



Oakdale G&CC in Downsview, Ontario, is known for its stance on environmental issues. Paul Dermott, CGCS at Oakdale, was on the steering committee for the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association's Environmental Resource Management Manual.

In a class by itself

Canadian association's environmental handbook garners GCSAA's President's Award for Environmental Stewardship.

Scott Wogomon

When current Canadian Golf Superintendents Association President Jay Leach and a hand-picked steering committee set out to create a readable, usable handbook to help superintendents in the Great White North with environmental issues, little did they know the impact such a project would have.

That impact has been felt by superintendents in this country to such a degree that GCSAA's Board of Directors selected the CGSA's Environmental Management Resource Manual for the 2002 President's Award for Environmental Stewardship (formerly President's Award for Environmental Leadership). Leach will be presented with the award by GCSAA President Tommy D. Witt, CGCS, at the Golf General Session of GCSAA's 73rd International Golf

Course Conference and Show in Orlando this month. The Opening Session is presented in partnership with United Horticultural Supply.

"I commend the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association for its leadership efforts in preserving the environment," Witt says. "The CGSA exemplifies how the golf course superintendent profession is a steward of the environment. When you look at environmental success stories as candidates for this award, you can look at the work of individuals or that of a large group.

"These professionals exhausted a significant amount of time and effort to a cause for which they have great passion. Not only did they develop the guidelines and program, they work with the regulating bodies to see the appropriate materials are utilized."

Setting the standard

Complete with regulatory requirements, standard operating practices (tailored to the industry) and colleague examples, the manual serves as an industry guide for golf course superintendents so they can demonstrate their knowledge of facility management relative to environmental preservation to government and regulatory officials.

"We're very proud of the product that came from very hard work of the authors," Leach says. "They did a nice job of communicating good information that the superintendents can use."

In fact, the manual was so well received in Canada that the University of Guelph in Ontario picked up the publishing costs and has developed an independent study course, using the CGSA's offering as its textbook.

"It's very flattering that they paid for the publishing and developed a course around it," says Leach, superintendent at Cottonwood Golf & Country Club in Calgary. "When a university thinks so well of it that they publish it and develop a course around it, it's very gratifying."

Winning the GCSAA award, presented annually to recognize "an exceptional environmental contribution to the game of golf: a contribution that further exemplifies the golf course superintendent's image as a steward of the land," can only help spread the word, according to former CGSA Executive Director Vince Gillis.

"It's certainly going to be a kick-start for the handbook," Gillis says. "We're going to take advantage of it and promote it."

And it offers more than just information on regulatory issues.

"It's just good, sound advice that can be transferred," Witt says. "We've always had a strong relationship between the Canadian association and GCSAA."

In the beginning

The CGSA handbook really got its start in the mid-'90s. Leach, serving as the Alberta chapter's president, said there where many environmental issues swirling around in the Canadian media concerning golf courses, and the superintendent just "didn't like that."

It was then that Leach produced a



A river buffer zone keeps golfers at a distance from an environmentally sensitive area on the third hole of Oakdale's third nine.

series of position statements on environmental issues that was passed by his Alberta chapter. The material was well received. And word got out.

So Leach, through no real campaigning of his own, was given a chairman spot on a steering committee to develop an environmental handbook that might benefit all Canadian golf course superintendents who may not be aware of appropriate environmental practices and procedures. His steering committee included GCSAA members Bob Burrows, Quebec representative; Paul Dermott, CGCS, Ontario representative; Jim McGarvey, western representative; and Nancy Pierce, eastern

representative.

"We needed to tackle issues of compliance and getting information to our superintendents on this," says Leach, a 16-year GCSAA member. "It had to be of national scope, where the superintendent could find information for their specific area."

What would become an 18-month project from conception to the publishing house was under way. But who would write a manual on everything from regulatory requirements to integrated pest management to communications, in a language superintendents would not only understand, but find helpful and useable?

GCSAA's President's Award for Environmental Leadership

Previous winners of the President's Award for Environmental Leadership include:

- 1991 — Cape Cod Study Participants
- 1993 — Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for golf courses, administered by Audubon International/sponsored by the USGA
- 1995 — William "Timothy" Hiers, CGCS
- 1996 — USGA Environmental Research Program
- 1997 — Michael Hurdzan, Ph.D., golf course architect
- 1998 — Joseph O'Brien, GCSAA chief operating officer
- 1999 — Edward C. "Ted" Horton, CGCS
- 2000 — Thomas L. Watschke, Ph.D.
- 2001 — Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program (MTESP)

About the authors

In the summer of 1996, Mark Scenna of Environmental Investigations Ltd., a company he started after completing a postgraduate certificate in environmental management at Niagara College, made a presentation for the Alberta chapter. It was through this contact that Leach became familiar with Scenna's work.

"We liked his work very much," Leach says.

Scenna, a business administration major at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, has a long history on the golf course. His father Pelino and brother Paul are both golf course superintendents.

"I was brought up in the game — raised on golf courses," Mark Scenna admits. As a student, he did an auditing project on his father's golf course and developed a passion for golf course construction and design, and how the course relates to the environment.

His business develops innovative approaches to tackle the numerous environmental issues the Canadian golf course management industry faces. According to Scenna, Environmental Investigations calls 30 courses in Ontario clients. The company has also done work for courses in British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec. It was this auditing experience that Leach drew on for the manual.

But the leader of the project says he also knew he needed someone involved with experience writing these sorts of manuals, someone who had produced them as documents for work on various sites.

That's where Bel•MK Engineering Ltd. President Kirk Morrison came into the picture. Morrison, owner of a master's degree in civil engineering, brought experience developing materials on safety issues for the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. He'd also been involved in golf course projects at Heritage Point and Grey Wolf. He was friends with Leach and said he was well aware of the issues facing golf course managers as they related to the environment.

Morrison received his bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Waterloo University near Toronto. He



The construction of a butterfly house is one way to make a golf course more environmentally friendly.

went on to earn his master's from the University of British Columbia, before purchasing Bel•MK in 1992. The firm specializes in the fields of municipal and environmental engineering. Morrison is an instructor in environmental management courses offered by the University of Calgary and the Petroleum Industry Training Service.

Making it user-friendly

Scenna and Morrison set about authoring an environmental resource manual for Canadian golf course superintendents with the guidance of Leach and his steering committee. But every one of the committee members knew that no matter how informative the manual might be, if it wasn't user-friendly, it would probably gather dust on a shelf somewhere. Making it useable for the superintendent was critical.

"We had to try and summarize complicated legislation in a simple way," Morrison says. "So they can do a compliance assessment of their own golf course. We provide a checklist and get them the best management practices that they can refine on their own golf courses."

"We wanted to make something they can use, and not just set on the shelf. Something they're not scared of. The feedback I've gotten is it's very user-friendly."

Leach says he knew they had to write it in specific language.

"The resource manual specifically deals with compliance issues as they relate to the superintendent, but not in environmental language. In superintendent language," Leach says.

Scenna went a step farther.

"We kind of based it on the 'Computer for Dummies' series of books," says Scenna.

Scenna says the manual introduces teaching aids like "Did you know..." and "Plain English, Eh?," a take-off of the popular Canadian phrase. "It's easy to use. Kirk knew what he was doing on structure and he understood the readers. But we wanted it to become the No. 1 reference tool on their desks. There are so many requirements, you want to steer (superintendents) in the right direction."

The handbook also has a freshness in presentation seldom seen in these types of manuals, according to Leach.

"It's very unique as it goes through how the government works, and talks about the three levels of government — federal, provincial and municipal," Leach says. "Each section is laid out similarly, with regulations, standard operating procedures and examples."

Morrison says input from superintendents was key to the success of the manual.

"They seek information and are very proactive and environmentally conscious," Morrison says. "We had really good input from the superintendents

and the steering committee and that was very helpful.”

Their final draft included nine parts, with specific sections dedicated to topics ranging from an explanation of regulatory requirements and maintenance facility operations to course renovation and environmental monitoring. Section three covers “Important Steps to Avoid Being Investigated,” while section eight deals with “Environmental Enhancement Projects” like the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program and GCSAA’s Environmental Leaders in Golf Awards. Section nine discusses communication with members, media and the general public. The manual also includes a glossary and numerous “Q & A scenarios” to further assist the reader.

“We’ve given superintendents a basis from which to work,” says Dermott, superintendent at Oakdale Golf and Country Club in Downsview, Ontario, and a 33-year GCSAA member. “To cover the whole country from coast to coast it had to be fairly general with all the rules and regulations. But we’ve made it specific enough to get them to the people they need to talk to about their concerns or problems.”

Class of its own

When CGSA faced a price tag of more than \$50,000 to get the handbook published, the association’s longstanding relationship with the University of Guelph came in handy. Canada’s answer to Penn State University recognized the way the handbook could enhance its turf management offerings, and it entered into an agreement with the CGSA to publish the manual and retain rights to an independent study course.

“They saw the value in developing a course, so it’s worked out well for both parties,” Gillis says.

And the student response has been very good.

CGSA Director of Professional



Above: Construction of a snake hibernaculum is just one of the ways Oakdale G&CC has been proactive concerning environmental issues. Left: Handling issues concerning the environment properly can give golfers plenty of wildlife to view, like this snapping turtle.

Development and Environment Jacqui

Atkin says she’s talked with many students taking the course.

“It’s a challenging course, but fruitful,” Atkin says. “They’re appreciative of the manual and use it to gather information on various regulatory things in Canada.”

Award-winning efforts

Leach says winning the prestigious GCSAA award can only benefit the CGSA and its environmental resource manual.

“This award will help more superintendents become aware of the product,” he says. “We wish more people would use it. The information is there if they need it.”

Scenna, who serves as a marker for the course offered by Guelph, says it was a great day when he heard about CGSA winning the President’s Award.

“That’s icing on the cake, when a noted body the size of GCSAA recognizes your work. It means something,” he says. “It can only help the manual. Every superintendent that I call on, I see it on their book shelf and it makes me smile. I’ve had a number of superintendents tell me how useful it is and two called in the first month and said they read it cover to cover.”

Gillis says the CGSA is constantly

working to tie things to the handbook, including the Association’s “CGSA/Toro Environmental Achievement Award” which has been presented annually since 1999. Superintendent winners are treated to a weeklong stay at Valderrama in Spain.

The CGSA updated information in the manual in 2000, and another update is planned this year. The product also became available on CD last December.

Dermott says he has used the handbook as a guide for projects at Oakdale, a course that has gained notoriety and won awards for its work on environmental projects.

“We’re in the process of putting in another snake hibernaculum and we’ve created a small wetlands area this fall,” Dermott says. “We like to think we’re making contributions to the environment.”

Keeping the information current is crucial in helping superintendents maintain their courses at the highest levels, the CGSA president says.

“Doing the minimum environmental requirements isn’t enough,” Leach says. “Going a step beyond proves we are the environmentalists we say we are.”

GCM

Scott Wogomon is GCM’s associate editor.