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Don't Confuse Me with Facts & Logic!

It's unfortunate but true; when it comes to the turfgrass phosphorus bans that are being proposed by many legislatures, scientific research often succumbs to peer pressure or just plain ignorance.

Phosphorus Bans Ignore Real Cause of Problems

Written By: Wayne Kussow
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Publisher: The Heartland Institute

Phosphorus in turfgrass fertilizers comes in two chemical forms, and both are 100 percent water-soluble. That means after one or two irrigations or comparable rainfalls, no fertilizer phosphorus remains on the soil surface. Instead, the phosphorus has washed into the soil, where it becomes strongly attached to soil particle surfaces while remaining available to plants. At that point, less than one percent of the fertilizer phosphorus is capable of making its way into bodies of water or the water table.

Fertilizer Bonding

Transfer of fertilizer phosphorus (P) to surface water is therefore predominantly through erosion of phosphorus-bearing soil particles. These soil particles constitute what is commonly referred to as the sediment in runoff water.

This is where turfgrass has a unique feature when compared to agricultural row crops. Sediment losses from agricultural lands are measured in tons per acre, while sediment in turfgrass runoff water ranges from zero up to 100 pounds per acre. This superior ability of

grasses to trap and hold sediment is why grass has long been used as a buffer strip between agricultural lands and surface waters.

Thick Lawns Deter Runoff

Since sediment transport is the primary means for transfer of fertilizer phosphorus from turfgrass to surface water, the quantity of phosphorus transferred should depend on two things: the amount of sediment lost, and the concentration of fertilizer phosphorus on the sediment particle surfaces.

The amount of sediment lost from turfgrass is almost totally dependent on the density of the grass. Research has shown as turfgrass cover approaches 70 percent, sediment losses approach zero.

Another factor in sediment loss is a visual quality rating of the grass. Turfgrass researchers employ a rating scale of one to nine, with one being bare soil and nine being a dense, uniform cover. Research shows as the quality rating approaches seven, sediment loss goes to zero.

The second thing determining the quantity of fertilizer phosphorus in sediment is the concentration of phosphorus on soil sediment particles.

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Don't Confuse Me with Facts & Logic! - cont'd from page 1

This is readily determined by soil tests. Soil tests are good indicators of the amount of fertilizer phosphorus applied, and presumably the phosphorus concentration bears a direct relationship to the amount of phosphorus in turfgrass runoff water. This assumption is what leads to the use of soil test phosphorus level as the criterion for deciding when fertilizer phosphorus application on turfgrass is to be banned.

Soil Tests Not Valid

But is this a valid assumption? Not according to research conducted to date in Minnesota and New York. That research has shown there is no direct relationship between turfgrass soil test phosphorus levels and the quantities of phosphorus in runoff water. Similarly, Wisconsin research has shown there is no relationship between the amount of fertilizer phosphorus applied and the amount of phosphorus in turfgrass runoff water. In other words, there is no scientific validation of the use of soil tests as the criterion for regulating or banning fertilizer phosphorus application to turfgrass.

A study conducted in Madison, Wisconsin showed the amount of

tree canopy over streets accounted for all of the P in runoff from the streets. It has long been known that P loads from urban areas have two peaks—one at the time of leaf fall and the other during spring snow melt.

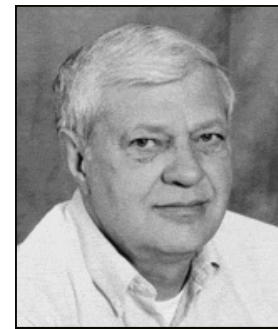
Recycling Phosphorus

One impetus for banning the fertilizer phosphorus on turfgrass has been surveys showing many home lawns have excessive levels of soil-test phosphorus with respect to actual turfgrass requirements.

When soil-test levels of phosphorus exceed what the grass actually requires, there is no additional uptake of phosphorus. Phosphorous bans assume fertilization is responsible for high soil-test levels. However, the science does not support this seemingly logical assumption.

Turfgrass researchers know the ratios in which nutrients are taken up by grasses are remarkably constant. For the cool-season grasses grown in northern climates, the ratio in which nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) are taken up is close to 9:1. Leaving the clippings on lawns (now a widespread practice) results in recycling of phos-

phorus. Wisconsin research has shown when clippings are left on lawns, it takes only 0.1 pound of fertilizer P per pound of N to replace what has been removed from the soil. This equates to a ratio of 10:1. Any survey of fertilizers commonly sold for lawn application quickly reveals a similar ratio of 10:1. This leads to the inescapable conclusion that these fertilizers are supplying only the quantity of phosphorous that is being removed by the grass.



Wayne Kussow, Ph.D. is an emeritus professor in the Department of Soil Science at the University of Wisconsin Madison.

To see the first in a four part series featuring Dr. Kussow's research go to: http://www.heartland.org/publications/environment%20climate/article/24561/Phosphrus_Bans_Ignore_Problems_Real_Causes.html

Diversification and Imaginative Marketing!

The Greenhorizon Group of Farms in Ontario, CANADA has always been known for their innovative thinking and their ability to diversify their business. Rob Witherspoon, Executive Director of the Guelph Turfgrass Institute has pointed out that **Ron Schiedel**, Greenhorizon's president, is not only an innovative thinker; he's acutely aware of what has worked in the past and uses that as a springboard to foresee change and embrace advancements. Selling a nutrient rich soil blended with black loam, well-composed manure and mineral soil is one thing but as these photos suggest, colorful packaging and imaginative marketing is another.



Professional Seed

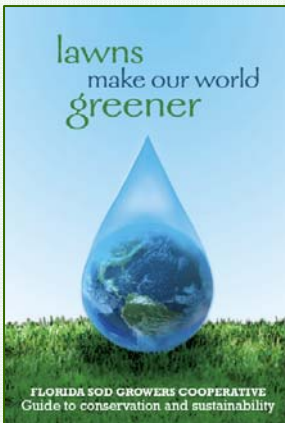
<http://www.scottsproseed.com/index.php>

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Florida Turfgrass Producers Get the Message Out

"Responsibly maintained turfgrass areas are good for the environment and good for people!"



The Florida Sod Growers Cooperative is launching a statewide marketing campaign focused on water-conservation strategies and education for homeowners and businesses on the benefits of healthy lawns.

As part of the *Lawns Make Our World Greener* campaign, the organization has published a six-page brochure highlighting well-documented environmental benefits that grass provides, including cooling the environment, reducing carbon in the atmosphere, controlling erosion and stormwater runoff, and purifying water that passes through its root zone. It also reinforces another message: that by maintaining and

using irrigation systems responsibly, homeowners can have healthier, better-looking lawns and conserve water at the same time.

"Consumers play a critical role in managing the state's natural resources, but they may not realize how simple it can be. As experts in growing and selecting grass, we can help," said Betsy McGill, executive director of the Florida Sod Growers Cooperative.

Brochures are available at member farms throughout the state, and can also be requested at: www.floridasodgrowers.com.



IC System

Intelligent Collections

Make Collections Less **TAXING** Now!

The TPI partnered provider of collection services, I.C. System, offers two timely suggestions for recovering more money to TPI members:

ASK ABOUT REFUNDS

February signals the start of tax season and typically, a creditor's best RECOVERY months of the year. Ask your debtors if they're getting a refund and mention that using it to pay you could keep their account from being sent to a collection agency. The timely tactic could help you collect more debt! If customers ignore your repeated requests for payment, submit their accounts to I.C. System. Doing so ensures your accounts are being processed during their best recovery months of the year - February through April. Historically, I.C. System's first-month collection percentage is 10% MORE on accounts received during these months compared to the rest of the year.

ASK FOR A FREE GUIDE OF TIPS

As a TPI member, you may receive a FREE guide of collection tips titled *Nice People Can Collect Bad Debt*. This valuable resource is proven to help collect more of your past-due accounts.

For a no-obligation consultation and/or to receive your FREE guide, please call 800-279-3511 or visit www.icmemberbenefits.com

This program is available to members in the USA only.

Are your new customers required to submit a credit application to do business with your turfgrass sod farm?

During the recent Midwinter Conference in Point Clear, Alabama at the Credit/Collections seminar, a discussion took place on best practices. Some of the attendees inquired about implementing credit applications with their first-time customers.



If you have a standard credit application and you would be willing to share a sample with your fellow TPI members please submit your credit application via email to Susan Hall, Membership & Marketing Manager at shall@turfgrassod.org.

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A TIP OF THE HAT

To **Paul Grose** of King Ranch who was named president of the Florida Sod Growers Cooperative at the association's 20th Annual Meeting on January 9.

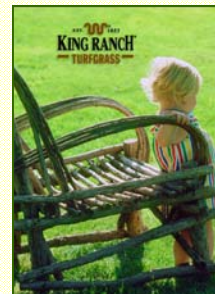


Paul Grose
General Manager
King Ranch Florida Division

Paul served on the FSGC board of directors and as treasurer since 2004. He also serves on the UF/IFAS Advisory Committee for the Everglades Research and Education Center in Belle Glade and the UF/IFAS Regional Advisory Committee.

“The turfgrass and landscape industries will continue to face many difficult challenges in the coming years,” Grose said, “and the Florida Sod Growers Cooperative will work hard with its green industry partners to promote and protect the interests of its members, the environment and all the citizens of Florida.”

Grose is the general manager of King Ranch's Florida division, overseeing the company's turfgrass, sweet corn, and sugar cane operations at its 20,000 acre Belle Glade farm. A graduate of Texas A&M University, he worked in King Ranch's South American cattle operations in Venezuela and Brazil prior to moving to Florida in 1987.



<http://www.wmitsh.com/>

HELP GROW YOUR ASSOCIATION



When you help to grow TPI's network of turfgrass sod producers, manufacturers and suppliers you not only strengthen TPI you also strengthen the turfgrass industry and your own business.

Be sure to tell fellow sod producers about the many exclusive membership benefits and services associated with TPI and encourage them to join.

For more information direct them to www.Turfgrassod.org where they can learn more about TPI membership benefits, services and access an easy to complete membership application.

Susan Hall
Membership & Marketing Manager

“Just think of how strong our voice could be if we all started singing the same song.”

The efforts of Turfgrass Producers International to provide reliable information to the general public and legislators is an on-going challenge. As with any association, TPI's efforts to educate and disseminate reliable information is strengthened considerably through membership. Challenging misleading information and providing the media with valid facts is strengthened

considerable through a unified message. Many of the benefits of membership are visible but there are many more benefits that are largely intangible yet immeasurably influential. The comments below substantiate the importance of unity and they are especially compelling at a time of economic challenges.

“Until agricultural organizations can find some common ground, put away the egos and turf battles, and begin to work together, the environmental radicals, and the bunny-hugging animal activists will continue to misinform the public and marginalize agriculture. Just think of how strong our voice could be if we all started singing the same song.”

Gary Truitt, President and founder of Hoosier Ag Today.

“If producers want to bring unity to their industry, they need to have a unified message; they should be unified as an industry and not have a lot of different people all telling their own story.”

Dave Vander Griend, CEO of ICM

“Why is turfgrass so misunderstood? Because the majority of people perceive grass in a way that is not accurate. They feel more comfortable speaking with the kid at the hardware store instead of an extension agent or a trained professional. They read and believe community brochures with facts that might not have been confirmed. Some buy into the concept of tragedy lawns. Many do not know where to turn for accurate information. It is becoming more and more apparent that you as licensed, trained and educated professionals must also serve as educators, not only to your customers, but to the public and legislature as well. Begin now with your training sessions and in your communications. You will be doing a public service.”

Karen Connelly, executive director, Massachusetts Association of Lawn Care Professionals

“The Return on Investment of trade association membership is largely intangible; however, it is outstanding nonetheless. It is in your self-interest to liberally join, sponsor and participate in numerous trade associations. If you are open-minded to talking with other firms, both your competitors and firms not directly in your field, you might stumble upon some new innovations. Successful industry clusters, business communities and ideas will emerge; this is essential to your firm's long-term success and the growth of a prosperous society.”

Steve Rosenbaum, Pop-Art contributing writer



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What is a Premiere Advertiser?

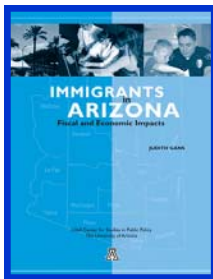
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This issue of the TPI e-newsletter is the first to include banner ads that feature companies identified as “Premiere Advertisers” in *Turf News*. A Premiere Advertiser is identified as a company that ran at least six *Turf News* display ads (regardless of size) during calendar year 2008 and has continued similar ad-frequency during 2009.

Banner ads of qualifying advertisers will be randomly rotated in each issue. These complimentary banner ads are intended to reflect TPI’s appreciation for the advertising support provided by qualifying companies. While this added feature in the e-newsletter is complimentary, it may be subject to change in the future.

Immigrant Workers and the Economy—It’s a Complex Issue

“Show me a 50-foot fence and I’ll show you a 51-foot ladder” Former Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano
(Appointed United States Secretary of Homeland Security January 2009)



The Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy, at the University of Arizona, looked at the full balance sheet to see what immigrants put into the economy and what they take out. In particular they studied the impact of immigrants, mostly illegal, on the economic conditions in Arizona. On a whole they found immigrants contributed more to the economy than they cost.

Almost 60 percent of agricultural workers and 51 percent of landscaping workers were immigrants.

The Udall Center also found that non-citizens, for their part, contributed \$28.9 billion, or eight percent of Arizona’s economic output, resulting in 278,000 full-time equivalent jobs. Their output included \$10 billion in labor income, and \$3.3 billion in other property income. The state tax revenues resulting from this economic activity were approximately \$1.08 billion.

They also looked at what would happen if the illegal workers were removed from the workforce. In the agriculture sector alone there would be a fifteen percent workforce reduction which would result in direct losses of 3,300 full-time-equivalent jobs, and losses of \$600.9 million in output including lost labor income of \$198.6 million, and lost other income of \$116.1 million. The lost direct state tax revenue would be approximately \$24.8 million.

The study concluded that the state of Arizona took in tax revenue of \$1.64 billion from immigrant workers while the amount the state spent on immigrants was approximately \$1.41 billion leaving a net benefit of \$222.6 million to the state coffers. But that is only what they contribute to Arizona’s revenue. They also pay national income taxes and social security taxes.

While it could be said that the economic impact of immigrants in the state of Arizona is a microcosm of a bigger picture, it’s also worth noting the comments of Steven A. Camarota, Director of Research, Center for Immigration Studies who stated the following in his testimony prepared for the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, “In the end, arguments for or against immigration are as much political and moral as they are economic.”

SOURCE: Immigrants in Arizona: Fiscal and Economic Impacts

By Judith Gans 2008 · 69 pages

ISBN 978-1-931143-37-0

For more information go to:

<http://udallcenter.arizona.edu/immigration/publications/impactofimmigrants08.pdf>



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