



Newsletter

Spring 2001

FROM DAVE'S DESK

Water! Water! Everywhere! No — it's a lack thereof. We've been getting some welcome spring Showers this year but there is still a deficit after a 3-year drought. Water is still a hot topic these days.

A couple of months ago, I attended a public hearing in Valdese, NC held by the NC Environmental Management Commission concerning temporary rules for buffer strips along the Catawba River. The temporary rules were adopted recently and will become law in June 2001. The buffers are to consist of a 50-ft. wide strip of land, 30 ft. of trees and 20 ft. of grass or other vegetation along both sides of the Catawba River and along the shores of the lakes. Only limited construction will be allowed within this buffer zone once the regulations become effective; existing land use falls under a grandfather clause.

Public hearings have been scheduled for the fall on the permanent rules. There is considerable difference between the temporary and permanent rules that will likely adversely affect the green industry livelihood. The permanent rules are being proposed to increase coverage for all tributaries of the Catawba River, which will probably reduce land available for development and increase costs for land development all along the River basin.

Sedimentation is a problem that affects water quantity by reducing the holding capacity of rivers and lakes. Less sediment means more water can be impounded for people and industry. Several communities in our area do have water shortages and with growth taking place in North Carolina, this problem will likely get worse. Enforcing current erosion control laws could reduce much of the sedimentation.

Recently, it came to my attention that a local Water and Sewer Board was proposing a policy that allowed industry to continue its water use but denied the usual availability to homeowners. The reasoning behind the proposal was to save the jobs that industry supplied to the area. However, it overlooked the fact that the green industry, i.e., landscapers, nurserymen, and sod producers employ many people too. The Board's proposal was effectively putting many out of work.

Several landscapers, as a group, attended a meeting with that Water and Sewer Board to express their concerns and to present the members of the Board with copies of *Water Right*, a book published by the International Turfgrass Producers Foundation. Although their problems are not entirely resolved, that group of landscapers was instrumental in impacting change in the regulations; they gained some positive results. By being proactive and working together, we are able to influence decisions that affect our industry.

Yet, another way to ease water shortage problems is to use more drought tolerant plants. Warm season grasses, such as Bermudas, Zoysias, and Centipedes, "fit that bill." I know it will require educating our customers to get them to agree to switch their cool season to warm season grasses. We will help you with this process in any way we can.

Piedmont Turf is increasing its acreage of warm season grasses. We have grown Certified Tifway 419 Bermuda for years, and we are now growing Empire Zoysia and TifBlair Centipede, both Certified grasses too. The latter should be ready to harvest sometime later this summer.

Quotable Quotes

**If you are planning for a year,
sow rice.**

**If you are planning for a decade,
plant trees.**

**If you are planning for a lifetime,
educate a person.**

Chinese Proverb

**If you always do what you always did,
You'll always get what you always got.**

Modern Proverb

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WATER RIGHT: CONSERVING OUR WATER, PRESERVING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Water Right is a recent publication whose aim is to encourage new thinking about water policy decisions with an ultimate goal to adopt forward-thinking approaches to water-use, conservation and quality.

It addresses the use of water for landscaping purposes. During water shortages, the homeowner and the landscaper are frequently the first target on whom water restrictions are imposed. However, scientists have shown that substantial benefits are realized using only minimal amounts of water when landscapes are properly designed, installed and maintained.

Long-term environmental, social, and personal well being are benefits to be realized with functional, recreational, and aesthetic landscapes. These require conservation and recycling of water and making the best use of all water resources. These benefits are most likely to be found wanting when single-solutions thinking and dire restrictions of water for landscapes result in fires, floods, and erosion, spoiling both the environment and the water supply.

Evidence mounts that more people in more places will find water, in the future, to be highly contaminated and very expensive. Officials need to expand their horizons innovatively and adopt forward-thinking approaches to water use, quantity and quality. Creating model systems that conserve water and provide responsible solutions is a task that will likely require your cooperation.

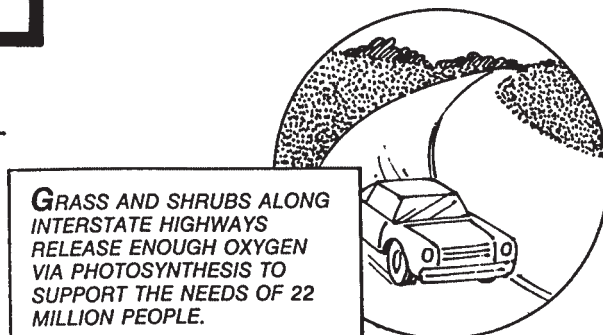
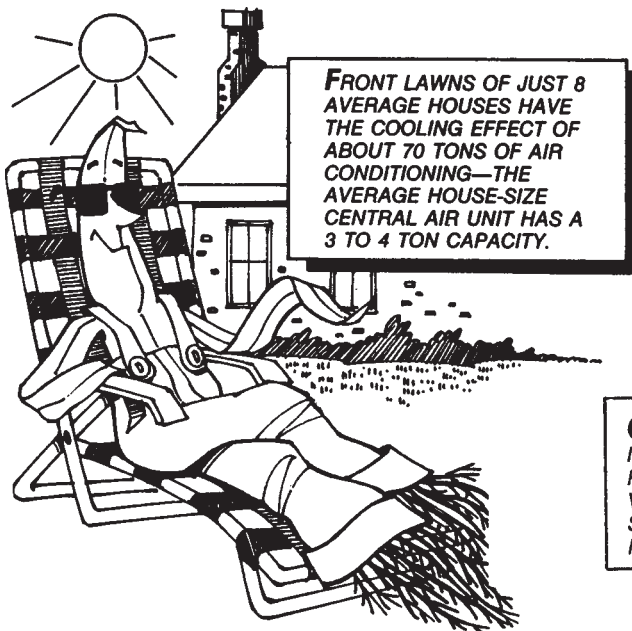
This book, now in its second printing, is published by the *International Turf Producers Foundation (ITPF)* and could be yours by (1) ordering through *Piedmont Turf Farm*, or (2) downloading at no charge from the *Turf Producers International (TPI)* website <www.TurfGrassSod.org>, or (3) ordering directly with

a \$5.00 S&H fee from TPI, 1855 Hicks Road, Suite C, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008.

The first seven chapters spell out scientifically supported solutions for landscape water usage. Case histories illustrate the benefits when water suppliers and landscapers work cooperatively to apply the best water conservation practices. A water conservation checklist, a review of landscape water conservation ordinances, and a set of principles for water conservation are contained in the appendices.

While visiting various water association officials in Washington, D.C. ITPF representatives found great interest for a wide distribution of the book. And the American Water Works Association suggested that the turf industry should become a partner in AWWA's water conservation activities and meetings.

You too, can influence your Water Department/ Board/Authority/ or Commission by presenting this book and talking to them about conserving, educating, and researching water quantity issues and solutions.



Diagrammatic summary of benefits derived from turfgrass

Benefits of Turfgrass

Functional

- Soil erosion control
- Dust prevention
- Rain water entrapment & ground water recharge
- Solar heat dissipation
- Glare reduction
- Organic chemical/pollutant entrapment and degradation

- Air pollution control
- Nuisance animal/pest reduction
- Fire prevention
- Security—visibility
- Environmental protection

Recreational

- Low cost surfaces
- Physical health
- Mental health
- Safety cushion
- Spectator entertainment

Aesthetic

- Beauty
- Quality of life
- Mental health
- Social harmony
- Community pride
- Increased property values
- Complements trees and shrubs in the landscape



Erosion control



Sports safety



Community pride

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Who feels the impact when landscape watering restrictions or bans are put into place?

Depending on the degree of the restrictions, everyone from a high school student working part time selling lawn mowers to the owner of a landscape service or irrigation company can be affected. The impact can be economic, aesthetic and even environmental.

DIRECT IMPACT

- Homeowners (single-family dwellings)
- Apartment renters and condo owners (multi-family dwellings)
- Public and private airports, churches, cemeteries
- Golf courses, parks and playgrounds, sports fields
- Tourism
- Commercial operations (owners and employees)
- Feed/seed stores
- Gas stations
- Hardware stores

- Greenhouses, nurseries, and garden centers
- Home centers
- Irrigation systems (manufacturing and installation)
- Mail-order firms
- Mass merchandisers
- Production nurseries
- Supermarkets and drug stores
- Turfgrass sod farms
- Landscape professionals (owners and employees)
- Architects and designers
- Contractors

- Golf course superintendents
- Groundskeepers
- Lawn-care operators
- Sports field managers

INDIRECT IMPACT

- (as a result of related lost sales, unemployment, etc.)
- Material sales and delivery
 - Service providers (cafes, dry cleaners, service stations, etc.)
 - Sales and use taxes
 - Trucking and other transportation

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Questions Water-Policy Officials Should Be Prepared To Answer

Ultimately, enlisting the public in a successful water-conservation program requires water-policy officials to be able to deliver on the promises they make — even if those promises are only implied. Officials should be prepared to answer:

Question 1. Are the landscape water-conservation goals short-term, long-term or indefinite, and are they expected to become more restrictive?

Question 2. Have the proposed conservation programs proven to be effective in saving water, or like some xeriscape programs actually resulted in using more water?

Question 3. Will the proposed landscape water-conservation efforts result in creating heat islands, which require increased energy consumption for cooling?

Question 4. Will there be any negative impacts on the environment and ecosystem as a result of the proposed water-conservation efforts?

Question 5. What are the economic impacts (positive and negative on home values, businesses and jobs) that can be expected as a result of these conservation efforts?

Question 6. What will happen to the water that is conserved? Where will it go and how will it be used?

Question 7. Will individuals maintain personal choice and individual responsibility when the proposed conservation efforts are implemented?

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World Population Growth

1900 – 1.6 Billion

1950 – 2.5 Billion

2000 – 6.1 Billion

Population and water use are increasing, and yet the fact remains, *only 1 percent of the world's water source is available for human use.*

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THE NORTH CAROLINA ENVIRONMENT & THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Finally, North Carolina is beginning to pay more than cursory attention to its water supplies! Dave told you about one public meeting that he attended whose subject was the Catawba River Basin. The Catawba River was included in the country's list of endangered rivers for 2001 in a report by American Rivers. One official made the comment that the river can only be as clean as the management of the land and the water surrounding it. Water quality is the issue undertaken by the local Upper and Lower River Basin Committees under the direction of the NC Division of Environmental Quality.

A different issue of water quantity is facing local officials. It deals with the sedimentation of the river and lakes, indicating soil erosion is occurring. As the lakes fill in with silt, water storage becomes an issue. It is estimated that Lake Rhodhiss is about 38 percent filled in and Lake Hickory is about 18 percent filled in.

Caldwell County prepared a grant application for the NC Division of Water Quality that funded 50 percent of the cost and Caldwell County supplied the balance. Investigations will be made to determine if the sediment clogging the lakes can be removed and identify ways to do so, evaluate treatment of the sediment, and identify potential uses of the removed material. Testing will begin in early May and the final report is expected in the fall. This study will be valuable for all areas along the river and while it is independent of the first study mentioned and has no regulatory phase to it, land use and buffer zones will, no doubt, be reviewed to slow the sedimentation of the River.

“Landscapes have direct and indirect economic values. People spend large sums of money on landscaping to enhance the personal and economic value of their homes. The presence or absence of well-maintained landscapes significantly affects local economies.”

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“When given information and technology, people will make the effort to conserve. Plant selection will have less impact on water use than either irrigation or soil preparation. Water budgets give consumers more options and personal choice, while providing an effective way to conserve water.”

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