

Guide for Greens Committee Members

PREPARED BY THE



AGCOSA

AUSTRALIAN GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS' ASSOCIATION

ENDORSED BY



Golf Australia

Congratulations on your appointment to the Greens Committee of your golf club.

Golf course management is an extremely complex profession, a balance of science and art, surface preparation and compliance management. More than ever, golf clubs require highly trained professionals to oversee and implement the management of their course. Superintendents and their staff now have qualifications ranging from trade certificates through to degrees in turf and business management.

The role of the modern golf course superintendent is more diverse than ever before. Regardless of the size of the facility, the superintendent is required to oversee areas that include:

- Turf management
- Agronomy
- Human resources
- Financial management
- Irrigation management
- Environmental management
- WHS management
- Asset management
- Public relations
- Ambassador
- Educator
- Role model

There can be enormous variations in work circumstances including:

- Staff levels of 1-35
- Budget differences
- Equipment differences
- Playing/traffic demands
- Grass type/soil type variations
- Climatic differences
- Quality and quantity of water supplies

Despite these variations and the way the superintendent does his/her job, they all have one common goal...

SUSTAINABLE, CONSISTENT QUALITY PLAYING SURFACES

I trust this guide is of use in your position on the Greens Committee. The AGCSA is a valuable resource to golf clubs and should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact the office on the numbers detailed below.

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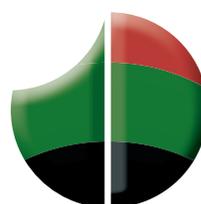




PHOTO: SMP IMAGES

SO WHERE DOES THE VOLUNTARY ROLE OF THE GREENS COMMITTEE FIT?

A Board/Committee's responsibility to its members is in the effective governance of the club, which includes the management of the golf course.

Your superintendent is the best person to advise you on the needs of the turf, maintenance problems and solutions, and budgetary requirements of the course. Entrusting your superintendent and his/her team with the operational aspects of course management allows the Greens Committee to focus on policy and longer term planning issues and communication with golfers, which are critical to the effective management of the course as an asset.

Boards/Committees have numerous responsibilities in their portfolios, and attending to all of these can be very difficult. Common to all clubs is the need for the golf course to be a major priority for club decisions in both the short and long term. Decisions made today can have a legacy that lasts for decades, so every effort needs to be made to ensure the best information available is obtained to assist the decision making process.



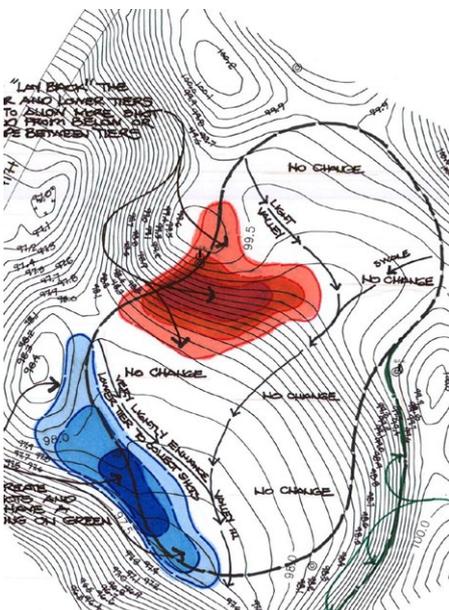
Utilising the knowledge and experience of your superintendent and his/her staff, your club can develop a very effective vision for the course, as well as strategic and business plans to assist short and long term management. The superintendent's objective is to provide the board/committee with the information it needs in order to make decisions in the best interests of the club.

PLANNING

Golf club management requires a business approach to ensure reliable financial and service performance. Therefore like any successful business, a golf club should have a clear direction for each area of its operation, and the course is no different.

The golf course is a dynamic and at times unpredictable area to manage, with factors beyond anyone's control significantly impacting the daily management requirements of the course. As a result, attention is often focussed on the issues of the day, rather than the longer term needs of the course.

In this environment, it is critical to have a 'game plan' that ensures that despite the inevitable deviations and distractions, there is a consistent focus on the fundamental requirements of your golf course.



Planning continued



The development of a documented 'vision' for the course provides consistency in the ever changing committee environment, and allows the development of strategic and business plans for the club to achieve that vision. It should clearly state the character of the course and the experience one can expect if playing the course for the first time. It can be bold, but should be mindful of the site, climate and available resources.

Each course has its strengths and weaknesses, and there should be documentation of these, and plans to address the issues (weaknesses) that are preventing the course from achieving or sustaining its vision.

These plans can then be prioritised (Strategic Plan), with financial considerations being a critical component of the decision making process, to ensure that any work undertaken is done so for the long-term benefit of the course and within the club's means.

The Business Plan for the golf course should include specific allocations for the annual maintenance budget, and the capital acquisition budget. It is recommended that the capital replacement budget is forecast up to 25 years in advance to cover/accommodate changeover schedules of most equipment including irrigation system components.

Too often clubs find themselves under financial pressure to replace expensive assets, simply because planning does not commence until it is clear there is a problem.

The following is a very relevant extract from a USGA publication '**A Guide for Greens Committee Members**' regarding the role of Greens Committee members;



"Greens Committees should consider the long-term best interest of the facility, and not attempt to 'put their mark' on the golf course. Short-term planning is expensive, and short-term Greens Committees often become a liability. Successful business people often are shocked by such a waste of labor and expense within their golf course operation. Dr. Alister Mackenzie, the famous golf course architect, may have best summarized the pitfalls of short-term committees in his book, The Spirit of St. Andrews, when he wrote: 'The history of most golf clubs is that a committee is appointed, they make mistakes, and just as they are beginning to learn by these mistakes, they resign office and are replaced by others who make still greater mistakes, and so it goes on.'

Planning continued



“Under such a system, it is difficult for the superintendent and the maintenance crew to work in any manner other than on a month-to-month basis. No one knows who the chairperson will be next year, and a new chairperson does not always recognize the accomplishments a superintendent made under prior leadership. The important feeling of teamwork between the superintendent and the chairperson does not have time to develop. Sufficient lengths of term and continuity must be maintained on the Greens Committee to work constructively with the superintendent and to accomplish both short- and long-term goals. More than any other club committee, the Greens Committee needs time to accomplish desired results because nothing happens fast in agriculture, with the exception of crop failure!”

“This reasoning leads to one conclusion: A long term is needed for the Greens Committee chairperson (three to five years), with the possibility of reappointment at the end of that time. When a new chairperson must be appointed, it is recommended that the person selected has actively served on the Greens Committee for a minimum of two years prior to becoming the chairperson. This action helps maintain committee continuity with the implementation of the long-range plan.”

On a final note, golfers who agree to serve on the Greens Committee must be able to commit the necessary time to attend regularly scheduled meetings. In addition, the most effective committee members make themselves available and approachable to others. It is difficult, if not impossible, to identify and address the concerns of the membership with respect to course policies and setup unless there is personal contact with a wide range of players throughout the season.

The Greens Committee has a vital role in bringing the vision, strategic and business plans to fruition by ensuring the course management team has the support and resources they need.





MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

While it is tempting to compare one course to another, or be influenced by images on our television screens, it is critical that there is an understanding of the capabilities of your own club and course. The intricate combination of the site, soils, climate, water supply, staffing levels, course design and budgets all have enormous impact on the maintenance programme at your course, as they do with others.

Avoid the temptation to implement a practice or programme simply because another course does it, but instead focus on the practices that are best suited and most relevant to your course. Trust your superintendent and his/her team with the agronomic programmes, for it is their responsibility to manage turfgrass for golf.

However, by gaining an understanding of the resources your course management team has at their disposal, and the requirements of course management overall, the Greens Committee can prove invaluable in helping to manage the expectations of golfers.

The AGCSA strongly encourages Greens Committees to work with their superintendent to develop Course Maintenance Guidelines (CMG) and Course Quality Objectives (CQO). CMGs relate to things like mowing heights and frequencies of each area of the course throughout the year, indicative frequency of bunker maintenance, key pesticide application frequency and timing, thatch management techniques and timing and type of renovation practices that will be undertaken.

CQOs are the measurable objectives of the course maintenance programme. These may include thatch levels, weed species populations (%), surface quality, turf density, water consumption, number of pesticide applications, time required for bunker maintenance etc. While the Greens Committee should be consulted, the desired objectives should be set by the course superintendent, as he/she is best qualified to understand what is required and sustainable.



It is important to note these are NOT Key Performance Indicators or specifications. There are many factors beyond the course maintenance team's control (weather, budget changes, traffic levels, event timing etc) that can influence the ability to achieve these objectives from time to time. However, they do help maintain everyone's focus on what they are trying to achieve on a daily basis, and more importantly, in the longer term for the course.



COMPLIANCE

Ensure your club has an Environmental Management System in place.

All directors take on the responsibility to ensure they have an Environmental Management System (EMS) in place for their course. While the superintendent may be entrusted with the administration of the EMS, it is imperative the club directors endorse the system and are actively involved in its annual review. The AGCSA has developed an Environmental Initiative for golf courses which will ensure that your club develops an EMS that attains an ISO 14001 standard for environmental management.

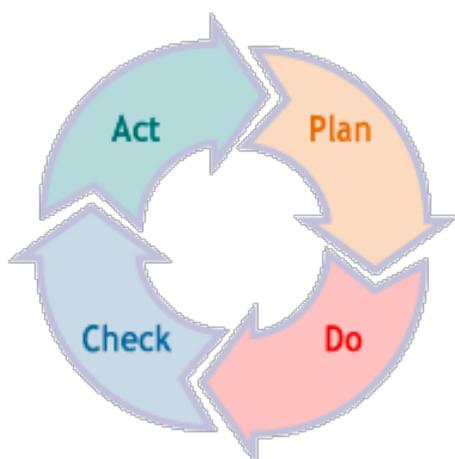
What is an EMS?

An Environmental Management System (EMS) is a set of processes and practices that enable an organisation to reduce its environmental impacts and increase its operating efficiency. It is a framework that helps a organisation achieve its environmental goals through consistent control of its operations. The assumption is that this increased control will improve the environmental performance of the organisation. The EMS itself does not dictate a level of environmental performance that must be achieved; each company's EMS is tailored to the their business and goals.

An EMS helps a company address its regulatory demands in a systematic and cost-effective manner. This proactive approach can help reduce the risk of non-compliance and improve health and safety practices for employees and the public.

An EMS can also help address non-regulated issues, such as energy conservation and can promote stronger operational control and employee stewardship. Basic elements of an EMS include:

- Reviewing the company's environmental goals
- Analysing its environmental impacts and legal requirements
- Setting environmental objectives and targets to reduce environmental impacts and comply with legal requirements
- Establishing programmes to meet these objectives and targets
- Monitoring and measuring progress in achieving the objectives
- Ensuring employees' environmental awareness and competence
- Reviewing progress of the EMS and making improvements



Source: www.epa.gov



Ensure the club has a Workplace Health and Safety Management System

All directors take on the responsibility to ensure they have a Workplace Health and Safety Management System (WHSMS) in place for their club. While the superintendent may be entrusted with the administration of WHS for the golf course, it is imperative the club directors endorse the system and are actively involved in its annual review.

A WHSMS aims to plan, implement, evaluate, review and audit the effectiveness of existing and future policies, procedures and work practices and achieve compliance with relevant legislation.

WATER

Throughout most of Australia, water is the biggest input to golf courses. Due to its community value, water must be managed in a manner that will satisfy club, public and regulatory requirements now and into the future.

As a starting point, and to ensure the sustainable quality of playing surfaces and water consumption throughout the club, it will need to complete a comprehensive Water Management Plan that will identify potential improvements in water management efficiency, and where long-term water supplies can be obtained. A Water Management Plan should be reviewed regularly with a view to continuous improvement.

The AGCSA has developed an online Water Management Plan for golf courses to assist in this process.

MEETINGS

The typically short-term tenure of Greens Committee members means that excellent record keeping is critical to promote continuity of decision making.

It is common for Greens Committee meetings to be held monthly. Regardless of the frequency of these meetings, or their duration, it is critical that minutes are formally recorded, with any resolutions documented and circulated among Greens Committee members and the course superintendent.



This avoids any discrepancy regarding decisions that have been made, and ensures that any resolutions are carefully considered. It is strongly recommended a policy be developed that does not allow any instruction or direction be given to the course superintendent (or any course maintenance team member) without it being in writing.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Aeration

The creation of a passage for air to pass into the soil profile, in an effort to restore the appropriate balance of air, water and mineral components within the soil.

Best Management Practice

A best practice is a technique or methodology that, through experience and research, has proven to reliably lead to a desired result. A commitment to using the best practices in any field is a commitment to using all the knowledge and technology at one's disposal to ensure success. The term is used frequently in the fields of health care.

Best practices service and support available through the AGCSA. Call (03) 9548 8600.

Biological Products

Naturally occurring materials that can be used to stimulate plant and/or soil health.



Chemical Resistance

Any population of turf pest has a number of individuals that have the ability to survive chemical applications that will control the majority of the population. A resistant population develops when the naturally resistant individuals survive and multiply following repeated applications of the same or chemicals with similar modes of action.

Compaction

The compression of the soil resulting in reduced soil pore space (the spaces between soil particles); decreased movement of water and air into and within the soil (hence poor root health); decreased soil water storage, and increased surface runoff and erosion potential.

Cultural Practices

Activities that are not naturally occurring, but undertaken by turf managers to improve the condition of the turf. Includes, mowing, fertilising, irrigation, aeration etc.





Disease in turfgrasses, as in other plants, develops from an interaction among a susceptible plant, a disease-producing organism (pathogen), and an environment favourable for disease development. Susceptible grasses and pathogens (usually fungi) are present in all turf areas. In most cases, the pathogens exist in a dormant or saprophytic (feeding on dead or decaying substances) state and do not attack living plants. Diseases occur when environmental conditions (weather, management, and/or site conditions) become favourable for the build up of pathogen populations and/or cause an increase in the susceptibility of the plant. When this happens, turfgrass loss can occur.

Disease diagnosis and treatment advice is available from AGCSATech. Call (03) 9548 8600.

Dusting

A light application of sand or soil to the turf surface to assist the diluting of thatch levels.



Fertilisers

Any of a large number of natural and synthetic materials, including manure and nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium compounds, spread on or worked into soil to increase its capacity to support plant growth. In turf management options include:

- *Controlled or slow release* – designed to meet plant growth needs over an extended period and governed by temperature, moisture, microbial activity.
- *Immediately available* – no controlled or slow release element in the product.
- *Granular* – a product designed to be applied through a conventional fertiliser spreader. Usually applied to the soil.
- *Liquid* – diluted in sufficient volumes of water so that it can be applied directly to the spray tank. Usually applied to the turf foliage.
- *Soluble* – a dry fertiliser product designed to be mixed with water and then added to a spray tank. Usually applied to the turf foliage.



Grooming, Brushing, Dethatching, Vertical mowing, Scarifying

Practices used to remove thatch or reduce thatch accumulation and promote new, finer textured growth.

Indigenous Plants

Those that are naturally occurring in a specific site.



Insect Pest

Many insects occur naturally within the turfgrass ecosystem, but only a few become a pest when their reliance on the turf plant as a food source is to the detriment of the turf's health. This can either be due to pest population numbers, or reduced ability of the turf to cope with pest demands due to other stress factors (e.g. wear, salinity, mowing heights, compaction etc)

Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

An IPM programme is a multi-disciplinary, ecologically-based pest management system that uses all available methods to keep pests at acceptable levels while minimising the effects on people, environment and turf. Options include pesticides, genetic, regulatory, biological and cultural solutions.

Integrated Pest Management requires;

- Understanding turf conditions and characteristics
- Surveying pest types and levels
- Defining pest damage thresholds
- Developing monitoring and record-keeping programmes
- Developing and implementing pest control strategies

Monitoring

Monitoring is the regular observation and recording of activities taking place in a project or programme. It is a process of routinely gathering information on all aspects of the project.

Nematode

Microscopic unsegmented worms, many of which are parasites on turf plants, living either inside or outside the roots.



Off Label Use



The law requires that all agricultural and veterinary chemical products sold in Australia be registered by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA). In most States, registered products must only be used for purposes that are specified on the label. In practice, situations often arise where chemicals are needed for a use not specified on the label. These are often termed 'off-label' uses. The APVMA can consider applications for permits that allow for the legal use of chemicals in ways different to the uses set out on the product label. In certain circumstances, the limited use of an unregistered chemical may also be allowed by permit.

Source: www.apvma.gov.au

Pathogen

A disease-producing agent, usually applied to a living organism. Generally, any viruses, bacteria, or fungi that cause disease, with fungal pathogens most common in turf management.



Re-entry Period

The time from when you apply the chemical, until it is safe for you to go back into the treated area. If you want to go back into the treated area before this time, you must wear the safety equipment that is listed on label.

Source: www.apvma.gov.au

Remnant Vegetation

Remaining plant species that have not been introduced.

Selectivity (treated areas, chemicals)

Describes the specific targeting of a designated treatment (area, pest)

Sustainability

The objective of golf course management that meets the present needs of the course and the environment without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.



Syringing

A very light application of water to the turf foliage for a specific purpose, such as to assist cooling of the plant or dew removal.

Glossary continued **Thatch**



The intermingled layer of living and dead grass stems, roots and other organic matter that is found between the soil surface and the leaf blades.

Threshold Levels

The number or amount of pest activity tolerable before chemical intervention is deemed necessary.

Topdressing

A heavier application of sand or soil to fill core holes and/or restore surface levels.

#Note: Frequency and types of practices associated with aeration, compaction and thatch management can vary greatly from club to club, and can be dependent on resources, time, events, water quality, traffic levels, grass type and condition, weather, climate, soil type, etc. It is recommended you consult your superintendent regarding the specific requirements of your course.



Turf Registered Product

Chemicals registered for use on turf have undergone years of rigorous testing, often at an investment in the millions of dollars, to ensure they are suitable for their intended use. As a result, manufacturers of turf registered products provide a warranty when they are used in accordance with label directions.

This results in turf registered products being priced to reflect the investment in the testing and registration process, but provides turf managers with an assurance of a product's quality and efficacy when used as directed.

Committing to the use of turf registered products supports ongoing research and development of new, improved chemistry for the turf industry.

Source: www.apvma.gov.au



Weed

A plant considered undesirable, unattractive, or troublesome, especially one growing where it is not wanted.

