

What Does “Intelligent Use” of Water Mean To Clubs?

THE INTELLIGENT USE OF WATER – WORDS WE OFTEN HEAR TODAY. AND IT’S ALL PART OF EDUCATING PRIVATE CLUBS, GOLF COURSE OWNERS, AND MANAGERS ON JUST HOW THEY CAN INCORPORATE THE INTELLIGENT USE OF WATER INTO THEIR OPERATIONS.

“We’ve discovered that often members of green committees, and the ownership and managements levels at clubs have no idea of the kinds of things that are available either for environmental stewardship or for the conservation of water,” related Kerry Barnett, Rain Bird’s golf division marketing manager.

“Some don’t even know they’re using recycled water on their golf courses today. So we want information aimed at constituents (the board of directors, the green committee and GM), to help them make better informed decisions.”

But if it’s so important to private clubs, boards of directors, general managers and golf course superintendents, what’s it mean to a company such as Rain Bird Corporation?

“It’s our corporate philosophy meaning that conservation, the use of recycled water, integrating advanced technology and environmental stewardship are part of everything we do at Rain Bird,” exclaims Kerry Barnett.

In most cases, this knowledge is something golf course superintendents already know and have because they’re involved in these efforts daily. “Most of the Superintendents have achieved a level of certification through the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. They’re well educated about these kinds of things and they work on irrigation and conservation everyday,” Barnett commented.

“How do we get the information out to the board of directors and the general manager? That’s the task facing us.

“A club’s greens committee (as do most of the club’s members) cares about two things as they relate to the golf course...playability of the course and being the financial stewards of their club in matters related to the playing surface and property.

“There’s an increased pressure on clubs and courses to be environmental stewards. For example, there’s a need and desire to cut back on water and fertilizer usage and consumption, yet it’s tougher to maintain conditions of

playability that everyone wants on their golf course. It’s such a dichotomy and dilemma,” he explained.

“So how do board of directors and general managers look at these two factors of playability and the economic impact? How do we get the education and information to both so that it has an impact to help with decision making?” are questions Barnett posed.

“The irrigation system on a course is one of the single largest capital investments made on the course outside of the buildings etc, or value of the land, and generally we’re talking about an investment of close to \$1 million. It’s invisible to members and quite often the board, until there’s a problem. So we’re starting with a preposition that they don’t know about it until something happens.

“They don’t see the superintendent spending an inordinate number of hours trying to rebuild and make sure the irrigation system is working to bring the golf course surface back to class A conditions. Board members, the greens committee and club members often are unaware of what’s happening in the background to make sure the club has the best playing conditions.

Rain Bird is creating more processes, materials and products that focus on the intelligent use of water even as more golf courses use recycled or effluent water sources.

“We know golf course are terrific environmental stewards. For example, on their courses, many allow and encourage wildlife living in its natural habitat. There’s a tremendous exchange of oxygen because of the natural environment. There are so many ways courses contribute to the quality of the air and the prudent, intelligent use of water.

“One of primary benefits for a club arises because the water allows golf clubs to develop and maintain a pristine property. We take treated water supplies and disperse it over golf course. When it filters down through the earth, and sand etc...and back into underground supply, it’s significantly cleaner than when it was applied. By this we’re accomplishing two things...an outlet for water with a filtration system that’s also providing an incredible playing surface for people who enjoy golf,” Barnett expounded.

“We’re developing new products all the time so that these systems consume less water. However, sometimes a course

might consume more water simply because requirements of the course have changed. More water is being used, but we're actually irrigating more turf, with technology that's much more precise. The superintendent has absolute control over where to place the water for the greatest benefit, so in effect, there's a much more intelligent use of water.

"It's also important at times when homeowners live close to the course. They might not want water from the golf course on their property, preferring to look after their own needs. To handle these situations, we've got wind control mechanisms, allowing a very precise application of water, for example in a full circle or partial circle.

"Course superintendents can irrigate only where they want to irrigate. There's absolutely no question, we're able to control the amount and application of the water supply much more precisely that we were able to do even 10 years ago. We're much more efficient today," Barnett related.

"As I mentioned earlier, golf courses are well known as environmental stewards for our water supplies, but there are still issues facing the course superintendents, the board of directors and the club's general manager. For example, what do they do at a private club when asked to replace an old irrigation system, because the present system has become such a high maintenance situation?

"That's something we'll look at in the future articles," Barnett explained. "For example, when is it time to renovate the club's irrigation system? Often these systems are 30 years or older and badly in need of repair, so a decision for the future must be made. What do board members need to

know so that they can make good, sound economic decisions, for example, in considering the club's return on investment?" Barnett queried.

"I think much of the time board members are uncomfortable when faced with these kinds of issues – their superintendent is asking for a million-dollar decision and they're not sure of all of the elements that are involved in making the decision. That's where the board must have good sound research to make an intelligent decision that best for the future of the club, and that's where we can help.

"The network of resources available to golf course decision makers, including irrigation suppliers, architects and irrigation consultants, local distributors and other golf courses are all sources that should be utilized when information is needed. In the end, our objectives of promoting a sport we enjoy while preserving the environment are all factors that we share and take responsibility for in our organization," Barnett concluded. **BR**

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