality entering the golf course, or whether the golf course is having a positive, neutral, or negative effect on water quality. It also provides a body of evidence on the golf course's environmental impact.
- A water quality monitoring plan should be prepared to ensure the ongoing protection of groundwater and surface-water quality after construction is completed. The same sites should be monitored during the preconstruction phase, although the monitoring plan can be modified based on site-specific conditions.
- Sampling parameters are determined based on golf course operation and basin-specific parameters of concern (these may be identified by local/state Total Maximum Daily Load [TMDL], Programs). Typically, samples should be analyzed for nutrients, pH and alkalinity, sediments, suspended solids, dissolved oxygen (DO), heavy metals, and any pesticides expected to be used on the golf course.
- Ongoing, routine water sampling provides meaningful trends over time. A single sample is rarely meaningful in isolation.
- Post-construction surface-water quality sampling should begin with the installation and maintenance of golf course turf and landscaping. Samples should be collected a minimum of three times per year.
- Should there be no discharge on the scheduled sample date, samples should be taken during the next discharge event.
- Post-construction surface-water quality sampling should continue through the first three years of operation and during the wet and dry seasons every third year thereafter, provided that all required water quality monitoring has been completed and the development continues to implement all current management plans. It may also be wise to sample if a significant change has been made in course operation or design that could affect nearby water quality.
- Sampling parameters should be determined based on golf course operation and any basin-specific parameters of concern (identified by the TMDL program or local regulators).  
Golf courses should also sample for macroinvertebrates as determined useful by water quality specialists.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Establish dissolved oxygen (DO) thresholds to prevent fish kills (occur at levels of 2 ppm), for example, use artificial aeration (diffusers).
- Reduce stress on fish; keep DO levels above 3 ppm.
- Select algacides containing hydrogen peroxide instead of one containing copper or endothall to treat high populations of phytoplankton.

- Use IPM principles to limit excess use of pesticides.
- Spot-treat filamentous algae or frequently remove algae by hand to prevent lowering oxygen concentrations in water.
- Use dyes and aeration to maintain appropriate light and DO levels.
- Apply algaecides to small areas to prevent fish mortality; do not treat the entire pond at once.
- Coordinate construction/renovation activities to minimize the amount of disturbed area and possible risk of contamination via runoff.
- Plan construction/renovation activities in phases to limit soil disruption and movement.
- Sod, sprig, or reseed bare or thinning turf areas.
- Mulch areas under tree canopies to cover bare soil.
- Avoid the use of trimmers along the edge of the water body.
- Mow lake and pond collars at 2 inches or higher to slow and filter overland flow to water bodies.
- Remove excess sediments to reduce irrigation system failures.
- Treat dredged materials as a toxic substance. Avoid contact with turf.
- Locate littoral shelves at the pond's inlets and outlets to reduce problems with the playability and maintainability of a water hazard.

## ***Sampling Parameters, Collection, and Analysis***

### **Principles**

- A water quality monitoring program must include monitoring of surface water, groundwater, and pond sediments. It should be implemented in three phases: background, construction, and long-term management.
- Sampling of all watershed ingress and egress points is important to know what is coming into the property to identify potential impacts and baseline of water quality data.
- The purpose of quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) is to ensure that chemical, physical, biological, microbiological, and toxicological data are appropriate and reliable, and are collected and analyzed using scientifically sound procedures.
- It is strongly recommended that a certified laboratory be used even if the data are only for proprietary use and are not reported to any regulatory agency
- QA/QC procedures should be followed. Golf course management must have good data to make good decisions, and if a golf course should ever want to produce data for an agency or in court to defend the facility from unwarranted charges, those data must meet QA/QC standards to be defensible as evidence.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Seek professional assistance from an environmental specialist to design an appropriate water sample collection strategy.

- Determine what sites will be analyzed and use reputable equipment and qualified technicians.
- Demonstrate responsible land and water use practices based on water data.
- Define data values appropriately based on the associated BMP used to protect water quality.
- Record observations of fish, wildlife, and general pond conditions.

## ***Buffer Zones***

### **Principles**

- Buffers around the shore of a waterbody or other sensitive areas filter and purify runoff as it passes across the buffer. Ideally, plant buffers with native species provide a triple play of water quality benefits, pleasing aesthetics, and habitat/food sources for wildlife. As discussed above, it is important to continue these plantings into the water to provide emergent vegetation for aquatic life, even if the pond is not used for stormwater treatment.
- Effective BMP in these areas include filter and trap sediment, site-specific natural/organic fertilization, and limits on pesticide use, primarily focusing on the control of invasive species.
- Golf course stormwater management should include “natural systems engineering” or “soft engineering” approaches that maximize the use of natural systems to treat water. Apply an understanding of the best potential stream condition as fluvial geomorphological data may inform.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Riparian buffer areas are above the high-water mark and should be unfertilized and left in a natural state.
- Reduce the frequency of mowing at the lake edge and collect or direct clippings to upland areas.
- Institute buffers and special management zones.
- The placement of bunkers and the shaping of contours surrounding a green should allow proper drainage and provide for the treatment and absorption of runoff from the green.
- Use turf and native plantings to enhance buffer areas. Increase height of cut in the riparian zone to filter and buffer nutrient movement to the water.
- Use a deflector shield to prevent fertilizer and pesticide prills from contacting surface waters.
- Apply fertilizer and pesticides based on the effective swath; keep application on target and away from buffers or channel swales.
- Use a swale and berm system to allow for resident time (ponding) for water to infiltrate through the root zone to reduce lateral water movement to the surface water body.
- Maintain a riparian buffer to filter the nutrients in stormwater runoff.

- An appropriate-sized buffer (steeper slope requires great buffer width) of turf mowed at a higher height of cut and minimally fertilized with enhanced-efficiency fertilizers can provide an effective buffer.
- Use plant buffers with native species to provide pleasing aesthetics, habitat, and food sources for wildlife.
- Ideally, littoral zones should have a slope of about 1 foot vertical to 6-10 foot horizontal.
- Encourage clumps of native emergent vegetation at the shoreline.
- Establish special management zones around pond edges.
- Reverse-grade around the perimeter to control surface water runoff into ponds and reduce nutrient loads.
- Planting on slopes with less than a 6-foot horizontal to a 1-foot vertical may not be as successful over the long term.
- Construct random small dips and ridges of a few inches to a foot to promote diversity within the plant community and provide a healthier and more productive littoral zone.
- All or most of the out-of-play water bodies should have shoreline buffers planted with native or well-adapted noninvasive vegetation to provide food and shelter for wildlife.
- Practice good fertilizer management to reduce the nutrient runoff into ponds that causes algae blooms and ultimately reduces DO levels.
- Manipulate water levels to prevent low levels that result in warmer temperatures and lowered DO levels.
- Aerate shallow lakes less than 6 feet in depth to maintain acceptable DO levels.
- Where applicable, aerate at night to control oxygen depletion in any pond.
- Install desirable plants to naturally buffer DO loss and fluctuation.
- Dispose of grass clippings where runoff and wind will not carry them back to the lake.
- Nutrient rich runoff encourages alga blooms and other phytoplankton; apply appropriate fertilizer rates and application setbacks.
- Dredge or remove sediment to protect beneficial organisms that contribute to the lakes food web and overall lake health.



*Figure 13. Proper fertilizer management reduces nutrient runoff. Photo credit: Ryan D'Autremont.*

## ***Wetland Protection***

### **Principles**

- Several states protect isolated wetlands as waters of the state by rule of law. Wetlands act both as filters for pollutant removal and as nurseries for many species. Many people do not realize the vital role they play in purifying surface waters.
- The biological activity of plants, fish, animals, insects, and especially bacteria and fungi in a healthy, diverse wetland is the recycling factory of our ecosystem. While wetlands do pose a special concern, their mere presence is not incompatible with the game of golf. With care, many golf holes have been threaded through sensitive areas, and with proper design and management golf can be an acceptable neighbor.
- When incorporated into a golf course design, wetlands should be maintained as preserves and separated from managed turf areas with native vegetation or structural buffers.
- Constructed or disturbed wetlands may be permitted to be an integral part of the stormwater management system.

## **Best Management Practices**

- Establish wetlands where water enters lakes to slow water flow and trap sediments.
- Maintain appropriate silt fencing and BMP on projects upstream to prevent erosion and sedimentation.
- Natural waters should be considered treatment systems and must be protected. (Natural waters do not include treatment wetlands.)
- Check local requirements to establish a low- to no-maintenance level buffer along non-tidal and tidal wetlands.
- Establish and maintain a 100-foot riparian buffer around wetlands, springs, and spring runs.

## ***Stormwater Management***

### **Principle**

Controlling stormwater on a golf course is more than just preventing the flooding of the clubhouse, maintenance, and play areas. In addition to controlling the amount and rate of water leaving the course, stormwater involves storing irrigation water, controlling erosion and sedimentation, enhancing wildlife habitat, removing waterborne pollutants, and addressing aesthetic and playability concerns. Keep in mind that not all stormwater on a golf course originates there; some may be from adjoining lands, including residential or commercial developments.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Use vegetated swales to slow and infiltrate water and trap pollutants in the soil, where they can be naturally destroyed by soil organisms.
- Maximize the use of pervious pavements, such as brick or concrete pavers separated by sand and planted with grass.
- Special high-permeability concrete is available for cart paths or parking lots.
- Design stormwater control structures to hold stormwater for appropriate residence times in order to remove total suspended solids.
- Use a stormwater treatment train to convey water from one treatment structure to another.
- Eliminate or minimize directly connected impervious areas as much as possible.
- Disconnect runoff from gutters and roof drains from impervious areas, so that it flows onto permeable areas that allow the water to infiltrate near the point of generation.
- Use depressed landscape islands in parking lots to catch, filter, and infiltrate water, instead of letting it run off. When hard rains occur, an elevated stormwater drain inlet allows the island to hold the treatment volume and settle out sediments, while allowing the overflow to drain away. See Ohio state specifics for design guidance on bioretention and rain gardens.



- Ensure that no discharges from pipes go directly to water without water quality treatment.

## ***Sediment***

### **Principle**

During construction and/or renovation, temporary barriers and traps must be used to prevent sediments from being washed off-site into water bodies. Wherever possible, keep a vegetative cover on the site until it is actually ready for construction, and then plant, sod, or otherwise cover it as soon as possible to prevent erosion.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Use shoreline grasses to prevent bank erosion.
- Use detention basins/catchments and water quality practices to buffer flooding and excessive runoff that may contain sediment.
- When constructing drainage systems, pay close attention to engineering details such as subsoil preparation, the placement of gravel, slopes, and backfilling.
- Internal golf course drains should not drain directly into an open water body, but should discharge through pretreatment zones and/or vegetative buffers to help remove nutrients and sediments.
- Maintain a vegetative cover on construction sites until it is actually ready for construction.



*Figure 14. Use detention basins/catchments and water quality practices to buffer flooding and excessive runoff that may contain sediment. Photo credit: Ryan D'Autremont.*

## **Sodic/Saline Conditions**

### **Principles**

- All natural waters contain soluble salts; however, the amount and type of salts they contain vary greatly.
- Irrigation water can degrade when wells are pumped at high rates or for prolonged periods. Sometimes “up-coning” can occur from pumping, whereby saline water, rather than freshwater, is drawn into the well.
- Saline water typically is unsuitable for irrigation because of its high content of TDS.
- Saltwater intrusion from groundwater pumping near coastal areas can create a problem with some irrigation wells.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Use surface water to mix (blend) affected groundwater to lower the total salt concentration.
- Routinely monitor water quality to ensure that salt concentrations are at the acceptable levels.
- Consider fertilizer that uses soluble nitrogen forms with a relatively low concentration of salts in frequent applications.
- Consider a controlled-release fertilizer to reduce salt injury.
- Identify salt additions and saline sources that contribute to the total salt concentration.
- Base management plan on routine soil tests to determine sodium adsorption ratio (SAR), exchangeable sodium percentage (ESP), electrical conductivity saturated paste method/unit (EC<sub>e</sub>), and free calcium carbonate content.
- Select alternative turfgrass and landscape plants that are more salt-tolerant.
- Reduce salt accumulations in the soil by flushing soils as needed with a higher-quality water source.
- Design irrigation systems to account for flushing of salt accumulation from soil.
- Amend soil and water to remove salt ions from affected areas.
- Evaluate BMP to determine effectiveness toward managing sodic/saline conditions.

# Nutrient Management

## *Preface*



Proper nutrient management plays a key role in the reduction of environmental risk and increases course profitability. Among other benefits, applied nutrients inflate the available pool of nutrients and allow turfgrass to recover from damage, increase its resistance to stress, and increase its playability. However, the increase in available nutrients also increases the potential risk of environmental impact. Nutrients may move beyond the turfgrass via leaching or runoff, which may directly impact our environment. Other organisms also respond to increases in nutrients and, in some cases, these organisms may deleteriously alter our ecosystem. The goal of a proper nutrient management plan should be to apply the minimum necessary nutrients to achieve an acceptable playing surface and apply these nutrients in a manner that maximizes their plant uptake.

## ***Regulatory Considerations***

The [Impacts of Nitrogen and Phosphorus on Water Quality](#) has been well documented with solutions widely discussed. Ohio has made efforts and put programs in place to help combat nutrient pollution in the state's waterways. The [Ohio Nutrient Reduction Strategy 2015 Addendum](#) was introduced in January of 2016, and additional [Nutrient Management Initiatives](#) in Ohio are addressing water quality issues.

Fertilizer application records should be documented within 24 hours of the initial application. The records should then be kept for a minimum of three years. Ohio does not maintain a standard record keeping format, but the following information is recommended:

- Name of the responsible agricultural fertilizer certificate holder (and name of applicator if different)
- Date of application (month, day, and year)
- Location or field identification number of fertilizer application area
- Rate of application (e.g., pounds of fertilizer per acre)
- Analysis of fertilizer applied (e.g., 10-10-0)
- Application method (soil injected, incorporated, surface-applied, etc.)
- Soil conditions at the time of application

- Temperature, precipitation, and other weather conditions at the time of application
  - For surface applications only: was the ground frozen or snow-covered (yes/no)?
- Weather forecast for the day following the application

## **Principles**

- Local and state regulations are in place to better manage nutrient risks based on the unique conditions that exist in your location. Designing a nutrient management plan within these regulations addresses local concerns and minimizes risk within your unique ecosystem.
- Depending on your location, regulatory agencies may include federal, state, or local policies.
- In general, if your location is regulated by nutrient policies (such as nutrient management plans), all of your nutrient BMP will be designed according to these policies.  
Understand the importance of nutrient licensing.

## **Best Management Practices**

- Identify who must be licensed.
- Describe differing licenses, if applicable.
- Provide the minimum requirement.
- Detail the Continued Education Unit required to maintain the license.
- Understand the value of training programs.
- Contact local and state organizations for regulatory restrictions.



*Figure 15. Through proper sampling, laboratory analysis, interpretation of results, recommendations, and record keeping, soil testing can be used to manage nutrients more efficiently. Photo credit: Ryan D'Autremont.*

## **Soil Testing**

### **Principles**

- Soil testing may or may not provide the appropriate answers to your nutrient management questions. Consult with your local land-grant university to get the most current information and to better understand which soil test values are relevant in your location.
- Through proper sampling, laboratory analysis, interpretation of results, recommendations, and record keeping, soil testing can be used to manage nutrients more efficiently.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Accurate and consistent sampling is essential to providing useful soil test information over time.
- Divide the course into logical components such as greens, fairways, tees, roughs, etc., for each hole.

- Ten to 15 soil samples should be randomly taken from each section and blended together to provide a representative, uniform soil sample.
- Each soil sample should be taken from the same depth.
- Use an extractant appropriate for your soils.
- The same extractant must be used for each test in order to compare soil test results over time.
- The purpose of a soil test is to provide the grower with a prediction of a plant's response to an applied nutrient.
- If the location has correlation data between a given nutrient applied to soil and a response to that nutrient by turfgrass, then recommendations may provide expected results.  
If your location does not have correlation data, then soil test recommendations may be of little value.
- Keeping soil tests from prior years will allow you to observe changes over time. This practice can provide good evidence of the impact of your nutrient management plan.

The Ohio State University Extension maintains [guidelines and a list of soil test laboratories](#) in Ohio and neighboring states.

## ***Plant Tissue Analysis***

### **Principles**

- Because of the mobility and conversion of elements within the soil; soil sampling can be less predictable than tissue testing. Tissue testing provides a precise measurement of nutrients within the plant. Tissue test sufficiency ranges are only as good as the correlation data of a given element to an acceptable quality level of a given turfgrass. Typically, tissue correlation data are more prevalent than soil test correlation data and, therefore, programs designed around tissue testing may provide more reliable results.
- Through proper sampling, consistent intervals, and record keeping, tissue sampling may be used to measure existing turf health.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Tissue samples may be collected during regular mowing.
- Do not collect tissue after any event that may alter the nutrient analysis. Events may include fertilization, topdressing, pesticide applications, etc.
- Place tissue in paper bags, not plastic.
- If possible, allow tissue samples to air-dry at your facility before mailing them.
- Poor-quality turfgrass that is of concern should be sampled separately from higher-quality turfgrass.
- When turfgrass begins to show signs of nutrient stress, a sample should be collected immediately.

- More frequent tissue sampling allows a more accurate assessment of your turfgrass nutrient status changes over time.
- The quantity of tissue analysis you choose to use is entirely up to you and your needs. However, two to four tests per year are common on greens and one to two tests per year are common on tees and fairways.
- Keeping tissue test results from prior years will allow you to observe changes over time and can provide good evidence of the impact of your nutrient management plan.

## ***Fertilizers Used in Golf Course Management***

### **Principles**

Understanding the components of fertilizers, the fertilizer label, and the function of each element within the plant are all essential in the development of an efficient nutrient management program.

### **Terminology**

- Grade or analysis is the percent by weight of Nitrogen (N), Phosphorous fertilizer ( $P_2O_5$ ) and Potassium fertilizer ( $K_2O$ ) that is guaranteed to be in the fertilizer.
- A complete fertilizer contains N,  $P_2O_5$ , and  $K_2O$ .
- The laws governing the labeling of fertilizer vary greatly among states. Consult your land-grant university or the appropriate state agency regarding the laws in your location.

### **Label**

- The label is intended to inform the user about the contents of the fertilizer which, if understood and followed, will result in little to no environmental risk.
- The fertilizer label may contain:
  - Brand
  - Grade
  - Manufacturer's name and address
  - Guaranteed analysis
  - "Derived from" statement
  - Net weight



*Figure 16. Understanding the components of fertilizers, the fertilizer label, and the function of each element within the plant are all essential in the development of an efficient nutrient management program. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

## **Macronutrients**

Macronutrients are required in the greatest quantities and include nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K).

Understanding the role of each macronutrient within the plant should provide you with a greater understanding of why these nutrients play such a key role in proper turfgrass management.

### **The role of nitrogen (N)**

Nitrogen is required by the plant in greater quantities than any other element except carbon (C), hydrogen (H), and oxygen (O). Nitrogen plays a role in numerous plant functions including an essential component of amino acids, proteins and nucleic acids.

- *Fate and transformation of N*
- The goal of all applied nutrients is to maximize plant uptake while minimizing nutrient losses. Understanding each process will increase your ability to make sound management decisions and ultimately leads to an increase in course profitability and a reduction in environmental risk.



- *Nitrogen processes*
  - *Mineralization*: the microbial mediated conversion of organic N into plant-available  $\text{NH}_4$
  - *Nitrification*: the microbial-mediated conversion of  $\text{NH}_4$  to  $\text{NO}_3$
  - *Denitrification*: the microbial mediated conversion of  $\text{NO}_3$  to N gas; this primarily occurs in low-oxygen environments and is enhanced by high soil pH
  - *Volatilization*: the conversion of  $\text{NH}_4$  to  $\text{NH}_3$  gas
  - *Leaching*: the downward movement of an element below the rootzone
  - *Runoff*: the lateral movement of an element beyond the intended turfgrass location
- The release mechanism and factors influencing N release from available N sources

Understanding how certain N sources should be blended and applied is an essential component in an efficient nutrient management plan. In many cases, N sources are applied without regard to their release characteristics. This is an improper practice and increases the risk of negative environmental impact. Each N source (particularly slow-release forms) is unique and therefore should be managed accordingly. Applying a polymer-coated urea in the same manner one would apply a sulfur-coated urea greatly reduces the value of the polymer-coated urea. Similarly, applying 2 pounds of N from ammonium sulfate may cause burning, while applying 2 pounds of N from certain polymer-coated ureas may not provide the desired turfgrass response. Rate, application date, location, and turfgrass species all should be included in your nutrient application decision.

- *Soluble nitrogen sources*
  - Urea (46-0-0)
  - Ammonium nitrate (34-0-0)
  - Ammonium sulfate (21-0-0)
  - Diammonium phosphate (18-46-0)
  - Monoammonium phosphate (11-52-0)
  - Calcium nitrate (15.5-0-0)
  - Potassium nitrate (13-0-44)
- *Slow-release nitrogen sources*

A slow-release N source is any N-containing fertilizer where the release of N into the soil is delayed either by requiring microbial degradation of the N source, by coating the N substrate which delays the dissolution of N, or by reducing the water solubility of the N source.

These include:

- Sulfur-coated urea
- Polymer/resin-coated
- Isobutylidene diurea

- Urea-formaldehyde/ureaformaldehyde reaction products
- Natural organic
- *Urease and nitrification inhibitors*
  - Urease inhibitors reduce the activity of the urease enzyme resulting in a reduction of volatilization and an increase in plant-available N.
  - Nitrification inhibitors reduce the activity of *Nitrosomonas* bacteria, which are responsible for the conversion of NH<sub>4</sub> to NO<sub>2</sub>. This reduced activity results in a reduction of N lost via denitrification and an increase in plant-available N.

### **The role of phosphorous (P)**

Phosphorus can be a growth-limiting factor for many unintended organisms and is a major contributor to eutrophication of water bodies. Thus, proper timing and rates should be implemented to reduce the risk of off-site movement of phosphorus.

Phosphorus forms high-energy compounds that are used to transfer energy within the plant. Phosphorus may remain in an inorganic form or may become incorporated into organic compounds. Phosphorous application rates should be based upon soil test results derived from documented correlations demonstrating a turf response to soil test phosphorous levels.

- *P deficiency symptoms*
  - Initially, reduced shoot growth and dark green color may be observed
  - Later, lower leaves may turn reddish at the tips and then the color may progress down the blade
- *P sufficiency ranges*

Consult your land-grant university for sufficiency ranges in your location

- *P fertilizer sources*
  - Diammonium phosphate
  - Concentrated superphosphate
  - Monoammonium phosphate
  - Natural organics

### **The role of potassium (K)**

Potassium is of no environmental concern, but can be an economic concern, particularly when potassium is over-utilized, which can be quite common. Generally, potassium concentrations in turfgrass tissue are about 1/3 to 1/2 that of nitrogen.

Potassium is not a component of any organic compound and moves readily within the plant. Potassium is key component of osmoregulation which has been documented to increase stress resistance.

- *K deficiency symptoms*

Except under severe, documented deficiencies, K may not have an observable influence on turfgrass quality. Yellowing of older leaves followed by tip dieback and scorching of leaf margins have been reported.

- *K sufficiency ranges*

Consult your land-grant university for sufficiency ranges in your location.

- *K fertilizer sources*
  - Potassium sulfate
  - Potassium chloride
  - Potassium nitrate

## **Secondary Macronutrients**

Secondary macronutrients are essential to plant function and are required in quantities less than N, P, and K, but more than micronutrients. These include calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg), and sulfur (S)

### **The role of calcium (Ca)**

- Primarily a component of cell walls and structure
- Consult your land-grant university for sufficiency ranges in your location
- Found in gypsum, limestone, and calcium chloride

### **The role of magnesium (Mg)**

- Central ion in the chlorophyll molecule and chlorophyll synthesis
- Consult your land-grant university for sufficiency ranges in your location
- Found in S-Po-Mg, dolomitic limestone, and magnesium sulfate

### **The role of sulfur (S)**

- Metabolized into the amino acid, cysteine, which is used in various proteins and enzymes
- Consult your land-grant university for sufficiency ranges in your location
- Found in ammonium sulfate, elemental sulfur, gypsum, potassium sulfate

## **Micronutrients**

Understanding the role of each micronutrient within the plant should provide you with a greater understanding of why these nutrients play such a key role in proper turfgrass management.

Micronutrients are just as essential for proper turfgrass health as macronutrients, but they are required in very small quantities compared to macronutrients. Micronutrients include iron (Fe), manganese (Mn), boron (B), copper (Cu), zinc (Zn), molybdenum (Mo), and Chlorine (Cl).

Consult your land-grant university for micronutrient sufficiency ranges in your location.

### **The role of iron (Fe)**

- Is part of the catalytic enzymes and is required for chlorophyll synthesis
- Affects photosynthesis, nitrogen fixation, and respiration
- Consult your land-grant university for sufficiency ranges in your location

### **The role of manganese (Mn)**

- Involved in photosynthesis
- Required as a cofactor for ~35 enzymes
- Lignin biosynthesis depends on Mn

### **The role of boron (B)**

- Found in the cell wall; probably required for the structural integrity of the cell wall

### **The role of copper (Cu)**

- Cu-protein plastocyanin is involved in photosynthesis
- Cofactor for a variety of oxidative enzymes

### **The role of zinc (Zn)**

- Structural component of enzymes
- Protein synthesis requires Zn
- Carbohydrate metabolism affected by Zn

### **The role of molybdenum (Mo)**

- Primarily related to nitrogen metabolism
- Structural and catalytical functions of enzymes

### **The role of chlorine (Cl)**

- Required for the oxygen-evolving reactions of photosynthesis
- Also appears to be required for cell division in both leaves and shoots

## **Soil pH**

### **Principle**

Identifying pH levels may be the most important soil test result for turfgrass managers. In most cases, a pH of 6.3 is ideal because it provides the greatest probability of micronutrient availability. Soil pH adjustments may occur slowly and are temporary.



*Figure 17. Soil properties and soil sampling aid in developing a nutrient management plan. Photo credit: Ryan D'Autremont.*

### **Best Management Practices**

- To increase soil pH, apply a liming material (calcium carbonate, calcium oxide, dolomitic limestone) that contains  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  and neutralizes acidity.
- To lower soil pH, products containing elemental sulfur should be applied.
- In some cases, utilizing injection pumps into irrigation water to address pH can be beneficial.

## ***Nutrient Management***

### **Principles**

- Within Ohio, environmental conditions vary greatly including differences among soils, topography, rainfall, and temperature. These differences require that a nutrient management plan be flexible enough to allow turfgrass managers to address their unique needs.
- Understand the importance of application timing for effective use of applied nutrients.
- Nutrients applied which are carried off by runoff and not utilized by turf contribute to enrichment of downstream water resources and harmful algal blooms.

### **Best Management Practices**

- The objective of all nutrient applications is plant uptake and the corresponding desirable response.
- Apply nutrients when turfgrass is actively growing.
- Apply slow-release N fertilizers at the appropriate time of year to maximize the products' release characteristics. For example, an application of slow-release N to warm-season turfgrasses in fall may not be as effective as the same application applied in early summer because of the prolonged release time in fall.
- Follow N application rate recommendations from your local land-grant university.
- N application rates from slow-release materials should take into consideration the release rate of the chosen material. If insufficient material is applied, the desired response may not be observed.
- Consult your local land-grant university for efficient N:K in your location.
- The reduced height of cut and excessive traffic damage on putting greens results in an increased need for growth leading to an increase in nutrition.
- Tees and landing areas often have higher fertility requirements than fairways and roughs because they suffer constant divot damage.
- Fairways and roughs often require less nutrient inputs than other locations because of their increased height of cut, less damage, and clipping return.
- Exercise caution when applying nutrient applications during turfgrass establishment as these applications are particularly susceptible to loss via leaching and runoff.
- Provide appropriate rates and products to minimize N loss without reducing turfgrass establishment.
  - Increased water applications
  - Increased nutrients to hasten establishment
  - Reduced root mass
- Be aware of the different types of spreaders and understand the advantages and disadvantages of each.

- Not all fertilizers can be spread with every spreader. For example, if sulfur-coated urea was spread through a drop spreader, the sulfur coating could be damaged, essentially leading to an application of soluble urea.
- Choose the appropriate spreader for a given fertilizer material.
  - Walk-behind rotary
  - Drop spreader
  - Bulk rotary
  - Spray
  
- Calibration reduces environmental risk and increases profitability.
- Proper fertilizer storage, loading, and clean-up reduce environmental risk.
- Avoid applying fertilizer to soils that are at, or near, field capacity or following rain events that leave the soils wet.
- Do not apply fertilizer when the National Weather Service has issued a flood, tropical storm, or hurricane watch or warning, or if heavy rains are likely.

# Cultural Practices

## *Preface*



Cultivation practices are an important part of golf course turf management. Certain cultural practices such as mowing, verticutting, and rolling are necessary to provide a high-quality playing surface, while others such as aerification are required to enhance plant health.

Heavily used areas such as putting greens often deteriorate because of compacted soil, thatch accumulation, and excessive use. Soil problems from active use are usually limited to the top 3 inches of the soil profile and should be actively managed to enhance turf health and improve nutrient and water uptake.

Unlike annual crops, which offer the opportunity for periodic tilling of the soil profile to correct problems like soil compaction that might develop over time, turfgrass does not offer opportunities for significant physical disturbance of the soil without destroying the playing surface.

## ***Mowing***

### **Principles**

- Mowing is the most basic yet most important cultural practice to consider when developing a management plan.
- The mowing practices implemented on a facility will have an impact on turf density, texture, color, root development, and wear tolerance.
- Mowing practices affect turfgrass growth. Frequent mowing will increase shoot density and tillering. It will also decrease root and rhizome growth as a result of plant stress associated with removal of leaf tissue.
- Infrequent mowing results in alternating cycles of vegetative growth followed by scalping, which further depletes food reserves of the plants.
- Proper mowing height is a function of the species/cultivar being managed and the intended use of the site. Other factors influencing mowing height include mowing frequency, shade, mowing equipment, time of year, root growth, and abiotic and biotic stress.



- Maintaining an optimal root-to-shoot ratio is critical. Turfgrass plants that are mowed too low will require a substantial amount of time to provide the food needed to produce shoot tissue for future photosynthesis. If turf is mowed too low in one event, an imbalance occurs between the remaining vegetative tissue and the root system, resulting in more roots being present than the plant needs physiologically. As a result, the plants will slough off the unneeded roots. Root growth is least affected when no more than 30% to 40% of leaf area is removed in a single mowing.
- Failure to mow properly will result in weakened turf with poor density and quality.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Mowing frequency should increase during periods of rapid growth and decrease during dry, stressful periods.
- If turf becomes too tall, it should not be mowed down to the desired height all at once. Such severe scalping reduces turf density and can result in a dramatic reduction in root growth. Tall grass should be mowed frequently and height gradually decreased until desired height of cut is achieved.
- Shade affects turfgrass growth by filtering out photosynthetically active radiation. As a result, turfgrass plants respond by growing upright in an effort to capture more light to meet their photosynthetic needs. As a result, mowing height should be increased by at least 30% to improve the health of turf grown in a shaded environment.
- The use of the plant growth regulator trinexapac-ethyl has been shown to improve overall turf health when used as a regular management tool for grasses growing in shaded environments.
- Environmental stresses such as prolonged cloudy weather or drought can have a significant impact on turf health. Increase mowing heights as much as use will allow in order to increase photosynthetic capacity and rooting depth of plants.
- Use proper mowing equipment.
- Reel mowers are ideally suited for maintaining turfgrass stands that require a height of cut below 1.5 inches. They produce the best quality when compared to other types of mowers.
- Rotary mowers, when sharp and properly adjusted, deliver acceptable cutting quality for turf that is to be cut above 1 inch in height. Dull blades will result in shredding of leaf tissue, increasing water loss and the potential for disease development.
- Flail mowers are most often used to maintain utility turf areas that are mowed infrequently and do not have a high aesthetic requirement.
- Mowing patterns influence both the aesthetic and functional characteristics of a turf surface.
- Turfgrass clippings are a source of nutrients, containing 2% to 4% nitrogen on a dry-weight basis, as well as significant amounts of phosphorus and potassium.
- Nutrients contained in clippings can be sources of pollution and should be handled properly and not disposed of in, or near water resources.

- Clippings should be returned to the site during the mowing process unless the presence of grass clippings will have a detrimental impact on play. Cases when clippings should be removed include times when the amount of clippings is so large that it could smother the underlying grass or on golf greens where clippings might affect ball roll.
- Collected clippings should be disposed of properly to prevent undesirable odors near play areas and to prevent fire hazards that can occur when clippings accumulate. Consider composting clippings or dispersing them evenly in natural areas where they can decompose naturally without accumulating in piles.

## ***Cultivation***

### **Principles**

- Cultivation involves disturbing the soil or thatch through the use of various implements to achieve important agronomic goals that include relief of soil compaction, thatch/organic matter reduction, and improved water and air exchange.
- Cultivation techniques will result in disturbance of the playing surface that can require significant time for recovery.
- Frequency of cultivation should be based on traffic intensity and level of soil compaction.
- Core aerification is effective at managing soil compaction and aiding in improvement of soil drainage.
- Accumulation of excessive thatch and organic matter will reduce root growth, encourage disease, and create undesirable playing conditions.
- Light and frequent applications of sand will smooth the playing surface, control thatch, and potentially change the physical characteristics of the underlying soil when done in conjunction with core aerification.



*Figure 18. Applying light and frequent applications of sand can smooth playing surfaces and reduce thatch. Photo credit: Michael Takach.*

### **Best Management Practices**

- Core aeration involves removal of small cores or plugs from the soil profile. Cores are usually 0.25 to 0.75 inch in diameter. Annual core aeration programs should be designed to remove 15%-20% of the surface area. High-traffic areas may require a minimum of two to four core aerifications annually.
- Core aeration should be conducted only when grasses are actively growing to aid in quick recovery of surface density.
- Vary depth of aeration events by incorporating varying length tines to prevent development of compacted layers in the soil profile as a result of cultivation.
- Solid tines cause less disturbance to the turf surface and can be used to temporarily reduce compaction and soften surface hardness during months when the growth rate of grasses has been reduced. Benefits of solid-tine aeration are temporary because no soil is removed from the profile.
- Deep-drill aeration creates deep holes in the soil profile through use of drill bits. Soil is brought to the surface and distributed into the canopy. Holes can be backfilled with new root-zone materials if a drill-and-fill machine is used. These machines allow replacement of heavier soils with sand or other materials in an effort to improve water infiltration into the soil profile.

- Slicing and spiking reduce surface compaction and promote water infiltration with minimal surface damage.
- Slicing is faster than core aeration but is less effective. Slicing is best accomplished on moist soils.
- A spiker can break up crusts on the soil surface, disrupt algae layers, and improve water infiltration.
- Vertical mowing (verticutting) can be incorporated into a cultural management program to achieve a number of different goals. The grain of a putting green can be reduced by setting a verticutter to a depth that just nicks the surface of the turf. Deeper penetration of knives will stimulate new growth by cutting through stolons and rhizomes while removing accumulated thatch.
- Verticutting depth for thatch removal should reach the bottom of the thatch layer and extend into the surface of the soil beneath the thatch.
- Dethatching with a verticutter is an aggressive practice that is not recommended on golf putting greens because of the damage that occurs and the extensive recovery time required.
- Initiate vertical mowing when thatch level reaches 0.25 to 0.5 inch in depth. Shallow vertical mowing should be completed at least monthly on putting greens to prevent excessive thatch accumulation.
- Groomers, or miniature vertical mowers attached to the front of reels, are effective at improving management of grain and improving plant density through cutting of stolons.
- Topdress the playing surface with sand following core aeration and heavy vertical mowing to aid in recovery of turf. Rates will vary from 0.125 to 0.25 inch in depth and will depend on the capacity of the turf canopy to absorb the material without burying the plants.
- Light, frequent applications of topdressing sand on putting greens can smooth out minor surface irregularities, aiding in the management of thatch accumulation.
- Use only weed-free topdressing materials with a particle size similar to that of the underlying root zone.
- Use of finer materials can result in layering and can have a negative impact on water infiltration.
- Daily rolling of putting surfaces following mowing can increase putting speeds by roughly 10%, allowing for improved ball roll without lowering height of cut.
- To minimize potential for compaction caused by rolling, use light weight rollers.



*Figure 19. Core-aerification can improve playing surfaces and should only be completed when turf is actively growing. Photo credit: Ryan D'Autremont.*



*Figure 20. Core aeration involves removal of small cores or plugs from the soil profile. Annual core aeration programs should be designed to remove 15%-20% of the surface area. Photo credit: Ryan D'Autremont.*

## **Overseeding Warm-Season Turfgrass**

### **Principles**

- The fundamental purpose of overseeding is to establish a temporary cool-season grass into the warm-season base for improved color and playability during the fall and winter when the warm-season grass enters dormancy.
- Overseeding increases the need for irrigation and routine mowing and may result in significant thinning of the base grass during spring transition.
- Successful overseeding programs require year-long planning and incorporate all aspects of root-zone cultivation and weed control in an effort to maintain health of the warm-season turfgrass while allowing successful establishment of the overseeded cool-season grass species.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Thatch depth greater than 0.5 inch in the warm-season turfgrass base will prevent good seed-to-soil contact and will result in sporadic germination and

establishment. Remove thatch as part of an active cultivation program before overseeding.

- Reduce or eliminate fertilization of the base grass three to four weeks before the planned seeding date to minimize growth and competition.
- Core-aerify the soil four to six weeks before the planned overseeding date to open turf canopy and aid in uniform establishment of overseeded grass.
- Select grass species/cultivars that are adapted to the desired use, taking note of disease resistance and spring transition traits. Cultivars with improved heat tolerance can delay spring transition and create increased competition for water, nutrients, and light with the warm-season turfgrass base.
- Irrigate newly planted overseed to maintain constant moisture levels, not allowing the soil surface to dry out. Gradually reduce irrigation once the seedlings have been mowed.
- Do not fertilize with nitrogen immediately before or during establishment of overseed as the N may encourage warm-season turfgrass competition and increase disease potential.
- Move hole locations on putting greens daily during the establishment period to minimize damage to seedlings from foot traffic.
- Reduce fertilizer rates in spring to slow growth of overseeded grass. Once warm-season turfgrass regrowth is apparent, restore fertilizer applications to stimulate growth of the warm-season turfgrass.
- Colorants (dyes and pigments) can be used to provide winter color to dormant grasses.
- Overseeding practices can generate significant dust that may require dust control measures.



*Figure 21. Core-aerify the soil four to six weeks before the planned overseeding date to open turf canopy. Photo credit: Michael Takach.*

## ***Shade and Tree Management***

### **Principles**

- In general, most turfgrasses perform best in full sun.
- Excessive shade reduces photosynthesis and air circulation, thus increasing the susceptibility of the turf to pest and disease problems.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Prune tree limbs and roots as needed to reduce competition for sunlight, water, and nutrients.
- When possible, trees located near closely mowed areas such as tees and greens should be removed or their canopy should be thinned to promote good turf growth.



- Understand the variability in sun angles at different times of the year and how this affects turf health.
- Conduct a shade audit to identify problem areas.
- Conduct a tree survey that identifies each tree's location, species, health, life expectancy, safety concerns, value and special maintenance requirements.



*Figure 22. Pruning tree roots can help reduce competition for water and nutrients. Photo credit: Michael Takach.*

# Integrated Pest Management

## *Preface*



The philosophy of integrated pest management (IPM) was developed in the 1950s because of concerns over increased pesticide use, environmental contamination, and the development of pesticide resistance. The objectives of IPM include reducing pest management expenses, conserving energy, and reducing the risk of pesticide exposure to people, animals, and the environment. Its main goal, however, is to reduce pesticide use by using a combination of tactics to control pests, including cultural, biological, genetic, and chemical controls.

Pest management on golf courses results in significant inputs of time, labor, and financial resources. To grow healthy turfgrass, it is important for golf course superintendents to know what IPM is and how to implement it for each pest group (arthropods, nematodes, diseases, and weeds). They must be well-versed in pest identification, understand pest life cycles and/or conditions that favor pests, and know about all possible methods of controlling pests.

## ***Regulatory Considerations***

### **Principles**

- Some federal or state regulations cover practically anyone who manufactures, formulates, markets, and uses pesticides.
- Record keeping of pesticide use may be required by law. IPM principles suggest that you keep records of all pest control activity so that you may refer to information on past infestations or other problems to select the best course of action in the future.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Proper records of all pesticide applications should be kept according to local, state, or federal requirements.
- Use records to establish proof of use and follow-up investigation of standard protocols regarding:
  - Date and time of application

- Name of applicator
- Person directing or authorizing the application
- Weather conditions at the time of application
- Target pest
- Pesticide used (trade name, active ingredient, amount of formulation, amount of water)
- Adjuvant/surfactant and amount applied, if used
- Area treated (acres or square feet) and location
- Total amount of pesticide used
- Application equipment
- Additional remarks, such as the severity of the infestation or life stage of the pest
- Follow-up to check the effectiveness of the application

## ***IPM Overview***

### **Principles**

- The fundamental basis of an environmentally sound pest control program is a process called IPM.
- IPM focuses on the basics of identifying the pests, choosing pest-resistant varieties of grasses and other plants, enhancing the habitat for natural pest predators, scouting to determine pest populations and determining acceptable thresholds, and applying biological and other less toxic alternatives to chemical pesticides whenever possible.
- Chemical controls should have minimal effect on beneficial organisms and the environment and minimize the development of pesticide resistance.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Chemical pesticide applications should be carefully chosen for effective and site-specific pest control with minimal environmental impact.  
Identify key pests on key plants.
- Determine the pest's life cycle, and know which life stage to target (for an insect pest, whether it is an egg, larva/nymph, pupa, or adult).
- Use cultural, mechanical, or physical methods to prevent problems from occurring (for example, prepare the site, select resistant cultivars), reduce pest habitat (for example, practice good sanitation, carry out pruning and dethatching), or to help promote biological control (for example, provide nectar or honeydew sources).
- Decide which pest management practice is appropriate and carry out corrective actions. Direct control where the pest lives or feeds.
- Use preventive chemical applications only when your professional judgment indicates that properly timed preventive applications are likely to control the target pest effectively while minimizing the economic and environmental costs.

- Determine whether the corrective actions actually reduced or prevented pest populations, were economical, and minimized risks. Record and use this information when making similar decisions in the future.



*Figure 23. IPM focuses on the basics of identifying the pests and choosing pest-resistant varieties of grasses and other plants. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

## **Written Plan**

### **Principles**

- IPM is an overall pest management strategy that includes biological controls, cultural methods, pest monitoring, other applicable practices.
- A pest-control strategy should be used only when the pest is causing or is expected to cause more damage than what can be reasonably and economically tolerated. A control strategy should be implemented that reduces the pest numbers to an acceptable level while minimizing harm to non-targeted organisms.
- When a pesticide application is deemed necessary, its selection should be based on effectiveness, toxicity to non-target species, cost, and site characteristics, as well as its solubility and persistence.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Decide which pest management practice(s) are appropriate and carry out corrective actions. Direct control where the pest lives or feeds. Use properly timed preventive chemical applications only when your professional judgment indicates they are likely to control the target pest effectively, while minimizing the economic and environmental costs.

- Determine whether the corrective actions actually reduced or prevented pest populations, were economical, and minimized risks. Record and use this information when making similar decisions in the future.
- Observe and document turf conditions regularly (daily, weekly, or monthly, depending on the pest), noting which pests are present, so intelligent decisions can be made regarding how damaging the pests are and what control strategies are necessary.

## ***Pest Thresholds***

### **Principles**

- IPM is commonly used in agricultural crop production, where the economic thresholds for key pests have been determined. Pest levels exceeding the site's threshold warrant treatment.
- Using IPM is more challenging on golf courses than in an agricultural setting. The golf industry is sensitive to aesthetic damage, and golfers are often intolerant of anything that could affect the appearance of turfgrass and ornamental plants. Increased education of golfers and maintenance personnel could raise their tolerance of minor aesthetic damage without compromising plant health, play, and aesthetics.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Use available pest thresholds to guide pesticide application decisions (see IPM Guide).
- Use preventive chemical applications only when professional judgment indicates that properly timed preventive applications are likely to control the target pest effectively while minimizing the economic and environmental costs.
- Record and use this information when making similar decisions in the future.

## ***Monitoring***

### **Principles**

- Monitoring, or scouting, is the most important element of a successful IPM program. Monitoring documents the presence and development of pests, or the conditions that are conducive for pest outbreak throughout the year.
- It is essential to record the results of scouting in order to develop historical information, document patterns of pest activity, and document successes and failures.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Train personnel to observe and document turf conditions regularly (daily, weekly, or monthly, depending on the pest), noting which pests are present, so intelligent decisions can be made regarding how damaging they are and what control strategies are necessary.
- Train personnel to determine the pest's life cycle, and know which life stage to target (for an insect pest, whether it is an egg, larva/nymph, pupa, or adult).
- Train personnel to determine whether the corrective actions actually reduced or prevented pest populations, were economical, and minimized risks. Record and use this information when making similar decisions in the future.
- Train personnel to document, identify, and record key pest activities on key plants.
- Look for signs of the pest. These may include mushrooms, animal damage, insect frass (insect damage/excrement), or webbing.
- Identify the symptoms of the pest. Look for symptoms such as chlorosis, dieback, growth reduction, defoliation, mounds, or tunnels
- Determine the damage. Problem areas might include the edges of fairways, shady areas, or poorly drained areas.
- Document when the damage occurred. Note the time of day, year, and flowering stages of nearby plants.
- Map pest outbreaks locations to identify patterns and susceptible areas for future target applications and ultimate pesticide reductions.

## ***Record Keeping***

### **Principles**

- It is essential to record the results of scouting in order to develop historical information, document patterns of pest activity, and document successes and failures.
- Record keeping is required to comply with the federal Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA, Title III), which contains emergency planning and community right-to-know legislation
- Certain pesticides are classified as restricted-use pesticides (RUPs). Very few pesticides in this category are routinely used in turf maintenance, but if you happen to use one of them, certain record-keeping requirements apply.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Document, identify, and record key pest activities on key plants and locations.
- Determine the pest's life cycle, and know which life stage to target (for an insect pest, whether it is an egg, larva/nymph, pupa, or adult).
- Determine whether the corrective actions actually reduced or prevented pest populations, were economical, and minimized risks. Record and use this information when making similar decisions in the future.

- Observe and document turf conditions regularly (daily, weekly, or monthly, depending on the pest), noting which pests are present, so intelligent decisions can be made regarding how damaging they are and what control strategies are necessary.

## ***Turfgrass Selection***

### **Principles**

- Selecting pest-resistant cultivars or plant species is a very important part of IPM, and it leads to reduced pesticide usage. Species grown outside of their zone of adaptation are more prone to pest problems.
- Species and cultivars should be managed under conditions similar to their intended use (for example, not exceeding mowing height limitations that a grass was bred for or selected for).
- Educate builders, developers, golf course and landscape architects, sod producers, golfers and others on which plants are best suited to their areas.
- Turfgrasses must be scientifically selected for the eco-region of the golf course, resulting in minimized irrigation requirements, fertilization needs, and pesticide use.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Select the most suitable turfgrass for existing conditions and one that adheres to design specifications.
- Avoid use of turfgrass in heavy shade.
- Select shade-adapted grasses for areas receiving partial sun or shaded areas.
- Reduce pest and disease pressures by correcting dead spots and air-circulation issues by pruning understory and adjusting irrigation scheduling.
- Reduce fertilizer applications in shaded areas.
- Reduce traffic in shaded areas to protect turfgrasses and trees from injury and soil compaction, if practical.



*Figure 24. Turfgrasses must be scientifically selected for the eco-region of the golf course, resulting in minimized irrigation requirements, fertilization needs, and pesticide use. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

## **Biological Controls**

### **Principles**

- The biological component of IPM involves the release and/or conservation of natural predators, such as parasites and pathogens, and other beneficial organisms (pollinators).
- Natural enemies (including ladybird beetles, green lacewings, and mantids) may be purchased and released near pest infestations.
- Areas on the golf course can also be modified to better support natural predators and beneficial organisms.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Identify areas on the golf course that can be modified to attract natural predators, provide habitat for them, and protect them from pesticide applications.
- Install flowering plants that can provide parasitoids with nectar, or sucking insects (aphids, mealybugs, or soft scales) with a honeydew source.
- Avoid applying pesticides to roughs, driving ranges, or other low-use areas to provide a refuge for beneficial organisms.
- Release insect-parasitic nematodes to naturally suppress mole crickets and white grubs.



## ***Pollinators***

### **Principles**

- It is important to minimize the impacts on bees and beneficial arthropods. Pesticide applicators must use appropriate tools to help manage pests while safeguarding pollinators, the environment, and humans.
- Pollinator-protection language is a label requirement found on pesticide labels.
- Be mindful of pollinators; when applying pesticides, focus on minimizing exposure to non-target pollinators in play and non-play course areas.
- Pollinators may be negatively impacted when pesticide applications are made based on insufficient information and/or made without regard to the safety of pollinators.

### **Best Management Practices**

- When using pesticides, minimize injury and damage by following label directions.
- Follow label information concerning the application of pesticides when plants may be in bloom. Avoid applying pesticides during bloom season.
- Stay on target by using coarse-droplet nozzles and monitor wind to reduce drift.
- Do not apply pesticides when pollinators are active.
- Before applying a pesticide, scout/inspect area for both harmful and beneficial insect populations, and apply only when the indicated threshold of damage has been reached.
- Mow flowering plants (weeds) before insecticide application.
- If flowering weeds are prevalent, control them before applying insecticides.
- Use insecticides that have a lower impact on pollinators.
- Use the latest spray technologies, such as drift-reduction nozzles to prevent off-site (target) translocation of pesticide.
- Avoid applications during unusually low temperatures or when dew is forecasted.
- Use granular formulations of pesticides that are known to be less hazardous to bees.
- Consider lures, baits, and pheromones as alternatives to insecticides for pest management.

## ***Conventional Pesticides***

### **Principles**

- IPM does not preclude the use of pesticides. However, pesticides should be viewed as one of the many tools used to minimize pest problems.
- IPM involves both prevention — keeping the pest from becoming a problem — and suppression — reducing the pest numbers or damage to an acceptable level.

- A pest-control strategy using pesticides should be used only when the pest is causing or is expected to cause more damage than what can be reasonably and economically tolerated.
- Pesticides are designed to control or alter the behavior of pests. When, where, and how they can be used safely and effectively is a matter of considerable public interest.
- Pesticides should be evaluated on effectiveness against the pest, mode of action, life stage of the pest, personnel hazards, non-target effects, potential off-site movement, and cost.
- A control strategy should be implemented that reduces the pest numbers to an acceptable level while minimizing harm to non-targeted organisms.
- Always follow the directions on the label. These directions have been developed after extensive research and field studies on the chemistry, biological effects, and environmental fate of the pesticide. The label is the single most important document in the use of a pesticide. State and federal pesticide laws require following label directions!

### **Best Management Practices**

- Train employees in proper pest identification and pesticide selection techniques.
- Choose the product most appropriate for the problem or pest.
- Mix only the quantity of pesticide needed in order to avoid disposal problems, protect non-target organisms, and save money.
- Spot-treat pests whenever appropriate.
- Make note of any environmental hazards and groundwater advisories included on the label.
- Rotate pesticide modes-of-action to reduce the likelihood of resistance.
- Follow guidelines and advice provided by the Fungicide Resistance Action Committee (FRAC), Herbicide Resistance Action Committee (HRAC), and Insecticide Resistance Action Committee (IRAC).

### ***Disease***

#### **Principles**

- In the presence of a susceptible host and a conducive environment, plant pathogens can disrupt play by damaging and destroying intensely managed turf.
- No measure can completely eliminate the threat of turfgrass disease on a golf course. However, turfgrass managers have multiple tactics and tools that can reduce the likelihood of disease.
- Cultural factors that can influence turfgrass stress and the likelihood of disease problems include organic layer management, fertility programs, water management, and mowing height selection. Healthy, well-managed turfgrass is less likely to develop disease problems.

- Disease outbreaks that do occur are less likely to be severe on turf that is healthy because it has better recuperative potential than stressed, unhealthy turf.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Correctly identify the disease pathogen. This often involves sending samples to diagnostic clinics.
- Ensure that proper cultural practices that reduce turfgrass stress are used.
- Correct conditions that produce stressful environments for the turf (for example, improve airflow and drainage, reduce or eliminate shade.)
- Fungicide use should be integrated into an overall management strategy for a golf course.
- The appropriate (most effective) preventive fungicide should be applied to susceptible turfgrasses when unacceptable levels of disease are likely to occur.
- Preventively apply appropriate fungicides where diseases are likely to occur and when conditions favor disease outbreaks.
- Record and map disease outbreaks and identify trends that can help guide future treatments and focus on changing conditions in susceptible areas to reduce disease outbreaks.

For additional information on turfgrass diseases commonly found in Ohio and management, see:

- [Summer Patch on Turfgrass](#). 2013. The Ohio State University.
- [Brown Patch on Turfgrass](#). 2010. The Ohio State University.
- [Gray Leaf Spot on Turfgrass](#). 2010. The Ohio State University.
- [Powdery Mildew on Turfgrass](#). 2010. The Ohio State University.
- [Dollar Spot on Turfgrass](#). 2010. The Ohio State University.
- [Slime Molds on Turfgrass](#). 2010. The Ohio State University.
- [Managing Basil Rot Anthracnose on Greens](#). 2015. The Ohio State University.

## **Weeds**

### **Principles**

- Weeds compete with desired plants for space, water, light, and nutrients and can harbor insect pests and diseases.
- Weed management is an integrated process where good cultural practices are employed to encourage desirable turfgrass ground cover, and where herbicides are intelligently selected and judiciously used. A successful weed management program consists of:
  - preventing weeds from being introduced into an area
  - using proper turfgrass management and cultural practices to promote vigorous, competitive turf
  - properly identifying weeds

- properly selecting and using the appropriate herbicide, if necessary
- Weeds are hosts for other pests such as plant pathogens, nematodes, and insects, and certain weeds can cause allergic reactions in humans.
- Weeds reproduce from seed, root pieces, and special vegetative reproductive organs such as tubers, corms, rhizomes, stolons, or bulbs. People, animals, birds, wind, and water can distribute seeds.
- Weeds complete their life cycles in either one growing season (annuals), two growing seasons (biennials), or three or more years (perennials). Annuals that complete their life cycles from spring to fall are referred to as summer annuals. Those that complete their life cycles from fall to spring are winter annuals.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Proper weed identification is essential for effective management and control.
- Select appropriate turf species or cultivars that are adapted to the prevalent environmental conditions to reduce weed encroachment that may lead to bare soils.
- To prevent weed encroachment, adopt or maintain cultural practices that protect turfgrass from environmental stresses such as shade, drought, and extreme temperatures.
- To reduce weed infestation, address improper turf management practices, such as the misuse of fertilizers and chemicals, improper mowing height or mowing frequency, and improper soil aeration, and physical damage and compaction from excessive traffic.
- Proper fertilization is essential for turfgrasses to sustain desirable color, growth density, and vigor and to better resist diseases, weeds, and insects.
- Avoid scalping; it reduces turf density, increasing weed establishment.
- Weed-free materials should be used for topdressing.
- Address damage from turfgrass pests such as diseases, insects, nematodes, and animals to prevent density/canopy loss to broadleaf weeds.
- Record and map weed infestations to help identify site specific issues for preventative actions.

## ***Nematodes***

### **Principles**

- Plant-parasitic nematodes adversely affect turfgrass health.
- Plant-parasitic nematodes are microscopic roundworms (unsegmented), usually between 0.0156 and 0.125 inch (0.25 and 3 mm) in length and are difficult to control.
- Nematodes debilitate the root system of susceptible turfgrasses; plant-parasitic nematodes cause turf to be less efficient at water and nutrient uptake from the soil and make it much more susceptible to environmental stresses. Additionally,

weakened turf favors pest infestation, especially troublesome weeds that necessitate herbicide applications.

- Over time, turf in the affected areas thins out and, with severe infestations, may die. The roots of turfgrasses under nematode attack may be very short, with few, if any, root hairs, or they may appear dark and rotten.
- Turfgrasses usually begin showing signs of nematode injury as they experience additional stresses, including drought, high temperatures, low temperatures, and wear.

### **Best Management Practices**

- When nematode activity is suspected, an assay of soil and turfgrass roots is recommended to determine the extent of the problem.
- The application of a nematicide on golf course turf should always be based on assay results.
- Divert traffic away from areas that are stressed by insects, nematodes, diseases, or weeds.
- Increase mowing height to reduce plant stress associated with nematodes, root-feeding insects, disease outbreaks, or peak weed-seed germination.
- Reduce/eliminate other biotic/abiotic stresses when nematodes are compromising the root system and plant health.

# Pesticide Management

## *Preface*



Pesticide use should be part of an overall pest management strategy that includes biological controls, cultural methods, pest monitoring, and other applicable practices, referred altogether as IPM. When a pesticide application is deemed necessary, its selection should be based on effectiveness, resistance, toxicity to non-target species, cost, site characteristics, and its solubility and persistence in the environment.

## ***Regulatory Considerations***

### **Principle**

Pesticides contain active ingredients (the component that targets the pest) and inert ingredients such as solvents, surfactants, and carriers. Both active and inert ingredients may be controlled or regulated by federal, state, and local laws because of environmental and health concerns. The Ohio Department of Agriculture Division of Plant Health Pesticide and Fertilizer Regulation Section is responsible for licensing pesticide dealers and applicators in addition to ensuring safe use of pesticides and preventing misuse. The section also offers training and testing sessions over the course of the year.

Additional information can be found through the Ohio Department of Agriculture Division of Plant Health Pesticide and Fertilizer Regulation [Pesticide Laws and Rules](#).

### **Best Management Practices**

- Only apply pesticides that are legally registered at all levels of jurisdiction.
- Only apply pesticides that are legally registered for use on the facility (for example, do not apply pesticides labeled for agricultural uses even though they may have the same active ingredient).
- Apply according to manufacturer recommendations as seen on label.

## ***Human Health Risks***

### **Principle**

Pesticides belong to numerous chemical classes that vary greatly in their toxicity. The human health risk associated with pesticide use is related to both pesticide toxicity and the level of exposure. The risk of a very highly toxic pesticide may be very low if the exposure is sufficiently small. Each pesticide label will provide information on personal protective equipment needed (PPE), first aid, as well as include a precautionary statement and pesticide signal word. The label is the law, and each applicator should read the label in its entirety prior to mixing, loading or applying a pesticide. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) also contain relevant information such as precautionary and first aid treatment. Safety Data Sheets should be used in conjunction with the pesticide label.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Select the least toxic pesticide with the lowest exposure potential.
- Know the emergency response procedure in case excessive exposure occurs.
- Read the pesticide label in its entirety before mixing, loading or applying a pesticide.
- Use the recommended PPE per the pesticide label.
- In case of exposure, refer to the pesticide label for additional information and treatment recommendations.



*Figure 25. Always read the pesticide label in its entirety before mixing, loading or applying a pesticide. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

### **Shelf Life**

#### **Principle**

- Pesticides degrade over time. Do not store large quantities of pesticides for long periods.

- Utilize computer software systems to record inventory and use.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Avoid purchasing large quantities of pesticides that require storage for greater than six months.
- Adopt the “first in–first out” principle, using the oldest products first to ensure that the product shelf life does not expire.
- Many states offer “amnesty” days in order to eliminate potential public health and environmental hazards from cancelled, suspended, and unusable pesticides that are being stored.
- Ensure labels are on every package and container.
- Consult inventory when planning and before making purchases.
- Ensure that labels remain properly affixed to their containers.

### ***Environmental Fate and Transport***

#### **Principle**

Environmental characteristics of a pesticide can often be determined by the environmental hazards statement found on pesticide product labels. The environmental hazards statement (referred to as “Environmental Hazards” on the label and found under the general heading “Precautionary Statements”) provides the precautionary language advising the user of the potential hazards to the environment from the use of the product. The environmental hazards generally fall into three categories: (1) general environmental hazards, (2) non-target toxicity, and (3) endangered species protection.

#### **Best Management Practices**

- Select pesticides that have a low runoff and leaching potential.
- Before applying a pesticide, evaluate the impact of site-specific characteristics (for example, proximity to surface water, water table, and well-heads; soil type; prevailing wind; etc.) and pesticide-specific characteristics (for example, half-lives and partition coefficients)
- Select pesticides with reduced impact on pollinators.
- Select pesticides that, when applied according to the label, have no known effect on endangered species present on the facility.
- Do not make pesticide applications during adverse weather conditions.

### ***Pesticide Transportation, Storage, and Handling***

#### **Principle**

Storage and handling of pesticides in their concentrated form poses the highest potential risk to ground or surface waters. For this reason, it is essential that facilities for



storing and handling these products be properly sited, designed, constructed, and operated.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Store, mix, and load pesticides away from sites that directly link to surface water or groundwater.
- Store pesticides in a lockable concrete or metal building that is separate from other buildings.
- Locate pesticide storage facilities from other types of structure to allow fire department access.
- Storage facility floors should be impervious and sealed with a chemical-resistant paint.
- Floors should have a continuous sill to retain spilled materials and no drains, although a sump may be included.
- Sloped ramps should be provided at the entrance to allow the use of wheeled handcarts for moving material in and out of the storage area safely.
- Shelving should be made of sturdy plastic or reinforced metal.
- Metal shelving should be kept painted to avoid corrosion. Wood shelving should never be used, because it may absorb spilled pesticides.
- Automatic exhaust fans and an emergency wash area should be provided. Explosion-proof lighting may be required. Light and fan switches should be located outside the building, so that both can be turned on before staff enter the building and turned off after they leave the building.
- Avoid temperature extremes inside the pesticide storage facility.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) should be easily accessible and stored immediately outside the pesticide storage area.
- Do not transport pesticides in the passenger section of a vehicle.
- Never leave pesticides unattended during transport.
- Place a spill containment kit in the storage area, in the mix/load area, and on the spray rig.



*Figure 26. Store, mix, and load pesticides away from sites that directly link to surface water or groundwater. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

## **Emergency Preparedness and Spill Response**

### **Principle**

Accidents happen. Advance preparation on what to do when an accident occurs is essential to mitigate the human health effects and the impact on the environment. In Ohio pesticide/fertilizer spills must be reported to the Ohio EPA Division of Environmental Response, Investigation and Enforcement at 800-282-9378, and the Ohio Department of Agriculture Pesticide & Fertilizer Regulation Section at 800-282-1955. Non-emergency complaints must be directed to the appropriate [district office](#) of the Ohio EPA. For additional information, see the [Ohio EPA Guide to Emergency Response](#).

### **Best Management Practices**

- Develop a golf course facility emergency response plan which includes procedures to control, contain, collect, and store spilled materials.
- Prominently post “Important Telephone Numbers” including numbers for the Ohio EPA, Ohio Department of Agriculture, and CHEMTREC, for emergency information on hazards or actions to take in the event of a spill.
- Ensure an adequately sized spill containment kit is readily available.
- Designate a spokesperson who will speak on behalf of the facility should an emergency occur.
- Host a tour for local emergency response teams (for example, fire fighters, etc.) to show them the facilities and to discuss the emergency response plan. Seek advice on ways to improve the plan.

## ***Pesticide Record Keeping***

### **Principle**

Maintaining accurate records of pesticide-related activities (for example, purchasing, storage, inventory, applications, etc.) is essential. Ohio requires businesses and employer retains records for 3 years from the date of application and make them available to the Ohio Department of Agriculture upon request. When documenting a pesticide record, the following information must be included:

- name and address of applicator
- date of application
- type and size of area to be treated
- location or field identification number of treatment area
- trade name (brand name) and EPA registration number of pesticide used
- total amount of each pesticide used
- if diluted, total volume of use dilution applied
- type of equipment used
- time of day of application, start and completion times
- wind direction and velocity, air temperature and other weather conditions when applicable

### **Best Management Practices**

- Keep and maintain records of all pesticides used to meet legal (federal, state, and local) reporting requirements.
- Use records to monitor pest control efforts and to plan future management actions.
- Use electronic or hard-copy forms and software tools to properly track pesticide inventory and use.
- Develop and implement a pesticide drift management plan.
- Keep a backup set of records in a safe, but separate storage area.

## ***Sprayer Calibration***

### **Principle**

Properly calibrated application equipment is paramount to mitigating environmental and human health concerns.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Personally ensure spray technician is experienced, licensed, and properly trained.

- Minimize off-target movement by using properly configured application equipment.
- Properly calibrate all application equipment at the beginning of each season (at a minimum) or after equipment modifications.
- Check equipment daily when in use.
- Use recommended spray volumes for the targeted pest to maximize efficacy.
- Calibration of walk-behind applicators should be conducted for each person making the application to take into consideration their walking speed, etc.



*Figure 27. Properly calibrated application equipment is paramount to mitigating environmental and human health concerns. Photo credit: Ryan D'Autremont.*

## ***Types of Sprayers***

### **Principle**

Various types and sizes of application equipment are readily available. The size of the equipment (tank size, boom width, etc.) should be matched to the scale of the facility.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Use an appropriately sized applicator for the size of area being treated.
- Equipment too large in size requires greater volumes to prime the system. This can result in significant waste that must be properly handled.

## ***Inventory***

### **Principle**

Do not store large quantities of pesticides for long periods. Adopt the “first in–first out” principle, using the oldest products first to ensure that the product shelf life does not expire.

### **Best Management Practices**

- An inventory of the pesticides kept in the storage building and the Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for the chemicals used in the operation should be accessible on the premises, but not kept in the pesticide storage room itself.

## ***Leaching Potentials***

### **Principle**

Weakly sorbed pesticides (compounds with small K<sub>oc</sub> values) are more likely to leach through the soil and reach groundwater. Conversely, strongly sorbed pesticides (compounds with large K<sub>oc</sub> values) are likely to remain near the soil surface, reducing the likelihood of leaching, but increasing the chances of being carried to surface water via runoff or soil erosion.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Understand pesticide sorption principles so that appropriate decisions can be made.
- Understand site characteristics that are prone to leaching losses (for example, sand-based putting greens, coarse-textured soils, shallow water tables).
- Identify label restrictions that may pertain to your facility.
- Avoid using highly water-soluble pesticides.

- Exercise caution when using spray adjuvants that may facilitate off-target movement.

## ***Mixing/Washing Station***

### **Principle**

Pesticide leaks or spills, if contained, will not percolate down through the soil into groundwater or run off the surface to contaminate streams, ditches, ponds, and other waterbodies. One of the best containment methods is the use of a properly designed and constructed chemical mixing center (CMC).

### **Best Management Practices**

- Loading pesticides and mixing them with water or oil diluents should be done over an impermeable surface (such as lined or sealed concrete), so that spills can be collected and managed.
- Mixing station surface should provide for easy cleaning and the recovery of spilled materials.
- Pump the sump dry and clean it at the end of each day. Liquids and sediments should also be removed from the sump and the pad whenever pesticide materials are changed to an incompatible product (that is, one that cannot be legally applied to the same site).
- Apply liquids and sediments as you would a pesticide, strictly following label instructions.
- Absorbents such as cat litter or sand may be used to clean up small spills and then applied as a topdressing in accordance with the label rates or disposed of as a waste.
- Sweep up solid materials and use as intended.

## ***Disposal***

### **Principle**

All pesticide applications must be used in accordance to the label directions, including wash water from pesticide application equipment, which must be managed properly, since it contains pesticide residues.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Collect wash water (from both inside and outside the application equipment) and use it as a pesticide in accordance with the label instructions.
- The rinsate may be applied as a pesticide (preferred) or stored for use as makeup water for the next compatible application.

## ***Personal Protective Equipment***

### **Principle**

Exposure to pesticides can be mitigated by practicing good work habits and adopting modern pesticide mix/load equipment (for example, closed-loading) that reduce potential exposure. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) statements on pesticide labels provide the applicator with important information on protecting himself/herself. To avoid contamination, do not store PPE in a pesticide storage area.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Provide adequate PPE for all employees who work with pesticides (including equipment technicians who service pesticide application equipment).
- Ensure that PPE is sized appropriately for each person using it.
- Make certain that PPE is appropriate for the chemicals used.
- Ensure that PPE meets rigorous testing standards and is not just the least expensive.
- Store PPE where it is easily accessible but not in the pesticide storage area.
- Forbid employees who apply pesticides from wearing facility uniforms home where they may come into contact with children.
- Provide laundering facilities or uniform service for employee uniforms.
- The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to fit test workers who must wear tight-fitting respirators.
- Meet requirements for OSHA 1910.134 Respiratory Protection Program.

## ***Pesticide Container Management***

### **Principle**

The containers of some commonly used pesticides are classified as hazardous wastes if not properly rinsed, and as such, are subject to the many rules and regulations governing hazardous waste. The improper disposal of a hazardous waste can result in very high fines and/or criminal penalties. However, pesticide containers that have been properly rinsed can be handled and disposed of as nonhazardous solid waste. Federal law (FIFRA) and some state laws require pesticide applicators to rinse all empty pesticide containers before taking other container disposal steps. Under federal law (the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, or RCRA), A PESTICIDE CONTAINER IS NOT EMPTY UNTIL IT HAS BEEN PROPERLY RINSED. For additional information, please visit The Ohio State University Extension Pesticide Safety Education Program website on [Commercial Pesticide Disposal](#).

### **Best Management Practices**

- Rinse pesticide containers immediately in order to remove the most residue.

- Rinse containers during the mixing and loading process and add rinsate water to the finished spray mix.
- Rinse emptied pesticide containers by either triple rinsing or pressure rinsing.
- Puncture empty and rinsed pesticide containers and dispose of according to the label.



# Pollinator Protection

## Preface



Most flowering plants need pollination to reproduce and grow fruit. While some plants are pollinated by wind, many require assistance from insects and other animals. In the absence of pollinators, many plant species, including the fruits and vegetables we eat, would fail to survive.

The western honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) is one of the most important pollinators in the United States. Hundreds of other bee species, including the bumble bee (*Bombus* spp.), mason (*Osmia lignaria*) and leaf cutter (*Megachile rotundata*) also serve as important pollinator species. Protecting bees and other pollinators is important to the sustainability of agriculture. The Ohio State University Extension offers information on [attracting pollinators to the garden](#). Additionally, the [Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative](#) has partnered with The Ohio State University, state agencies, and allied associations to help protect pollinator habitats across the state. This initiative provides additional information on how golf courses can continue to provide habitats for native and domestic species of pollinators. Further data can be found through the USGA publication [Making Room for Native Pollinators](#) which provides information on pollinators on the golf course.

Pesticides are products designed to control pests (for example, insects, diseases, weeds, nematodes, etc.). Pesticides and other plant growth products, including plant growth regulators, surfactants, biostimulants, etc., are used in golf course management. The non-target effect of products used in golf course management is of increasing concern; therefore, pesticide applicators, including those on golf courses, need to be mindful of the impact that pesticides have on pollinator species and their habitat.

## **Regulatory Considerations**

### **Principles**

- Pollinator-protection language is a label requirement found on pesticide labels; follow the label, it is the law.
- Pesticide applicators must be aware of honey bee toxicity groups and able to understand precautionary statements.


- Recordkeeping may be required by law in order to use some products. IPM principles suggest that you keep records of all pest control activity so that you may refer to information on past infestations or other problems to select the best course of action in the future.

## Best Management Practices


- Proper records of all pesticide applications should be kept according to local, state, or federal requirements.
- Use records to establish proof of use and follow-up investigation of standard protocols regarding:
  - Date and time of application
  - Name of applicator
  - Person directing or authorizing the application
  - Weather conditions at the time of application
  - Target pest
  - Pesticide used (trade name, active ingredient, amount of formulation, amount of water)
  - Adjuvant/surfactant and amount applied, if used
  - Area treated (acres or square feet) and location
  - Total amount of pesticide used
  - Application equipment
  - Additional remarks, such as the severity of the infestation or life stage of the pest
  - Follow-up to check the effectiveness of the application
- Those applying pesticides, and who make decisions regarding their applications should be able to interpret pollinator protection label statements.
- Those applying pesticides should be aware of honey bee biology.
- Those applying pesticides should understand the various routes of exposure (outside the hive and inside the hive).
- Those applying pesticides should understand the effects of pesticides on bees.

PROTECTION OF POLLINATORS

APPLICATION RESTRICTIONS EXIST FOR THIS PRODUCT BECAUSE OF RISK TO BEES AND OTHER INSECT POLLINATORS. FOLLOW APPLICATION RESTRICTIONS FOUND IN THE DIRECTIONS FOR USE TO PROTECT POLLINATORS.



Look for the bee hazard icon



in the Directions for Use for each application site for specific use restrictions and instructions to protect bees and other insect pollinators.

This product can kill bees and other insect pollinators.

Bees and other insect pollinators will forage on plants when they flower, shed pollen, or produce nectar. Bees and other insect pollinators can be exposed to this pesticide from:

- Direct contact during foliar applications, or contact with residues on plant surfaces after foliar applications
- Ingestion of residues in nectar and pollen when the pesticide is applied as a seed treatment, soil, tree injection, as well as foliar applications.

When Using This Product Take Steps To:

- Minimize exposure of this product to bees and other insect pollinators when they are foraging on pollinator attractive plants around the application site.
- Minimize drift of this product on to beehives or to off-site pollinator attractive habitat. Drift of this product onto beehives or off-site to pollinator attractive habitat can result in bee kills.

Information on protecting bees and other insect pollinators may be found at the Pesticide Environmental Stewardship website at: <http://pesticidestewardship.org/PollinatorProtection/Pages/default.aspx>.

Pesticide incidents (for example, bee kills) should immediately be reported to the state/tribal lead agency. For contact information for your state, go to: [www.aapco.org/officials.html](http://www.aapco.org/officials.html). Pesticide incidents should also be reported to the National Pesticide Information Center at: [www.npic.orst.edu](http://www.npic.orst.edu) or directly to EPA at: [beekill@epa.gov](mailto:beekill@epa.gov)

*Figure 28. Those applying pesticides, and who make decisions regarding their applications should be able to interpret pollinator protection label statements. Label provided by: Sean McHugh, CGCS.*

## **Pollinator Habitat Protection**

### **Principles**

- It is important to minimize the impacts of pesticides on bees and beneficial arthropods. Pesticide applicators must use appropriate tools to help manage pests while safeguarding pollinators, the environment, and humans.
- Be mindful of pollinators; when applying pesticides, focus on minimizing exposure to non-target pollinators in play and non-play course areas.
- Pollinators require a diversity of flowering species to complete their life cycle. Pollinator habitat contains a diversity of wildflower species of different colors and heights, with blossoms throughout the entire growing season



*Figure 29. Asclepias (milkweed) provides a strong habitat for the various stages of a Monarch butterfly. Photo Credit: Leasha Schwab.*



*Figure 30. Monarch butterfly pupa on an Asclepias (milkweed) plant. Photo Credit: Leasha Schwab.*



*Figure 31. Monarch butterfly adult on an Asclepias (milkweed) plant. Photo Credit: Leasha Schwab.*

## Best Management Practices

- Follow label information directing the application of pesticide when the plant may be in bloom. Avoid applying pesticides during bloom season.
- Stay on target by using coarse-droplet nozzles, and monitoring wind to reduce drift.
- Do not apply pesticides when pollinators are active.
- Before applying a pesticide, scout/inspect the area for both harmful and beneficial insect populations, and use pesticides only when a threshold of damage has been indicated.
- Mow flowering plants (weeds) before insecticide application.
- If flowering weeds are prevalent, control them before applying insecticides.
- Use insecticides that have a lower impact on pollinators.
- Use the latest spray technologies, such as drift-reduction nozzles to prevent off-site (target) translocation of pesticide.
- Avoid applications during unusually low temperatures or when dew is forecast.
- Use granular formulations of pesticides that are known to be less hazardous to bees.
- Consider lures, baits, and pheromones as alternatives to insecticides for pest management.
- Develop new pollinator habitat and/or enhance existing habitat.

# Maintenance Operations

## *Preface*



Equipment maintenance, fueling, and chemical storage can have an impact on water quality on-site and off-site both during construction and during the maintenance of existing golf courses.

## *Regulatory Considerations*

### *Storage and Handling of Chemicals*

#### **Principles**

- Proper handling and storage of pesticides and petroleum-based products is important to reduce risk of serious injury or death of an operator or bystander. Fires or environmental contamination may result in large fines, cleanup costs, and civil lawsuits if these chemicals are not managed properly.
- Check federal, state, and local regulations for specific requirements related to storage of pesticides.

#### **Best Management Practices**

- Storage buildings should have appropriate warning signs and placards.
- Follow all personal protective equipment (PPE) statements on pesticide labels.
- Store PPE away from pesticide storage areas in an area that is easily accessible.
- Develop an emergency response plan and educate all golf course personnel regarding emergency procedures on a regular basis.
- Supply local fire department with blueprint of storage building(s), Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for all product stored in building(s).

- Supply local fire department emergency contract information.
- Individuals conducting emergency chemical cleanups should be properly trained under requirements of federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).
- Store pesticides in a lockable concrete or metal building.
- Locate pesticide storage away from other buildings, especially fertilizer storage facilities.
- Floors of chemical storage buildings should be impervious and sealed with chemical-resistant paint.
- Floors of chemical storage buildings should have a continuous sill to contain spills and should not have a drain. A sump is acceptable.
- Shelving should be fabricated from plastic or reinforced metal. Metal shelving should be painted to avoid corrosion. Wood shelving should never be used because of its ability to absorb spilled pesticides.
- Automatic exhaust fans and an emergency wash area should be provided
- Explosion-proof lighting may be required. Locate fan and light switches outside the entrance to the building to facilitate ventilation of building before entrance of staff.
- Maintain detailed records of current pesticide inventory in the storage facility. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for the chemicals stored on-site should be stored separate from the storage room, but readily accessible on-site.
- Do not store large quantities of pesticides or chemicals for long periods of time. Follow a “first in, first out” principle to rotate products into use to ensure products do not expire.
- Store chemicals in original containers. Never store them in containers that might be mistaken as packaging for food or drink.
- Arrange containers so the labels are clearly visible. Securely fasten loose labels to ensure containers and associated labels are kept together.
- Damaged labels should be replaced immediately.
- Store flammable pesticides separate from those that are nonflammable.
- Store liquid materials below dry materials to prevent leaks from contaminating dry products.
- Ensure that oil containers and small fuel containers (service containers) are properly labeled and stored within the facility.



*Figure 32. Supply local fire department with blueprint of storage building(s), Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for all product stored in building(s). Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

## ***Equipment Storage and Maintenance***

### **Principle**

Storing and maintaining equipment properly will extend useful life and reduce repairs.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Store and maintain equipment in a covered area complete with a sealed impervious surface to limit risk of fluid leaks contaminating the environment and to facilitate the early detection of small leaks that may require repair before causing significant damage to the turf or the environment.
- Seal floor drains unless they are connected to a holding tank or sanitary sewer with permission from the local wastewater treatment plant.
- Store pesticide and fertilizer application equipment in areas protected from rainfall. Rain can wash pesticide and fertilizer residues from the exterior of the equipment and possibly contaminate soil or water.
- Store solvents and degreasers in lockable metal cabinets away from ignition sources in a well-ventilated area. These products are generally toxic and highly flammable. Never store them with fertilizers or in areas where smoking is permitted.
- Keep an inventory of solvents and SDS for those materials on-site but in a different location where they will be easily accessible in case of an emergency.
- Keep basins of solvent baths covered to reduce emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOC).



- When possible, replace solvent baths with recirculating aqueous washing units. Soap and water or other aqueous cleaners are often as effective as solvent-based products and present a lower risk to the environment.
- Always use appropriate PPE when working with solvents.
- Never allow solvents or degreasers to drain onto pavement or soil, or discharge into waterbodies, wetlands, storm drains, sewers, or septic systems.
- Collect used solvents and degreasers in containers clearly marked with contents and date; schedule collection by a commercial service.
- Blow off all equipment with compressed air to reduce damage to hydraulic seals.

## ***Waste Handling***

### **Principles**

- Proper disposal of waste materials is critical for protection of water and natural resources. State or local laws and regulations related to disposal of hazardous waste products may vary. Be sure to familiarize yourself with all state and local laws related to disposal/recycling of these waste materials.
- When appropriate and permissible by local, state and federal regulations triple rinse containers before discarding, add rinse water to sprayer.
- Identify and implement waste-reduction practices.
- Look for ways to increase recycling efforts and programs.
- Purchase environmentally preferred products in bulk packaging when possible.
- Do not allow mixing of waste and rain runoff; ensure all waste containers are covered if outdoors.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Pesticides that have been mixed for application must be disposed of as waste and may be classified as hazardous waste depending on the materials involved. Contact local authorities for guidance regarding proper disposal.
- Collect used oil, oil filters, and antifreeze in separate marked containers and recycle them as directed by local and state authorities.
- Antifreeze may be considered hazardous waste by state or local laws and should be handled accordingly. Commercial services are available to collect and recycle antifreeze.
- Lead-acid batteries are classified as hazardous waste unless they are properly recycled.
- Store old batteries on impervious surfaces where they are protected from rainfall and recycle as soon as possible.
- Recycle used tires.
- Recycle or dispose of fluorescent tubes and other lights according to state requirements.

## ***Equipment Washing***

### **Principle**

Wash water generated from equipment-washing facilities can be a source of both surface-water and groundwater pollution. Steps should be taken to prevent pollution.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Equipment washing areas should drain to an oil/water separator before draining to a sanitary sewer or holding tank.
- Consider the use of a closed-loop wash-water recycling system.
- Grass-covered equipment should be brushed or blown off with compressed air before being washed.
- Wash equipment with a bucket of water and a rag to minimize the amount of water used and use only the minimal amount of water required to rinse the machine.
- Spring-operated shut-off nozzles should be used.
- Do not allow any wastewater to flow directly into surface waters or storm drains.

## ***Fueling Facilities***

### **Principle**

Safe storage of fuel, including use of above-ground tanks and containment facilities, is critical to the protection of the environment. State or local laws and regulations related to storage of fuel may vary. Facilities in Ohio must comply with the federal regulations [40 CFR part 112](#), and are subject to the [Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure requirements](#). For additional information, please visit the [U.S. EPA Oil Spills Prevention and Preparedness Regulations page](#).

### **Best Management Practices**

- Locate fueling facilities on roofed areas with a concrete (not asphalt) pavement. Areas should be equipped with spill-containment and recovery facilities.
- Use of above ground fuel tanks is preferred.

## ***Pollution Prevention***

### **Principles**

- Plan appropriately to minimize the possibility of an illicit discharge and need for disposal. Monitor the water to be discharged for contamination; never discharge to the environment any contaminated water. If the water is not contaminated, it can be reused or discharged to a permitted stormwater treatment system.

- Pesticide leaks or spills, if contained, will not percolate down through the soil into groundwater or run off the surface to contaminate streams, ditches, ponds, and other water bodies.
- Wash water from pesticide application equipment must be managed properly, since it contains pesticide residues. This applies to wash water from both the inside and the outside of the application equipment. Material should be collected and used as a pesticide in accordance with the label instructions for that pesticide.
- An equipment-washing facility can be a source of both surface water and groundwater pollution, if the wash water generated is not properly handled. All equipment used in the maintenance of golf courses and associated developments should be designed, used, maintained, and stored in a way that eliminates or minimizes the potential for pollution.
- One of the key principles of pollution prevention is to reduce the unnecessary use of potential pollutants. Over time, the routine discharge of even small amounts of solvents can result in serious environmental and liability consequences, because of the accumulation of contaminants in soil or groundwater.
- The proper handling and storage of pesticides is important. Failure to do so correctly may lead to the serious injury or death of an operator or bystander, fires, environmental contamination that may result in large fines and cleanup costs, civil lawsuits, the destruction of the turf you are trying to protect and wasted pesticide product.
- Generating as little as 25 gallons per month of used solvents for disposal can qualify you as a “small-quantity generator” of hazardous waste, triggering EPA and state reporting requirements.
- Pesticides that have been mixed so they cannot be legally applied to a site in accordance with the label must be disposed of as a waste. Depending on the materials involved, they may be classified as hazardous waste.
- Provide adequate protection from the weather. Rain can wash pesticide and fertilizer residues from the exterior of the equipment, and these residues can contaminate soil or water.
- Never allow solvents to drain onto pavement or soil, or discharge into water bodies, wetlands, storm drains, sewers, or septic systems, even in small amounts.
- Office paper, recyclable plastics, glass, and aluminum should be recycled. Place containers for recycling aluminum cans and glass or plastic soft drink bottles at convenient locations on the golf course.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Pesticides should be stored in a lockable concrete or metal building.
- Pesticide storage and mixing facility floors should be impervious and sealed with a chemical-resistant paint. Floors should have a continuous sill to retain spilled materials and no drains, although a sump may be included.

- For valuable information about constructing chemical mixing facilities, reference the Midwest Plan Service book, *Designing Facilities for Pesticide and Fertilizer Containment* (revised 1995); the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) publication, *Coating Concrete Secondary Containment Structures Exposed to Agrichemicals* (Broder and Nguyen, 1995); and USDA–NRCS Code 703.
- Use a chemical mixing center (CMC) as a place for performing all operations where pesticides are likely to be spilled in concentrated form—or where even dilute formulations may be repeatedly spilled in the same area—over an impermeable surface. (A CMC is a concrete pad treated with a sealant and sloped to a liquid-tight sump where all the spilled liquids can be recovered.)
- Flush wash pad with clean water after the equipment is washed. Captured wash water can be used as a dilute pesticide per labeled site, or it may be pumped into a rinsate storage tank for use in the next application.
- FIFRA, Section 2(ee), allows the applicator to apply a pesticide at less than the labeled rate.
- The sump should then be cleaned of any sediment before another type of pesticide is handled.
- Discharge to a treatment system that is permitted under industrial wastewater rules.
- Never discharge to a sanitary sewer system without written permission from the utility.
- Never discharge to a septic tank.
- Use a closed-loop wash-water recycling system and follow appropriate BMP.
- Use non-containment wash water for field irrigation.
- Do not discharge non-contaminated wastewater during or immediately after a rainstorm, since the added flow may cause the permitted storage volume of the stormwater system to be exceeded.
- Whenever practical, replace solvent baths with recirculating aqueous washing units (which resemble heavy-duty dishwashers).
- Use soap and water or other aqueous cleaners; these products are often as effective as solvent-based ones.
- Blowing off equipment with compressed air instead of washing with water is often easier on hydraulic seals and can lead to fewer oil leaks.
- Grass-covered equipment should be brushed or blown with compressed air before being washed. Dry material is much easier to handle and store or dispose of than wet clippings.
- It is best to wash equipment with a bucket of water and a rag, using only a minimal amount of water to rinse the machine.
- Clean up spills as soon as possible.
- Keep spill cleanup equipment available when handling pesticides or their containers.
- If a spill occurs of a pesticide covered by certain state and federal laws, you may need to report any accidental release if the spill quantity exceeds the “reportable quantity” of active ingredient specified in the law.

- Large spills or uncontained spills involving hazardous materials may best be remediated by hazardous material cleanup professionals.
- For emergency (only) information on hazards or actions to take in the event of a spill, call CHEMTREC, at (800)424–9300. CHEMTREC is a service of the Chemical Manufacturers Association. For information on whether a spilled chemical requires reporting, call the CERCLA/RCRA help line at (800) 424–9346.
- Do not allow any wash water to flow directly into surface waters or storm drains.
- Avoid washing equipment in the vicinity of wells or surface water bodies.
- Wash equipment over a concrete or asphalt pad that allows the water to be collected. After the residue dries on the pad, collect, compost, or spread in the field.
- If applicable, allow runoff onto a grassed area to soak into the ground, but never into a surface water body or canal.
- Use compressed air to blow off equipment. This is less harmful to the equipment's hydraulic seals, eliminates wastewater, and produces dry material that is easier to handle.
- Handle clippings and dust separately. After the residue dries on the pad, it can be collected and composted or spread in the field.
- Minimize the use of detergents. Use only biodegradable non-phosphate detergents.
- Minimize the amount of water used to clean equipment. This can be done by using spray nozzles that generate high-pressure streams of water at low volumes.
- Do not discharge wash water to surface water or groundwater either directly or indirectly through ditches, storm drains, or canals.
- Do not conduct equipment wash operations on a pesticide mixing and loading pad. (This keeps grass clippings and other debris from becoming contaminated with pesticide).
- Solvents and degreasers should be used over a collection basin or pad that collects all used material.
- Oil/water separators can be used but must be managed properly to avoid problems. Do not wash equipment used to apply pesticides on pads with oil/water separators
- Collect used solvents and degreasers, place them into containers marked with the contents and the date, and then have them picked up by a service that properly recycles or disposes of them. Never mix used oil or other liquid material with the used solvents.
- Collect used oil, oil filters, and antifreeze in separate marked containers and recycle them. Arrange pickup of used oil or deliver to a hazardous waste collection site.
- Do not mix used oil with used antifreeze or sludge from used solvents. Antifreeze must be recycled or disposed of as a hazardous waste.
- Store batteries on an impervious surface and preferably under cover. Remember, spent lead-acid batteries must be recycled if they are to be exempt from strict hazardous waste regulations.

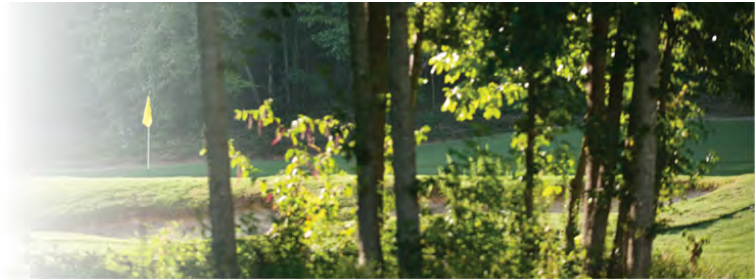
- Lead-acid storage batteries are classified as hazardous wastes unless they are recycled. All lead-acid battery retailers in Ohio are required by law to accept returned batteries for recycling.
- Spent lead-acid batteries must be recycled if they are to be exempt from strict hazardous waste regulations.
- Equipment used to apply pesticides and fertilizers should be stored in areas protected from rainfall.
- Pesticide application equipment can be stored in the chemical mixing center (CMC), but fertilizer application equipment should be stored separately.
- Blow or wash loose debris off equipment to prevent dirt from getting on the CMC pad, where it could become contaminated with pesticides.
- Ensure that all containers are sealed, secured, and properly labeled. Use only regulatory agency-approved, licensed contractors for disposal.
- Rinse pesticide containers as soon as they are empty. Pressure rinse or triple-rinse containers and add the rinse water to the sprayer.
- Shake or tap non-rinseable containers, such as bags or boxes, so that all dust and material fall into the application equipment.
- After cleaning them, puncture the pesticide containers to prevent reuse (except glass and refillable mini-bulk containers).
- Keep the rinsed containers in a clean area, out of the weather, for disposal or recycling.
- Storing the containers in large plastic bags/tubs to protect the containers from collecting rainwater.
- Recycle rinsed containers in counties where an applicable program is available or take them to a landfill for disposal. Check with your local landfill before taking containers for disposal, as not all landfills will accept them.



*Figure 33. Wash equipment over a concrete or asphalt pad that allows the water to be collected. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

# Landscape

## *Preface*



Landscape (non-play) areas are an essential part of the overall course design, providing enhanced course aesthetics, wildlife habitat, external sound/noise abatement, and natural cooling and freeze protection.

An environmental landscape design approach addresses environmentally safe and energy-saving practices; therefore, environmentally sound landscape management is also economically important. Non-play areas require a mix of sun and shade, optimal soil conditions and adequate canopy air movement to sustain growth and function.



*Figure 34. Golf courses proved exceptional habitats for various bird species such as bluebirds and wrens. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*





*Figure 35. Bluebird eggs in custom made bluebird house. Similar birdhouses are found on many golf courses throughout Ohio. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*



*Figure 36. Bluebird fledglings found in custom made bluebird house. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*



*Figure 37. Wren nest found in custom made birdhouse. These custom-made birdhouses are a common site on Ohio golf courses. Photo credit: Jason Mahl.*

## **Species Selection and Size Considerations**

### **Principles**

- The fundamental principle for the environmentally sound management of landscapes is “right plant, right place.” The ideal plant from an environmental standpoint is the one that nature and evolution placed there. It has adapted specifically to the soil, microclimate, rainfall, and light patterns, insects, and other pests, and endemic nutrient levels over thousands of years.
- Know the ultimate sizes and growth rates of trees, shrubs, and ground covers. This reduces the need for pruning and debris removal and lowers maintenance costs.
- The addition of proper soil amendments can improve soil’s physical and chemical properties, increase its water-holding capacity, and reduce the leaching of fertilizers. Amendments may be organic or inorganic; however, soil microorganisms rapidly decompose organic amendments such as peat or compost.
- The goal of species-selection BMP is to maintain as close to a natural ecosystem as practical, while meeting the needs of a golf course.
- Landscape areas should be fundamentally designed to facilitate rapid plant establishment to conserve water and lower nutritional input requirements once

mature. Plants within areas that are not in play or are not critical to the design of the course may be removed and replanted with native plant material that requires little to no maintenance after establishment. Additionally, 50% to 70% of the non-play areas should remain in natural cover. As much natural vegetation as possible should be retained and enhanced through the supplemental planting of native trees, shrubs, and herbaceous vegetation to provide wildlife habitat in non-play areas, along water sources to support fish and other water-dependent species. By leaving dead trees (snags) where they do not pose a hazard, a well-developed understory (brush and young trees), and native grasses, the amount of work needed to prepare a course is reduced while habitat for wildlife survival is maintained.



*Figure 38. Fallen trees in out-of-play areas can provide various wildlife habitats. Photo credit: Matthew Doran.*

### **Best Management Practices**

- Base plant selection as close to a natural ecosystem as practical, while meeting the needs of the golf course. It has adapted specifically to the soil, microclimate, rainfall, light patterns, insects and other pests, and endemic nutrient levels over many years.
- Select trees, plants, and grass species to attract birds seeking wild fruits, herbs, seeds, and insects.
- Know the ultimate sizes and growth rates of trees, shrubs, and ground covers.
- Use plants that are adapted for the site based on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) cold-hardiness map.
- Select stress-tolerant species or cultivars to manage periodic dry/wet conditions.
- Choose the most stress-tolerant species or cultivar for a particular area.

- Selection should keep in mind the environment is ever-changing and selections should reflect environmental adaptations. (ex. Emerald Ash Borer's effect on the use of ash trees in the landscape).



*Figure 39. Utilizing tree and plant species with fruits and nuts help provide food to wildlife. Photo credit: Matthew Doran.*

## ***Design and Function***

### **Principles**

- Aesthetic gardens, window boxes, and container gardens should include a variety of plants of different heights that provide nectar for hummingbirds and butterflies. Again, “right plant, right place” is the key to success.
- When integrating turf areas into the landscape around the clubhouse, entries, and other areas, design them for ease of maintenance and keep in mind that turfgrasses grow best in sunny areas. Consider the effect that tree canopy and other design features may have on the health and function of the turf.
- Garden plants, shrubbery, ground covers, or native plants may provide a pleasing view and provide useful food, cover, or other environmental benefits to wildlife; they may also require reduced maintenance.
- Trees and shrubs along streams provide temperature moderation through shade, which lowers water temperature in summer and increases it in winter. A fortified stream bank is another benefit to encouraging native plant and trees along water ways.

- To ensure a successful design, a balanced approach between aesthetics and practicality is essential.
- To create a cohesive design, it is helpful to generate a map or rendering during preliminary and future planning.



*Figure 40. Planting native species such as Solidago (goldenrod) can help provide a diverse habitat for wildlife. Photo credit: Matthew Doran.*

### **Best Management Practices**

- Well-designed forested buffers should contain a mixture of fast- and slow-growing native trees, shrubs, and grasses to provide a diverse habitat for wildlife.
- Use forested buffers to trap and remove upland sources of sediments, nutrients, and chemicals.
- Use forested buffers to protect fish and wildlife by supplying food, cover, and shade.
- Use forested buffers to maintain a healthy riparian ecosystem and stable stream channel.
- Leave dead tree snags whenever possible for nesting and food source to wildlife. However, make sure that these snags are a safe distance away from playing surfaces should they get blown over.
- Use turf as a landscape element where needed.

### ***Planting Methods***

#### **Principles**

- The ideal plant from an environmental standpoint is the one that nature and evolution placed there. It has adapted specifically to the soil, microclimate, rainfall, light patterns, insects, and other pests, and endemic nutrient levels over hundreds or thousands of generations. Where these factors have changed, the challenge is finding other suitable plants. A BMP goal is to maintain as close to a natural ecosystem as practical, while meeting the needs of the golf course.
- The use of organic mulches in gardens and aesthetic areas increases the moisture-holding capacity of plantings and prevents weed growth when applied in sufficient depth. Organic amendments are decomposed by soil microorganisms and add to soil tilth.
- Keep mulch 2 to 3 inches away from plants, to prevent fungal growth from excess dampness.
- Excess mulch or compacted mulch may be detrimental, causing water to shed away from the root zone and encourage overwatering. Compaction or excessive mulch buildup should be avoided, especially when annual re-mulching is performed.

### **Best Management Practices**

- The plant palette and irrigation system should be appropriate for site conditions, considering that, in some cases, soil improvement can enhance water-use efficiency.
- Plants should be grouped together based on irrigation demand.
- The percentage of landscaped area in irrigated high-water-use hydrozones should be minimized. Local government ordinances should address the percentage of irrigated landscaped area that may be included in high-water-use hydrozones. These high water-use limits should not apply to landscaped areas requiring large amounts of turf for their primary functions (for example, ball fields and playgrounds).
- In most instances, established, drought-tolerant landscape plants have a root system substantial enough to keep them alive with little or no supplemental irrigation.
- Pruning and fertilizing will also benefit landscape plants while they are becoming established.
- Add proper soil amendments in garden areas to improve the soil's physical and chemical properties, increase its water-holding capacity, and reduce the leaching of fertilizers.
- It is important to keep in mind that during establishment, native plants can require additional inputs. However, after establishment, native plants tend to be self-sufficient and require fewer inputs.

# Energy

## *Preface*



According to the GCSAA Golf Course Environmental Profile, Vol. IV (GCSAA 2012), six major energy sources were identified for golf course use: electricity, gasoline, diesel, natural gas, propane and heating oil. In addition, operational uses were segmented to meet irrigation, turf maintenance, buildings, clubhouse operations, swimming pools and various amenity needs.

The overall conclusion of the study suggests that golf facility managers must take steps toward identifying options for conservation, efficiency, and cost savings.

To address current needs and future energy reduction opportunities, managers should evaluate current energy conservation performance practices based on the following categories:

- General energy conservation position statements on policy and planning
- Buildings and amenities statements –buildings, infrastructure and facility amenities such as the clubhouse, swimming pool, restaurant, parking lot, kitchen, offices, maintenance building(s), tennis courts, etc.
- Golf course statements – the golf course and surrounding landscapes, pump station, irrigation system and related agronomic operations (playing surfaces, equipment, turfgrass maintenance etc.)

## ***Energy Conservation***

### **Principles**

- Determine goals and establish an energy policy that is part of the facility's overall environmental plan.
- Establish an energy management plan for the facility based on current energy use baselines to optimize efficiency.
- Communicate policy to all staff regarding use patterns and management practices to effect change.
- Relate the policy to the entire facility, including the services the facility provides to its customers and community.

- Incorporate quality management elements for continual improvement (plan, do, check, and act) to reduce environmental and economic impacts.
- Understand that the irrigation pump is the largest user of energy. A well-engineered pump station is critical to reducing energy consumption.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Conduct an energy audit.
- Conduct a lighting audit.
- Conduct a carbon footprint analysis.
- Add insulation where needed.
- Use non-demand electrical hour rates: charge golf carts, and use pumps to acquire water, charge maintenance equipment, and other items later in the day or early in the morning.
- Limit high-consumption activities during periods when demand is high.
- Use alternative energy from natural sources, such as solar, geothermal and wind energy generation.
- Upgrade or install National Electrical Manufacturers Association's (NEMA) premium efficiency-rated pump motors.
- Seek output reduction by watering less area, apply target golf goals.
- Install LED lighting and/or retrofit devices.
- Install motion sensors for lights where appropriate.
- Install a programmable thermostat.
- Install solar/Geo Thermal pumps for pools and spa.

### ***Evaluation***

#### **Principles**

- Continually track and measure energy use at the facility based on energy assessment units, for example, kilowatt hour.
- Benchmark practices to evaluate existing facility consumption with other local golf facilities of similar size.

#### **Best Management Practices**

- Monitor energy use: track data, evaluate billing meters.
- Install adequate meters, gauges, etc.
- Develop an equipment inventory incorporating individual equipment's energy use, traffic patterns, etc. (maintenance records, operation hours, etc.).
- Establish a baseline for performance parameters to optimize irrigation pumps.
- Consider benchmarking performance against similar-sized facilities.



## ***Efficiency***

### **Principles**

- Evaluate energy efficiency performance.
- Evaluate electric equipment/operations and ensure proper selection, operation, charging, and maintenance.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Evaluate all energy providers (electricity, natural gas and liquid petroleum fuels) for costs, efficiency/assistance programs, and incentives.
- Identify and categorize operations for energy efficiency opportunity and conservation analysis.
- Perform assessments of all the facility's infrastructure and operations.
- Perform appropriate audits throughout the facility depending on operation, infrastructure, and planning stage.
- Identify efficiency and conservation elements of infrastructure/hard items and behavioral/process-oriented items.
- Consider alternative equipment, products, and practices.

## ***Design and Renovation***

### **Principles**

- Incorporate an analysis of the assessments, audits, and data.
- Incorporate first cost consideration (initial investment and long-term gain).
- Redesign – evaluate future projects with a priority for energy conservation.
- According to system and compliance standards, communicate with utility provider, insurance company, and any state or local regulatory officials.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Identify buildings, amenities, and operations including existing, new construction, or renovation activities where energy efficiency enhancements are needed.
- Identify the golf course, course infrastructure, and related agronomic operations including existing and future developments or renovations that would benefit from energy efficiency improvements.

## ***Implementation Plan***

### **Principles**

- Set goals for buildings/amenities and the golf course operation; develop an implementation plan.

- Set energy-use goals according to efficiency/conservation of the building, infrastructure and equipment efficiency.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Evaluate effectiveness of upgrades according to efficiency/conservation goals for energy use.
- Continue to identify future energy needs and maintain good record keeping.
- Prioritize energy consumption as part of purchase/decision-making process for HVAC, food service, laundry, swimming pools, etc.
- Consider other devices as part of the plan; do research on building, pumps, and power generation.

### ***Infrastructure***

#### **Principles**

- Ensure efficient building/facility/amenities and related infrastructure.
- Consider the materials: used insulation and color selection.
- Ensure efficient lighting in both interior and exterior areas.

#### **Best Management Practices**

- Maximize use of space.
- Inspect and repair leaks/maintenance.
- Monitor temperature/environmental settings (heat loss, etc.).
- Evaluate building automation systems, monitoring systems, etc.
- Incorporate technology and up-to-date equipment (lights, controls, switches, etc.).
- Implement schedules/controlled use.
- Evaluate off-grid pole lighting and similar technology.

### ***Alternative products, operations, and practices***

#### **Principles**

- Educate and motivate employees, guests, etc.
- Educate, train, and motivate employees on energy efficiency practices pertaining to golf course operations.
- Identify incentives and programs from energy providers.
- Identify state/local programs and certification.
- Consider U.S. Green Building Council's LEED program.
- Consider EPA's EnergyStar, Portfolio Manager, etc.
- Consider energy management software, services, etc.

- Consider national and local programs and programs like the EPA's WaterSense program as it relates to buildings (see Water Conservation BMP).

### **Best Management Practices**

- Evaluate alternative transportation.
- Evaluate cleaning practices (dry vs. wet).
- Consider local vs. distant purchases, product selection, etc.
- Evaluate energy acquisition and energy coming into the facility.
- Evaluate golf car equipment/operations and ensure proper selection, operation, charging, and maintenance.
- Incorporate training for employees.
- Incorporate the use of incentives.

### ***Course Management Plan***

#### **Principles**

- Set energy-use goals for efficiency/conservation including infrastructure, equipment, behavior and agronomic practices.
- Ensure proper selection (type, size, etc.), operation, and equipment maintenance.
- Ensure efficient design, selection, operation, and maintenance of irrigation pumps, irrigation controls and other irrigation components.
- Implement energy source selection, management, and efficiency/conservation practices.

#### **Best Management Practices**

- Work with energy providers and evaluate existing programs, resources, etc.
- Consider long-term costs in addition to acquisitions.
- Schedule reviews to evaluate future technology and fuel types.
- Evaluate upgrades.
- Evaluate use of alternative energy/fuels.
- Identify future energy needs.
- Prioritize energy consumption as part of selection.
- Optimize equipment use data including hours operated, use patterns, etc.
- Incorporate new technology and upgrades when feasible.
- Consider alternative equipment, products, and practices.

### ***Irrigation***

#### **Principles**

- Ensure efficient design, selection, operation, and maintenance of irrigation pumps, irrigation controls, and other irrigation components.
- Assess irrigation pump efficiency; consider alternative equipment, products, and practices; use energy efficiently to maximize the output of the pump station.

### **Best Management Practices**

- Audit irrigation system (see Water Conservation BMP).
- Schedule and operate pumps and irrigation in an efficient manner.
- Identify and implement infrastructure and behavioral changes.
- Evaluate technology and upgrades; implement when feasible.

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