

AGA-BC Environmental Advocacy Committee Update

By Keith Lyall, Committee Chair

Dear AGA-BC Member Organizations,

The following is a progress update from the Environmental Advocacy Committee (EAC) as of November 2014.

Firstly, it is important to discuss potential changes that will increase the cost of irrigation water used by many golf courses. The BC government has proposed new legislation called the “Water Sustainability Act” (Bill 18), replacing the previous Act created in 1909. Consultation from the public was received and reviewed, much like the consultation for “cosmetic” pesticides. This bill is now before the Legislative Assembly and is expected to become law in the near future. Current rules are summarized in the following statement found on the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations website:

Water Licences and Approvals

All water in British Columbia is owned by the Crown on behalf of the residents of the province. Authority to divert and use surface water is obtained by a licence or approval in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Water Act and the Water Protection Act.

In British Columbia, simply having access to surface water within or adjacent to property does not authorize a right to divert, use or store water.

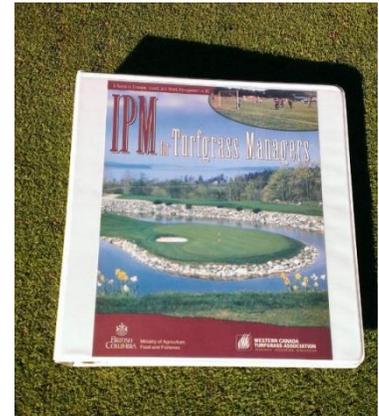
I have reviewed the information document titled “A Water Sustainability Act for B.C., Legislative Proposal, located at <http://engage.gov.bc.ca/watersustainabilityact/the-proposal/> here are few key topics that will affect our industry;

- Legislation will affect well users to a degree not seen previously. All subsurface water users will require registration and permitting from the provincial government to draw well water. Current legislation allows anyone to drill and use subsurface water without monitoring or reporting.

Personally and like many who commented during the consultation process, I am in favour of this change. Industry has had the ability to use water without restriction, for example, a water bottling facility near Hope BC, bottles and exports water completely free of provincial fees.

- The proposed legislation will require all well users to be government registered and will include, at this time, a similar flat rate fee and administration expense structure currently experienced by surface water users. The Ministry has stated that rates will be similar to those for surface water licensing. As an example, I can confirm that Sun Peaks Golf Course short term water licensing fees are \$200 annually, \$150 for the license and \$50 for administration. With the proposed legislation, it is important to realize that all golf courses could be paying for water usage in the future.
- There is also a proposal in the new act for flow monitoring of both surface and subsurface water usage. This should not be a huge disruption for most golf courses with modern pump stations using programmable logic controllers (PLC’s), however once usage volume is measured, it’s plausible per cubic meter charges would follow.

Work with the BC Ministry of Environment (MOE) on proposed IPM Act amendments continues. Most turf managers, by now, have heard and expect that change is coming to rules that govern application of plant



health products. The Committee is following up with its suggestion for a proposed addendum to the Landscape Applicators Certificate that has a focus on golf courses or “fine-turf”.

The committee feels that a comprehensive guide for turf managers already exists with the ‘IPM for Turfgrass Managers’, produced cooperatively with British Columbia’s Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and the Western Canada Turfgrass Association, dated 2002. This guide is intended for professional turfgrass managers in British Columbia and others who may find it useful. It includes information on the diseases, pests and weeds that occur in, or may be introduced to BC, along with IPM recommendations.

The aim of this guide is to provide current, practical and reliable disease, pest and weed control information with an emphasis on IPM. There is also an extensive section on pesticide safety, application, calibration, storage and regulations.

The aim of this committee is to ensure a level of professionalism within the golf industry and show our customers, critics and the public at large, that turfgrass managers are professionals and Best Management Practices (BMPs) are employed when plant health products are being used.

The committee also agreed that the IPM for Turfgrass Managers, should be the standard for all fine-turf managers including, but not limited to, the following:

- Prevention
- Rights of Others
- Responsible Use of Pest Management and Plant Health Products
- Legal Requirements
- Pest Identification
- Rates and Calibration
- Irrigation
- Emergency Response

Before the guide can be presented as our industry standard, significant updating is required. With assistance from many, the process of creating this resource that ultimately would reside in cyberspace, be available online free of charge and updated annually, has begun. Once endorsed by the Ministry, our “tool kit” would be used to create test questions for the ‘Fine-turf’ supplemental pesticide applicator certificate.

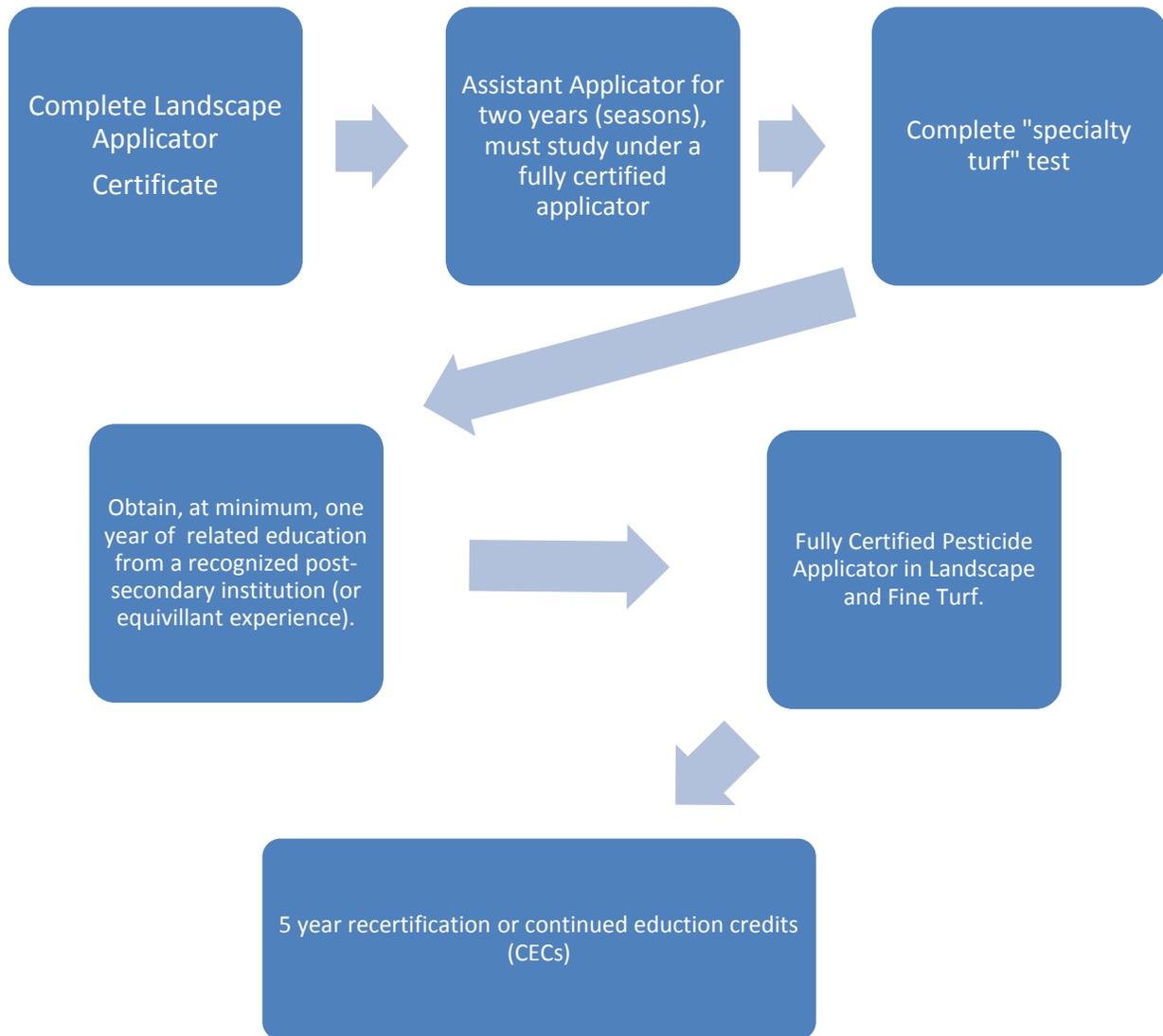
MOE is also considering changing the way a Pesticide Applicator Certificate is obtained by proposing an ‘Assistant Applicator’ designation. This person would study/apprentice under a fully certified applicator for a set time period before being allowed to complete the certification process. The committee favours this style of training, which I believe, is already commonplace on many golf courses.

At one meeting with Ministry staff, comments regarding the distance a non-certified applicator can apply pesticides was brought forward. The current regulation states:

“...in visual contact no more than 500 meters away”.

MOE stated that this would be an ideal role for the assistant applicator. The committee felt strongly, for a variety of reasons, that 500 meters was not an acceptable distance (too close) and that in a golf course environment, additional staff would be required for compliance. Suggestions were made that included increasing the distance and allowing use of radio or cell phone technologies to keep in contact with applicators.

The committee was then asked to outline what the progression for becoming a fully certified pesticide applicator could look like. After considerable discussion, the following flow chart was created to accommodate this request.



I can report that all members of the committee agree this process would address any critique that golf industry personnel are not sufficiently educated in the areas of IPM and pesticide application and counter any notion that individuals without formal horticulture training could pass the current exam because it is open book.

The committee believes that this proposed change to the examination and the improvement to competency, i.e. the assistant spray tech, will remove any doubt from the public that we are non-professional and are randomly spraying plant products thus destroying environments or creating public health issues.

Finally on the topic of pesticide use, MOE has proposed that all golf courses in BC would need to obtain a Pesticide Use License. This license requires the holder to have an active written IPM program and comply with all aspects of the Integrated Pest Management Act. Other regulations for licence holders include posting public pesticide application notifications, providing annual product use reports and creating pesticide-free zones (PFZ's). These licences are currently \$250 per year.

Currently about 10 golf courses in BC, including Sun Peaks which is located on leased crown land, hold this licence. Golf courses located on private land are not required to hold a Pesticide Use Licence at present and are therefore exempt from many of the regulations.

Doing the math, it's safe to say that in the near future, every golf property will be adding \$450 to their budgets to comply with proposed regulatory amendments not including additional fees that, for example, could come from water metering.

In answer to a few frequently asked questions received recently, I offer the following:

1. What will a golf course need to spray pesticides if changes to current legislation are made?

MOE will require all courses to use a certified applicator, have a use license and employ an IPM program with annual reports on usage. Currently none of the above are required, including a certified applicator, if a golf course is located on private land.

2. Can you explain a pesticide-free zone (PFZ) and what are the requirements?

Extensive consultation with Ministry staff has taken place to help answer this question. Mario Lanthier of CropHealth Advising and Research and a recognized Pesticide Certificate course instructor, was also asked for his interpretation. I will also state that I have had a use license since 2006 and have had many discussions with the former Pesticides Licence Officer during the process of obtaining the license.

First, a 30 meter PFZ is required around wells and water intakes for domestic/livestock use, in other words, around drinking water sources for humans and/or animals.

Current pesticide related guides, ie. The Handbook for Pesticide Applicators and Dispensers, IPM Manual for Turfgrass Managers and IPM for Landscape Pests, all state that a 10 meter PFZ and a 5 meter buffer zone is recommended as a BMP. The regulation has excluded landscapes (including golf) from any measured PFZs except around wells and water intakes but does state "a person must ensure that a no-treatment zone between an outdoor pesticide use area and a body of water is sufficient to prevent the release of pesticide spray or runoff into the body of water."

3. What has the \$46,000 raised for the Environmental Advocacy Committee been used for?

As originally stated when raising these funds, the EAC's goal was to hire a lobbyist that could act on behalf of the golf industry in regards to environmental issues such as the potential cosmetic pesticide ban. The expenses to date are as follows:

- *1/3 the cost of the 2014 Golf Awareness Day, approximately \$8000, held April 30, 2014. Environmental issues were a key component of the presentations made to politicians in Victoria which also included economic and social impacts of the game.*

- *\$12,500, which was ½ of the lobbyist cost through December 31, 2014. The focus of the lobbyist will be on two of the three pillars, environment and grow the game, so it was appropriate that half the cost was covered by the environmental advocacy fund.*
- *approximately \$3,952 has been spent for meetings and travel expenses*
- *approximate balance in the fund is \$21,548.*

In closing, I would again like to thank the associations who contributed to this committee, the WCTA, BCGSA and its regional groups, and the CGSA. I would also like to again, respectfully ask all other golf related associations to contribute to this fund. If we lose plant health products from our tool kits, golf course playability will suffer dramatically as shown by the picture below from April 2014 of an untreated green.

Respectfully;

Keith Lyall

EAC Chair, WCTA Past President, Superintendent Sun Peaks Resort



Meadow Creek Golf Course, Image credit K. Lyall.