

# 2025-2026 Priority Issues Agenda



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## How the Agenda is developed

The GCSAA Board of Directors, Government Affairs Committee members and staff receive ongoing feedback on golf course management issues through communication with members, affiliated chapters (boards, executives, GCSAA Grassroots Ambassadors), regional turfgrass and green industry coalitions, allied associations, industry partners, university scientists, advocacy consultants, and government agencies. Input and feedback is also gathered from the GCSAA Member Needs Assessment, as well as issue-specific member surveys.

Based on this feedback, the GCSAA Government Affairs Committee biannually develops a recommended Priority Issues Agenda. While staff actively monitor and take action on many issues impacting golf course management, the Priority Issues Agenda outlines the legislative and regulatory “priorities” for GCSAA—those that are likely to require the greatest amount of association resources and staff time.

For each priority issue, the Agenda contains an informational overview, a GCSAA Board-approved position statement, current GCSAA activity on the issue, information on official GCSAA position papers, and information on coalitions in which GCSAA participates.

The recommended Agenda is submitted to the GCSAA Board of Directors for approval. Upon approval, the Agenda is distributed to members through the GCSAA Website and other association communication vehicles. GCSAA staff utilize the Priority Issues Agenda to take action on golf course management issues. They are guided by the official GCSAA position statement for each issue.

The use of sound science in decision making is important to GCSAA. Throughout the Priority Issues Agenda, the term sound science is referenced frequently. \*\*Sound science includes the recognized/accepted science methodologies and practices for research that follow the high standards of the scientific method. These standards include important investigational attributes and practices such as the formulation of a readily testable hypothesis; the use of systematic and well-documented experimental or analytical methods; the application of appropriate data analysis tools (e.g., statistics and mathematical models) to the data; and the articulation of conclusions that address the hypothesis and are supported by the results. Sound science is also reproducible until there are no discrepancies between observations and theory.

## 2025-2026 Priority Issues:

- Value of Golf
  - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Water
  - Water Quality
  - Water Quantity
- Pesticides
  - State Preemption/Pesticide Bans
  - Pesticide Regulation
  - Endangered Species Act
  - Pollinators
- Power Equipment
- Labor and Workforce Development
  - H-2B Visa Program
- Fertilizers

For more information on any government issues that affect the golf industry, please contact the GCSAA Government Affairs department at (800) 472-7878, or visit GCSAA Online at [www.gcsaa.org](http://www.gcsaa.org).

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## Value of Golf

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### Issue information:

Golf is a sport played by more than 41.4 million Americans and enjoyed as a favorite spectator activity by millions more. But it is far more than a game: golf is a leading U.S. industry that makes a wide variety of positive contributions to society. 73 percent of golf facilities are open to the public. Approximately 8 of 10 golfers play on public courses.

Turfgrass comprises 60+ million acres and it is the 4th largest crop in the U.S. Turf is horticulture's most omnipresent crop worldwide. The 2 million acres on our nation's golf courses provide golfers with playing surfaces that promote health and well-being while serving as important green spaces in communities.

GCSAA's First Green program is an innovative environmental and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education outreach program using golf courses as environmental learning labs. Golf Course Superintendents and/or local golf course representatives host students on field trips where they test water quality, collect soil samples, identify plants, design plantings, assist in stream bed restoration and are involved in the ecology and environmental aspects of the golf course.

On September 19, 2022, GCSAA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency signed a Memorandum of Understanding pledging a commitment to environmental stewardship and environmental sustainability on golf courses. The MOU enhances the joint commitment to share information on environmental issues, best practices and industry challenges to promote best management practices on golf properties to protect and enhance the environment.

In 2016, the golf industry released new health and wellness data. A regular game of golf is likely to increase life expectancy and lead to better physical health, according to University of Edinburgh researchers. The review of 5,000 studies on golf and wellbeing found physical benefits increased with the player's age. The study was part of the Golf and Health Project, which was led by the World Golf Foundation. Walking 18 holes is equal to a 5-mile walk or 3.5-to-4-mile run. Playing golf and walking 18 holes can burn up to 2,000 calories. Golfers exceed 10,000 steps in a typical round of golf, meeting the recommended guidelines for daily exercise.

Most golf facilities in the U.S. qualify as small businesses according to the Small Business Administration. The golf facility size standard to be qualified as a small business is \$15 million in average annual receipts. Unfortunately, golf has been excluded from receiving benefits from several prominent pieces of federal legislation including relief for the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, relief to victims of natural disasters across the country in 2008 and 2009, and in 2009 with the federal economic stimulus bill. Continued exclusion of the golf industry – a major generator of jobs and tax revenue across the country – from relief and stimulus measures being considered by Congress is a serious challenge facing the industry.

An additional challenge to many golf facilities in urban areas relates to land use, development pressures, and land appraisals that often simply consider "highest and best use" of a property. Policies seeking to convert golf courses to residential and commercial developments often don't account for the environmental benefits golf courses bring to communities, including storm water runoff and catch basins, carbon sequestration and heat reducing characteristics, wildlife corridors, and pollinator habitat. Of particular concern was a bill considered by the California legislature in 2021 and 2022 that would have provided state funding to local governments as an incentive to convert municipal golf course properties into high density developments.

Collectively golf is big business, but as an industry comprised mostly of small businesses, its longevity and sustainability are sensitive like other industries to the uncertainty of economic conditions and impacts of unnecessary regulation. Many individual golf facilities often operate on small profit margins.

The game of golf was a crucial outlet for the public during a global health pandemic. Where allowed, golf proved to be a reliable refuge for those seeking fresh air and recreation in a socially distant manner. GCSAA and the golf industry served as a reliable partner at all levels of government to respond to COVID-19 and will continue to do so for any future pandemics.

Make Golf Your Thing is a collaborative effort across the industry to ensure the sport is welcome to all. This multi-faceted, multi-year diversity, equity and inclusion movement works to invite more people to golf from all backgrounds. Six cross-industry work groups are committed to making the sport more diverse, equitable, and inclusive, with a specific focus on education & skill development, talent acquisition, procurement, human resources, youth & adult player development, and marketing/communications. Learn more at <https://www.makegolfsyourthing.org/>.

Specific value of golf sub issues include:

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

**GCSAA position statement:**

Golf is more than a game – the April 2023 Golf Impact Report quantified golf's annual direct economic impact as \$101.7 billion, the industry provides nearly 1.65 million jobs and \$80.1 billion in wage income. In total, the U.S. golf economy exceeds \$226.5 billion in direct, indirect and induced impacts. The golf industry produced \$31 billion in travel expenditures in 2023. Golf's core industries exceed the charitable impact of the Major League Baseball, National Football League, National Basketball Association and National Hockey League combined. As a significant contributor to the U.S. economy, the continued health and growth of the golf industry has a direct bearing on jobs, economic development and tax revenues for thousands of communities across the country.

Golf facilities are good for the communities they serve. Golf contributes to society by providing economic, human, health/wellness and environmental benefits. Golf facilities are professionally managed by individuals who have achieved various levels of certification, they serve as managed open green space providing habitat for wildlife, and they generate \$4.6 billion for charity annually. Golf as a fundraising vehicle includes 15,945 golf facilities, 141,000 events, and 25.6 million course participants. Golf courses are a valuable use of land and can provide environmental solutions to problems resulting from land degradation and urban development, including stormwater management, wetland mitigation and brownfield redevelopment. Additionally, golf courses positively impact real estate value. According to the National Golf Foundation, "the average golf premium for golf residential units with direct frontage on, or in immediate proximity to, a golf courses is estimated at about 15% in added value.

GCSAA supports partnerships and collaboration with federal and state commerce departments and federal, state and local chamber of commerce organizations to advance the growth of the game of golf. Golf should be included in federal catastrophic relief targeted at businesses following natural disasters. Golf should have access to federal incentives and funding that stimulates the golf industry. Local and state golf associations should continue to invest in economic impact reports as a means to educate local, state and federal policymakers on the values of the golf industry.

GCSAA and the National Turfgrass Federation need support to promote turfgrass research and its many benefits, aided by academia, competitive government grants, and private industry. Turfgrass should be recognized as an important specialty crop by the USDA and Congress. GCSAA urges Congress to prioritize future turfgrass research funds via the Farm Bill and annual Agriculture Appropriations legislation. Farm Bill funding will support research that encourages discovery of solutions in areas ranging from drought and water conservation to soil erosion mitigation and enhancing commercial, recreational and residential spaces.

There are many members of the public who are not informed about the value of turfgrass in general, and about golf courses specifically. GCSAA supports the Natural Grass Sod Promotion, Research and Information Order (US Sod Check-Off Program) and endorses using this program to raise dollars toward the national marketing and research of sod/turfgrass.

**Coalitions/affiliations:**

American Golf Industry Coalition; National Turfgrass Federation

**The Americans with Disabilities Act (Sub-Issue)**

**Issue information:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires reasonable modifications to golf course policies, practices or procedures to serve people with disabilities (as defined by the law) on an equal basis with the rest of the general public. A reasonable modification is one that does not present an undue burden to the golf course or alter the fundamental nature of the game.

On September 15, 2010, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) released final rules to update its ADA regulations and implement new accessibility standards for golf courses and other recreational facilities. The rules impact municipal and commercial entities and codify the architectural guidelines for barrier removal. The rules impact new golf course development and renovations to existing facilities. Alterations to existing golf courses include the redesign of teeing grounds and greens. Mowing and other general maintenance activities are not considered an alteration. After March 15, 2012, all new golf facilities must be accessible in accordance with the golf course accessibility guidelines and existing courses must remove barriers when it is “readily achievable” over time (easy to accomplish without much difficulty or expense). The golf course accessibility standards cover: accessible routes and/or alternative golf car passages; teeing grounds; putting greens; weather shelters; and driving ranges.

Further, on July 26, 2010, DOJ issued an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) specific to accessible golf cars. DOJ is considering issuing regulations requiring golf courses that provide golf cars, when replacing or acquiring additional standard golf cars, to provide accessible golf cars for use by individuals with disabilities.

GCSAA has been active in working with golfers, lawmakers and regulators to address ADA issues since the law’s inception. GCSAA and its members have also taken a proactive stance on golf course accessibility issues through the use of best practices to accommodate golfers with disabilities; through modification of policies; and through education and outreach to golf course owners and operators. GCSAA serves on the executive board of the National Alliance for Accessible Golf, which is the leader in inclusion— working to ensure the opportunity for all individuals with disabilities to play the game of golf. Formed in the summer of 2001, the National Alliance is represented by major golf, recreation and therapeutic organizations in the United States; organizations that provide services for people with disabilities; and others who advocate for the inclusion of people with disabilities into society. GCSAA helps golf course superintendents understand and comply with the ADA; implement ADA programs at the golf facility and provides compliance with the technical ADA Accessibility Standards.

**GCSAA position statement:**

GCSAA recognizes and supports the standards set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, as amended, and similar state laws, which are designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. As golf course management professionals, the members of GCSAA will work to make golf accessible to all persons by promoting policies and practices that consider the needs and safety of all golfers, promote the growth and vitality of the game and maintain the agronomic integrity of the golf course. Every golf facility in the U.S. has a stake in growing the game of golf. The growth of the game is dependent upon new golfers of all abilities coming into the game. The purchase of single rider golf cars should be the decision of each individual golf facility weighing multiple factors including customer service considerations, safety of the devices, market demand and economic impact to the facility. GCSAA would support any actions making available tax credits or rebates for the purchase of accessible golf cars.

**Coalitions/affiliations:** National Alliance for Accessible Golf (serve on the board of directors)

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## Water

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**Issue Information:**

Water availability, water quality, water rights, water use, and water costs are significant issues for golf courses at all levels of government. Proper management and conservation of water resources is an important issue for golf course management.

Efficient water use and water quality management on golf courses requires up-to-date technologies, continuing education, scientific research, and sound management practices by golf course superintendents. Innovations at golf facilities include the use of reclaimed water, wetting agents, drought- and salt-resistant grasses, and other water conservation and water protection practices. Sophisticated instruments such as soil sensors, weather stations, weather sensors, irrigation controls, and VFD pump controls are also utilized. Golf facilities are making significant capital investments in these water conservation technologies in order to demonstrate their commitment to environmental stewardship. Specific water sub issues include:

- Water Quality - surface and groundwater protection, nutrient loading, non-point source pollution, reclaimed water
- Water Quantity - effluent/reclaimed water, drought, conservation of water resources

**GCSAA position statement:**

Golf course superintendents are responsible stewards of water resources. GCSAA supports collaboration with all levels of government to address water use and quality issues and for golf course superintendents to be involved in the construction of productive public policy related to water issues. GCSAA supports water conservation and water quality protection laws and regulations that are based on sound science\*\* and credible data and promote the values of turfgrass and professionally managed landscapes.

GCSAA supports the development and use of science-based best management practices (BMPs) for water conservation and water quality through superintendent–regulator–university partnerships at the local and state levels of government. To support this, the GCSAA launched in 2017 the 50 by 2020 BMP initiative. The goal of this landmark initiative was to have all 50 states with a BMP program in place by 2020 to ensure protection of human health and the environment and demonstrate the industry's commitment to environmental stewardship. This goal was accomplished at the end of 2020.

Public policy can help accelerate the adoption and implementation of water management on golf properties through incentives, including cost sharing, regulatory relief, tax credits, rebates and technical assistance. GCSAA supports the development and promotion of environmentally responsible economic and regulatory incentives for: installation of efficient irrigation products and systems; retrofits of existing irrigation systems with water-efficient technologies; and design and maintenance practices that foster and support efficient irrigation. GCSAA also supports increased funding for water conservation research and the development of new, more drought-tolerant turfgrass varieties.

**Coalitions/affiliations:** EPA-GCSAA Smart Sector Program Partnership; U.S. EPA Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program; Irrigation Association; WaterReuse Association; Waters Advocacy Coalition; National Groundwater Association

**Water Quality (Sub-Issue)****Issue Information:**

Water quality is a critical issue for golf facilities for both surface water and groundwater. Golf courses serve as an important water treatment system. Healthy turfgrass is a filter that traps and holds pollutants in place; golf courses serve as catch basins for residential and industrial runoff; many courses are effective disposal sites for effluent wastewater and have agreements with local municipalities for this purpose. Modern turfgrass management practices greatly reduce the potential for leaching or runoff into water supplies. Independent university research supports the fact that well-managed golf courses promote environmental quality for wildlife and human health.

Some areas of the U.S. require golf courses to use reclaimed, effluent or other non-potable water sources for irrigation and it is important there is access to water suitable for use on turfgrass. Many golf course superintendents monitor the water quality of streams and groundwater. Golf courses can also have a significant impact on groundwater recharge, especially in suburban areas. The turfgrass system acts as a living filter for reclaimed wastewater as measured by the leachate that percolates below the rootzone. This leachate helps with the recharging of aquifers.

The Clean Water Act gives the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers jurisdiction over “navigable waters,” which are defined as “waters of the United States” (WOTUS). Determining what constitutes a WOTUS significantly impacts golf course management: Nearly any activity that occurs in, over or near a WOTUS requires a federal NPDES permit, which can take years to obtain, is costly and can trigger large civil fines. The Supreme Court has attempted to define SCOTUS many times – what surface waters are federally protected, and which are protected by the states. The 2023 SCOTUS Sackett decision provided some clarity: Sackett limits federal wetlands to only those with “a continuous surface connection” to an existing WOTUS, i.e. the two must be “indistinguishable”. It reverses efforts to expand WOTUS to encompass a lot of waterways that are either isolated or rarely see water flowing through them. Under Sackett, only “a relatively permanent body of water” that connects to a “traditional interstate navigable water” is a WOTUS. GCSAA continues to work with federal regulators, members of Congress, and other impacted industries to ensure that Sackett is effectively implemented and that the definition of WOTUS remains clear, transparent, and respects the principles of cooperative federalism.

**GCSAA position statement:**

GCSAA supports water quality protection laws and regulations that are based on sound science\*\* and credible data and promote the benefits of turfgrass and professionally managed landscapes. GCSAA supports the use of reclaimed, effluent or other non-potable water for golf course irrigation when the water quality is suitable for plant growth and there are no public health implications. GCSAA does not support mandated use of reclaimed water when the water quality or water quantity is not adequate, when use is not cost effective or when the golf course superintendent does not play a key role in the decision-making process for the development of effluent water standards.

Properly maintained turfgrass provides many community benefits including: critical “greenspaces”; habitat for birds and other wildlife; temperature buffer, recreational opportunities; capture of run-off pollutants in stormwater, and carbon sequestration and oxygen production. In addition, many entities, both public and private rely on healthy greenscapes such as golf courses as a key component in maintaining financial revenues.

GCSAA does not support Congress, EPA or the Army Corps of Engineers expanding the jurisdictional reach of the federal Clean Water Act. This would be an unprecedented expansion of the regulatory authority of the federal government. Expanded federal jurisdiction would pre-empt traditional state and local government authority over land and water use decisions and alter the balance of federal and state authority. Increased delays in securing permits will raise costs of and impede many economic activities. GCSAA supports efforts to protect the principles of cooperative federalism in the Clean Water Act and recognizes the role that golf course superintendents play as responsible stewards of water resources.

**Water Quantity (Sub-Issue)**

**Issue Information:**

Among the most important issues facing the future of the game of golf is that of water use. Golf courses rely on water to irrigate the landscape on which the game is played. Often, golf courses are highly visible features in communities and are targets for criticism during periods of drought when homeowners and others are restricted in their use of potable water.

Golf has reduced the overall amount of water used and has increased water use efficiency measured as water applied per acre. U.S. golf facilities applied approximately 1.68 million acre-feet of water in 2020, a 29% reduction, since 2005. Two-thirds of this reduction was likely a result of facilities applying water more efficiently, evidenced by the 23% reduction in water applied per acre in 2020. Golf is continuously making improvements toward using less water and using it more efficiently.

Golf facilities must continue to proactively conserve water. Conserving water on golf facilities is essential to becoming a sustainable business. Water is a major input cost at golf courses, thus golf course

superintendents are focused on using water efficiently. Optimizing the acreage of irrigated turfgrass, implementing best management practices, utilizing technology to make water application decisions, conducting an irrigation system audit along with an audit of the non-golf course water uses at the entire facility are key to becoming responsible users of water. The golf industry takes steps to responsibly use water including potable water.

- Superintendents utilize information from multiple sources as part of their decision to apply water. Most facilities utilize direct observations of turfgrass and soil conditions. They also utilize soil moisture meters, weather and evapotranspiration data. (2021 GCSAA Water Use and Conservation Practices Report)
- Utilizing improved grasses that rely on less water.
- New irrigation system technologies.
- Irrigation best management practices.
- Alternate water sources.

**GCSAA position statement:**

GCSAA supports water conservation and the utilization of irrigation/water use best management practices (BMPs). GCSAA supports golf facilities utilizing irrigation system audits as a means to increase the effectiveness of the irrigation system and conserve water. GCSAA supports active collaboration with state and local officials to enact appropriate drought restrictions. GCSAA supports the creation and use of written drought management plans by golf facilities that are subject to drought cycles.

Regulatory agencies and golf courses should work together to develop conservation plans and BMPs. Regulations need to be based on sound science\*\*. Regulatory agencies need to look at golf courses as small businesses and important members of the community.

Properly maintained turfgrass provides many community benefits including: critical "greenspaces"; habitat for birds and other wildlife; recreational opportunities; temperature buffer; capture of run-off pollutants in stormwater; and carbon sequestration and oxygen production. In addition, many entities, both public and private, rely on healthy turfgrass as a key component in maintaining financial revenues.

Golf facilities should continue to take advantage of technology as part of the irrigation decision-making process to conserve water. The utilization of data from soil sensors for irrigation scheduling decisions is likely to increase in the future as the equipment becomes more reliable and affordable. GCSAA supports the development and promotion of environmentally responsible economic and regulatory incentives for water conservation: installation of efficient irrigation products and systems; retrofits of existing irrigation systems with water-efficient technologies; and design and maintenance practices that foster and support efficient irrigation.

There are proactive steps GCSAA and the industry can take to help ensure golf's access to water in the future including: 1) establishing a strong relationship with the Department of Interior and Bureau of Reclamation; 2) developing national outreach on the importance of working directly with local/regional state water agencies; 3) identifying potential opportunities for grant money at the Federal level for infrastructure upgrades; 4) a targeted focus on turfgrass breeding projects; 5) working with golf allied associations on golfer outreach to educate them about future water cuts at golf facilities; and 6) investigating state level funds to support advocacy efforts (i.e., formation of tax commissions).

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## Pesticides

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**Issue information:**

Golf course superintendents utilize pesticides in conjunction with integrated pest management (IPM) practices to best control pests and maintain healthy turf. Best management practices, continuing education, peer-reviewed research and technology are important elements for an IPM approach for golf course superintendents. The latest technology in application equipment is used on golf courses which allows for precise application of pesticides. Pesticide production is highly regulated in the U.S. through the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act which requires that pesticides cause 'no unreasonable adverse effect' to humans or the environment – including water quality and aquatic species. Pesticides used to maintain healthy golf course turf have been thoroughly tested by EPA. As a result, use labels are crafted to protect these resources and must be strictly followed: the "label is the law". The safe and responsible use of pesticides, and the continued availability of effective products, is a top priority for GCSAA and its members. This priority was reinforced in 2000 when GCSAA members passed an addition to the association's bylaws creating new entry and maintenance membership standards for Class A members. As of July 1, 2003, to maintain their membership status, Class A members must obtain a state pesticide applicator license or successfully complete a GCSAA-developed IPM exam which tests on principles of pesticide usage. Specific pesticide sub issues include:

- State Preemption/Pesticide Bans
- Pesticide Regulation
- Endangered Species Act
- Pollinators

The 2021 survey, A Continued Investigation into Pest Management Practices on U.S. Golf Courses, was conducted by GCSAA and showed the number of golf facilities engaging in the pest management practices listed in the survey remains high; 13 of the 17 practices included in the study were used by more than 50% of the courses. High use of various pest management practices reflects efforts by the golf industry to reduce the use of pesticides as the sole treatment for turfgrass pests. Some individual practices saw increased use while some saw decreased use, but it is important to remember that pesticide use is influenced by pest pressure, climate and other environmental factors.

The most frequently used pest management practices according to the report included monitoring the weather, scouting, employing pesticide resistance management strategies, improving turfgrass health, implementing cultural practices and spot treatment of damage.

**Position statement:**

The responsible use of pesticides is essential to maintaining healthy turfgrass. Healthy turfgrass allows communities to enjoy many benefits including: creation of critical "greenspaces", providing wildlife habitat, and ensuring recreational opportunities. There are many other environment benefits to healthy turfgrass including the capture of run-off pollutants in stormwater, temperature buffer, erosion control, and serving as a protective barrier to groundwater. In addition, many entities, both public and private rely on healthy green spaces like golf courses as a key component in maintaining financial revenues.

Pesticide laws and regulations should be based on sound science\*\* supported by credible peer reviewed data and university recommendations. Golf courses employ licensed pesticide applicators that are required to pass state administered exams and complete continuing education each year. These applicators are trained in the safe and proper use of pesticides within an integrated pest management (IPM) system. Golf course superintendents follow the best management practices for proper pesticide management on the course. GCSAA launched in 2017 the 50 by 2020 BMP initiative. The goal of this landmark initiative was to have all 50 states with a BMP program in place by 2020 to ensure protection of human health and the environment and demonstrate the industry's commitment to environmental stewardship. This goal was accomplished at the end of 2020.

**Coalitions/affiliations:**

EPA-GCSAA Smart Sector Program Partnership; U.S. EPA Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program (PESP); Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE); Pesticide Policy Coalition (PPC); CropLife America



**State Preemption/Pesticide Bans (Sub-Issue)****Issue information:**

Many cities and counties across the country are debating ordinances to ban/restrict the use of chemical pesticides on city/public property. This includes parks, city office buildings and government-owned recreation facilities such as golf courses. Local bans/restrictions on pesticide use are a trend that has gained momentum ever since the city of San Francisco, Calif., adopted such an ordinance in 1996. This ordinance has been used as a model by anti-pesticide activists to try to enact similar laws in other locations. Bans on pesticide use by local governments has also been a precursor to efforts to totally ban the use of all pesticides in a community, including applications by private citizens to their homes and lawns, applications to commercial property, privately owned golf courses, sports fields and other recreational facilities.

Many states have preemption (or “state primacy”) laws to prohibit municipalities from adopting local laws and regulations on the use of pesticides and fertilizers. Without such laws, the more than 80,000 municipalities in the U.S. could adopt and enforce their own unique ordinances, including use and applicator certification, making compliance virtually impossible. Local pesticide restrictions hinder the ability of golf course superintendents to control pests that have a detrimental effect on healthy turf.

**GCSAA position statement:**

GCSAA supports the development and use of science based best management practices (BMPs) collaboratively developed through superintendent-regulator-university partnerships at local and state levels of government. Integrated pest management (IPM) practices and plans are an integral part of the golf course BMPs developed by GCSAA for superintendents. GCSAA also supports the enactment of state laws based on sound science\*\* preempting regulation of the use of pesticides and prohibiting local governments from adopting such laws.

EPA and state lead agencies are the only entities with statutorily mandated expertise and resources to make scientifically informed decisions about pesticide use. Local regulation regarding the use of these products is costly, unnecessary and interferes with professional pest management on the golf course. Local pesticide bans/restrictions hinder the ability of golf course superintendents to control pests that have a detrimental effect on healthy turf, trees and ornamentals. Restricting the use of effective pesticides can curb the ability to control disease carrying pests and can jeopardize public health and sanitation. Local pesticide bans/restrictions also require the use of resources for investigation of violations and enforcement, creating an unnecessary drain on community funds. Pesticides are professionally used in accordance with the label and subsequent to IPM practices. They are integral to successful golf landscapes. Localities lack the resources and expertise to effectively regulate pesticides.

GCSAA supports including language in the Farm Bill codifying oversight of pesticides at the state level. When used properly, pesticides promote healthy turfgrass which provides many environmental benefits including wildlife habitat and a natural water filter.

**Pesticide Regulation (Sub-Issue)****Issue information:**

The 1996 Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) fundamentally changed the way EPA regulates pesticides. FQPA mandated a single, health-based standard for all pesticides in all foods; provided special protection for infants and children; expedited approval of safer pesticides; and required periodic re-evaluation of pesticide registrations and tolerances to ensure that the scientific data supporting pesticide registrations will remain up to date in the future. Under FQPA, EPA was required to reevaluate, within 10 years, all food tolerances that were in place as of August 1996. The agency completed over 99% of the required tolerance reassessments on Aug. 3, 2006. This review resulted in changes to how golf course chemicals are regulated including elimination of certain uses and changes in labeling for others. In August 2006, EPA issued a final rule, which implemented a new Registration Review process. Starting in 2007, every pesticide active ingredient must be reviewed at least once every 15 years. The review of organophosphates began in 2008, and the review of the carbamates class started in 2009.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004 established a new system for registering pesticides, called the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act, or PRIA. Under PRIA, the pesticide industry pays over \$40 million in pesticide registration and maintenance fees, which supplement federal appropriations, to

provide timely resources for EPA's registration and registration review efforts. About 1 of every 4 dollars available to the EPA Office of Pesticide Programs is derived from PRIA fees.

National Cotton Council, et al. v. EPA was a court case in which the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in 2009 that the EPA's 2006 Aquatics Pesticides rule was not a reasonable interpretation of the Clean Water Act (CWA). The court vacated the rule and required CWA permits for all chemical and biological pesticide applications that leave a residue in water. Effective October 31, 2011, pesticide applications made in, over or near a "water of the U.S." or WOTUS require a CWA National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. Prior to this, the federal government had not required a NPDES permit for chemical spraying activities for control of such pests as mosquitoes, algae and invasive aquatic weeds. Congress omitted pesticides in 1972 when it enacted the CWA, and despite major rewrites since, never looked beyond FIFRA for the regulation of pesticides. Unnecessary permitting places an economic burden on golf facilities, and states may spend significant resources in implementing and enforcing a permit that most regulators believe does little if anything to further protect water quality. Citizen action lawsuits can disrupt operations and jeopardize businesses. Future expansion of the permit is of concern.

**GCSAA position statement:**

GCSAA believes that all pesticide uses should be under the legal primacy of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). GCSAA supports the goals of the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA). GCSAA supports the use of real data and sound scientific methodology to assess pesticides for risk. GCSAA and its members have and will continue to provide accurate and usable data to the regulatory and scientific communities for use in Registration Review implementation decisions. The continued availability of safe, effective and economically viable pesticide products is a top priority for GCSAA and its members.

GCSAA supports uniformity in pesticide packaging by reaffirming that EPA is the primary federal authority under FIFRA for making pesticide findings and decisions. GCSAA recommends that the federal legislation or the Farm Bill reinforce and strengthen federal preemption regarding human health and other risk assessments under FIFRA on federal pesticide packaging. As co-regulators of pesticides, states have every right to build on the federal government's baseline regulations but should not require additional packaging requirements that directly contradict the scientific conclusions of the EPA.

GCSAA supports a long-term reauthorization by Congress of the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act (PRIA) to create a more predictable and timely pesticide registration and registration review evaluation process of active ingredients used on golf courses. GCSAA supports EPA collecting PRIA fees to register new and innovative pest control products in a timely manner.

GCSAA supports standalone legislation pending in Congress that would remove the NPDES Clean Water Act permit and restore FIFRA supremacy.

**Endangered Species Act (Sub-Issue)**

**Issue information:**

Section 7(a)(1) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) charges federal agencies to aid in the conservation of listed species, and section 7(a)(2) requires the agencies to ensure their activities are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of federally listed species or destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat. EPA has a statutory requirement to comply with the ESA when it registers and re-registers pesticides, and EPA has met these obligations for very few pesticides since Congress adopted the ESA in 1973. And unlike FIFRA, ESA does not include risk-benefit balancing. It is a hazard only statute.

After decades of litigation where EPA failed to meet its obligations, the agency is out of options in the courts. The vacatur of pesticide registrations is a real threat if the agency does not come into compliance. The intersection of FIFRA and ESA continues to present a significant challenge for the registration and re-registration of pesticides. It has been difficult to come up with a workable ESA consultation process and the lack of a clear and transparent process has jeopardized the availability and use of effective products to the golf industry.

In response to litigation, EPA has developed an ESA Workplan which was released in April 2022 and updated in November 2022. EPA is attempting to navigate a path that allows the agency to protect endangered species, provide an array of pesticides to ag and non-ag applicators, and comply with the

ESA far more quickly. The ESA Workplan identifies the highest priority pesticides in the short term and also focuses on getting early protections in place for listed species and their critical habitat.

The agency has developed and is releasing a series of pilots and strategies (Herbicides, Insecticides, Fungicides, Rodenticides, Vulnerable Species Action Plan and Hawaii) under the ESA Workplan which will change the way pesticides are labeled and used in the future. The use of agricultural best management practices (BMPs) or mitigations are at the heart of the pilots and strategies. Some of these pilots and strategies impact non-ag interests. GCSAA wants to make sure the agency considers the differences between ag and non-ag pesticide use and works closely with non-ag applicator groups to find solutions for ESA compliance, preferably while EPA is crafting and refining its proposals.

**GCSAA position statement:**

GCSAA shares in EPA's commitment to ensure that actions carried out by it and other federal agencies should not harm endangered species or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of their critical habitat. However, protecting endangered species and habitat does not need to be contradictory with easing the regulatory burdens faced by industry. GCSAA and its members have long-standing support, involvement and implementation of environmental stewardship programs that protect wildlife species and habitat throughout the U.S. GCSAA supports EPA and USDA working with federal fish and wildlife agencies to promulgate new rules that establish clear and equitable procedures for notice and comment on the EPA's pesticide effects determinations for endangered species and subsequent actions including draft Biological Opinions and potential product restrictions. Any consultation process should be responsible, streamlined and sustainable to mitigate against ongoing ESA Section 7 litigation.

GCSAA supports continued implementation of the January 31, 2018 Memorandum of Understanding between EPA-Interior-Commerce which established an Interagency Working Group (IWG) to evaluate and improve the ESA consultation process for pesticide registration. The 2018 Farm Bill created an interagency workgroup that includes representation from EPA, USDA, the White House Council on Environmental Quality, Department of Commerce, and Department of the Interior to make recommendations and implement improvements to the ESA Section 7 consultation process for pesticide registration and registration review. The IWG has made progress since the enactment of the 2018 Farm Bill, but its work must continue. GCSAA supports extending and updating the charge of the IWG.

GCSAA will engage and educate impacted federal agencies including the EPA, USDA, USFWS and NMFS and agricultural and environmental State Lead Agencies on the association's national Best Management Practices initiative and work toward inclusion of golf specific BMPs as a means for ESA mitigation and compliance.

**Pollinators (Sub-Issue)**

**Issue information:**

GCSAA recognizes the importance of native pollinators in our ecosystem and their significant contribution to our quality of life. GCSAA is aware of and concerned about the issue of pollinator decline. Researchers are working to determine exact causes of decline, and the association supports expedited review of the many potential factors that contribute to pollinator issues. GCSAA will continue to support use of best management practices that provide habitat through native areas as well as the professional use of inputs through training and education and the use of IPM practices. There are golf facilities providing apiaries that provide a great education platform to create awareness of pollinator issues Americans face.

In 2015, the White House Pollinator Health Task Force published its report, *National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and other Pollinators*. EPA's portion of the strategy reviewed its current and planned actions on pollinators, including its plan for pollinator risk assessments, new testing guidelines and mitigation through state pollinator plans. EPA issued a proposed rule to adopt mandatory pesticide label restrictions to protect managed bees under contract service. EPA also issued a proposed rule regarding *Risk Management Approach to Identifying Options for Protecting the Monarch Butterfly*. There has been a steady increase in the number of "pollinator free" cities across the country and big box retail stores have been phasing out the use of neonicotinoids.

In 2020, GCSAA added a comprehensive pollinator resources section to [gcsaa.org](https://gcsaa.org). This section provides a comprehensive listing of the association's work toward pollinator protection including articles, webinars,

case studies, videos, pollinator habitat and conversation guides, and information on beekeeping and apiaries. The pollinator resources section includes information on environmental stewardship programs like Audubon International and Monarchs in the Rough which many golf course superintendents participate in. GCSAA has also made pollinator protection a key focus area within its national Best Management Practices Planning Guide and Template. At the end of 2020 all 50 states had a comprehensive agronomic and environmental Best Management Practices program in place which included pollinator protection.

**GCSAA position statement:**

Golf course superintendents need to conduct pest control activities and those should be done in accordance with comprehensive IPM strategies while also complying with labeling laws set forth by FIFRA and EPA rulemakings. GCSAA will continue to monitor and engage in regulatory activities that directly impact active ingredients used on golf courses. GCSAA will monitor indirect activities but will engage only if impacts on golf courses are imminent.

Golf facilities contribute valuable green space within any watershed and community. Within the golf course, natural and/or native areas provide opportunities to provide habitat for wild pollinators and honeybees. Golf course superintendents should continue to develop, protect and manage areas for wildlife and pollinator habitat. One key guide is the resource provided by the USGA and Xerces Society, "Making Room for Native Pollinators." Honeybees will benefit from these efforts as well.

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## Power Equipment

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**Issue information:**

Starting with the state of California in 2021, a trend has developed in some states to pass legislation and/or regulations that would ban or restrict the manufacture, sale, and/or use of certain types of power equipment. Prior to this trend, local ordinances seeking to restrict the use of leaf blowers due to noise concerns, specifically, were not uncommon. But in 2021 the California Air Resources Board (CARB), with support from the state legislature, developed new regulations that drastically expanded the scope of equipment coming under greater scrutiny, specifically out of a concern for engine emissions.

As signed into law, California's AB 1346 required the CARB to "adopt cost-effective and technologically feasible regulations to prohibit engine exhaust and evaporative emissions from new small off-road engines (SORE), as defined by the state board." The subsequent CARB regulations focused on eliminating within the state the manufacture and sale of nearly all 25 hp gasoline engines and smaller starting with model year 2024. With some exceptions, this included many types of power equipment used on golf courses, such as chainsaws, handheld grass and hedge trimmers, handheld and backpack leaf blowers, handheld pole pruners, handheld and ground supported edger's, walk behind and riding greens mowers, select fairway mowers, verticutting and aerator units, pressure washers and snow blowers. Use of existing equipment has been allowed to continue, but production and sale of such equipment has been discontinued within the state.

Following this action, 2022 saw the introduction of similar legislation in Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, and Washington. Additionally, local ordinances – including complete bans in some instances – were proposed in San Francisco, CA, Montgomery County, MD, and Multnomah County, OR, for example, that could negatively impact superintendents and those operating on a commercial scale. Notably, and most concerning in each of these examples, no distinction was made between the needs of commercial operators and residential property owners. Further, some of the legislation went beyond California's AB 1346 by calling for the discontinued use of equipment by a designated date, not just banning new sales.

Policymakers appear to have some concerns for the financial burden of transitioning to battery powered, or "zero-emission equipment," and various rebate and tax incentive programs have been considered. Funding levels for such programs, however, have often been minimal or insufficient.

Finally, the golf industry is encouraged by advancements in the development of automation technologies such as autonomous mowers that may bring new efficiencies to golf course maintenance. Resolving regulatory issues around safety and liability may help support adoption in the future.

**GCSAA position statement:**

GCSAA supports the ability of equipment operators at golf courses to use power equipment that is in compliance with local, state, and federal regulations regarding air emissions and decibel levels. While early adoption of battery powered equipment may be practical for homeowners maintaining .25 acre lot, for example, the average golf course stretches across 150 acres creating quite different needs for those tasked with maintaining the turf, trees and ornamental plants found within it.

Battery powered equipment provides pros and cons. Benefits include reduced emissions, lower decibel levels, reduced fuel costs and avoidance of fuel spills and leaks. Conversely, drawbacks and deficiencies – especially when considering use in a commercial operation – include limited battery life and run time, insufficient power and durability, limited charging infrastructure, regional power grid reliability, disposal and recycling limitations, and the overall cost of new equipment, batteries, and charging stations. Further, some specialized pieces of equipment commonly used on golf courses, such as aerator and top-dressing units, as well as heavy duty utility vehicles, currently do not have electric alternatives.

Still, the golf industry has shown an ability to adapt and utilize new technology when the benefit of doing so is clearly demonstrated. A recent survey of GCSAA members showed that 47% of superintendents are currently using some form of electric equipment, most commonly leaf blowers and utility carts. Furthermore, the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEA) reports that "the majority of "handheld" products shipped are already electric powered. Electric "handheld" leaf blowers represented more than

80% of “handheld” leaf blower shipments in 2022. Residential electric walk-behind mower shipments have ballooned from just 5% of total walk-behind lawnmowers in 2014 to 40% in 2022,” and that these trends are likely to continue without legislative action.

Thus, policymakers should consider market forces already leading to adoption and use of battery powered equipment. Additionally, contributions to air quality concerns, by industry sector, must be well understood and demonstrated by legislative and/or regulatory bodies, using reliable modeling and sound science\*\*, before mandates restricting and banning various types of power equipment are pursued. Policymakers should also recognize that, thanks to decades of advancement in emissions reduction technologies, exhaust gas and evaporative emissions from equipment have been reduced up to 90% as reported by OPEI.

GCSAA supports the creation and funding of product rebate, tax incentive, and low interest loan programs that help offset the cost of new battery-powered equipment purchases, especially when conversion is mandated by law, or when due to regulation, the ability to purchase gasoline-powered alternatives has been restricted or eliminated. The costs of commercial-grade battery-powered equipment can far exceed their gasoline equivalents with industry research finding that zero-emissions equipment can have an upfront cost of as much as 2 to 4 times their gas counterparts.

The numerous challenges surrounding mandated adoption of zero-emission equipment often create unreasonable hardships for manufacturers, retailers, and end-users. Such mandates have the potential to result in an early market shortfall of products with high consumer need and demand, especially during a time of supply chain volatility as the golf industry continues to experience. Adoption of such new equipment and technology should be market based and fully consider availability and variety of equipment, affordability, reliability, feasibility, and the needs of the end-user, especially those operating on a commercial scale. Currently, there are some equipment types that do not have any zero emission alternatives or that have very few viable models available for commercial use.

While GCSAA does not support or oppose the use of any particular product line, GCSAA supports product choice and the ability of its members to source the various equipment types needed to maintain their golf courses to standards set by owners, customers, and members.

**Coalitions/affiliations:** Outdoor Power Equipment Institute

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## Labor and Workforce Development

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**Issue information:**

An available, legal and trained workforce is vital to the economic success of golf facilities and a top priority for the golf industry. Bureau of Labor Statistics data demonstrates the demographic reality that the U.S. population is aging, growth in the young workforce is declining, young workers are increasingly educated and disinterested in unskilled labor jobs, and major worker shortages are forecasted especially for seasonal and less-skilled positions. Significant labor shortages will make it difficult for many golf facilities to fill both their permanent and temporary/seasonal labor needs. Additionally, 95% of golf facilities either fall at or under the threshold for small business, as determined by the Small Business Administration (\$15 million in revenue annually). These facilities often face slim profit margins and rely on access to a safe, legal and affordable workforce to operate. The golf industry is encouraged by advancements in the development of automation technologies that could help address worker shortages. Further, many depend on foreign, seasonal labor due to the difficulty in finding U.S. workers willing to take seasonal, unskilled jobs. Proper documentation of workers presents its own set of unique challenges. The U.S. labor shortage, comprehensive immigration reform and mandatory use of E-Verify are issues Congress continues to debate as they try to address the need for a stable, legal workforce to ensure the nation's economic security. Specific labor and immigration issues include:

- H-2B Visa Program

GCSAA is focused on workforce development in several areas and can help secure the federal dollars that support these programs:

- GCSAA is focused on attracting, training and retaining a skilled workforce to tackle both current and future challenges in the golf course management industry.
- GCSAA is enhancing partnerships with local community colleges and universities to promote golf management programs.
- Founded in 1997, First Green, a GCSAA program, pairs golf courses with local schools for unique Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) learning opportunities. Not only does First Green enlighten communities about the benefits golf courses can have for their environment, but it also inspires young students to pursue an education and/or career in STEM, including golf course management.
- GCSAA also has an outreach initiative with the FFA organization, which targets young professionals including students and assistant superintendents, aim to drive interest in golf course maintenance careers and provide new growth opportunities for the existing workforce.
- GCSAA is working in several states with chapters to support the adoption of the federally approved Greenskeeper II Apprenticeship program which allows interested candidates to further their agronomy education, work alongside field experts to gain on the job learning and gain a national industry recognized credential. This program is conducted through the U.S. Department of Labor. GCSAA is creating a chapter toolkit on how to start a program in your state.
- Finally, GCSAA is also working with Operation Double Eagle, a program that helps transition active-duty military personnel into careers in civilian life. This program helps create opportunities for service members to move into a career in golf.

**GCSAA position statement:**

Immigration reform includes many key focus areas: legalization; employment verification systems; temporary worker programs; and border security. GCSAA does not engage in the debate over legalization or border security. Due to the difficulty many golf facilities have in finding permanent and seasonal U.S. workers, GCSAA supports comprehensive immigration reform that includes guest worker provisions. Reform measures should safeguard seasonal worker programs and not place undue economic burdens on employers. Reform should create an immigration system and guest worker program that functions efficiently for employers, workers and government agencies. Reform should create a program that ensures U.S. workers are not displaced by foreign workers and ensures that all workers enjoy the same labor law protections. Reform should strengthen national security by providing for the screening of foreign workers and creating a disincentive for illegal immigration. Enforcement of immigration laws is critical for the economic vitality of the country, national security and for successful

comprehensive immigration reform. GCSAA supports reform that creates a fair employment eligibility verification system for new hires that functions efficiently, effectively, and inexpensively for employers, workers and government agencies.

### **H-2B Visa Program (Sub-Issue)**

#### **Issue information:**

The federal H-2B visa program is used by U.S. golf facilities to secure legal employees when they cannot fill seasonal jobs with American workers despite intensive recruitment efforts. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) must certify that qualified workers are not available in the U.S. and that the foreign worker's employment will not adversely affect wages and working conditions of similarly employed U.S. workers. The program's congressionally mandated cap of 66,000 (33,000 for each half of the fiscal year) has been consistently inadequate to meet the seasonal needs of small businesses in a strong economy.

According to DOL statistics, in 2006, golf facilities (including resorts) asked for approximately 26,000 H-2B visa workers – of that number over 7,700 were for golf course maintenance positions. The number of H-2B visa workers in the golf industry declined with the country's economic decline. Requests for H-2B visa workers at golf facilities have been on the rise. In 2019, the golf industry requested 10,022 visas for all positions and in 2022 that number went up to 15,160 which was a 51% increase.

The H-2B visa program has been under attack since 2009. DOL has tried to finalize a series of regulations that would significantly increase the hourly wages that must be paid to H-2B workers as well as revamp the program entirely thereby making it difficult if not impossible for small, seasonal employers to use. Congress has held many of these regulations at bay. Further, there are many who wrongly believe the program takes jobs from Americans when instead it fills jobs that would otherwise remain vacant. A continued lobbying effort is necessary to ensure it provides valuable workers for golf. By filling temporary jobs, H-2B workers not only keep businesses open, but they also contribute to the creation of year-round jobs for American workers. Studies show that every H-2B position supports 4.6 American jobs.

#### **GCSAA position statement:**

GCSAA supports H-2B cap relief passed by Congress either as a permanent statutory change to the program (preferred) or as part of the annual Department of Homeland Security appropriation bills. The language should either raise the low H-2B visa annual cap or exempt workers from the cap if they have received an H-2B visa during one or more of the previous fiscal years. It should also create a system in which H-2B visas for new workers would be allocated on a proportional basis if the cap is reached so that all employers will receive a percentage of H-2B workers.

GCSAA supports long term H-2B relief that will ensure that seasonal employers such as golf will be able to rely on the H-2B visa program to plan for future business growth. Seasonal employers also need the certainty of a well-run H-2B program to reduce processing delays and ensure access to a safe, legal and reliable temporary workforce. The DOL should streamline and expedite processing of H-2B visa applications. GCSAA also supports the use of private wage surveys to help set the mandatory minimum wages paid to H-2B workers.



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## Fertilizers

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**Issue information:**

States, municipalities and counties across the United States attempt to ban or restrict the use of fertilizers as elected officials and citizens address concerns of nutrient loading in waterways. These efforts have taken place in all areas of the country including the Northeast (esp. Long Island, NY), Florida, the Great Lakes region, and the Mississippi River Basin. While these efforts encompass all aspects of fertilizer use, the primary focus is phosphorus and nitrogen. A federal focus on cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay watershed during the Obama Administration brought greater attention to agricultural and urban nutrient management. The Chesapeake Bay cleanup efforts served as a “model” for watershed cleanup efforts elsewhere. Federal agencies have pushed state and local governments to regulate fertilizers to control nutrient runoff as well as pushed states to adopt more stringent numeric nutrient water quality standards. As a result, activists are attempting to overturn state preemption laws. Golf course fertilizer use remains a target due to public perception that the amounts used to manage courses are a source of nutrient loads. State-mandated restrictions and nutrient management plans can have a detrimental impact on golf courses if they are not developed with input from the golf course management industry and without consideration of existing environmental best management practices for golf courses. It is important for policymakers to consider all potential sources for nutrient loading such as aging sewer and septic systems.

Golf course superintendents significantly decreased nutrient use rates and the number of acres being fertilized, according to the *2022 Nutrient Use and Management Practices on U.S. Golf Courses* survey that compared totals from 2006 and 2021. The survey was the third in the latest series of the Golf Course Environmental Profile reports, conducted by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) and funded by the United States Golf Association (USGA) through The GCSAA Foundation. Across the United States key indicators like total nutrients, fertilized acres and application rates are on the decline. U.S. courses have seen an annual reduction in the usage of the three key nutrients found in fertilizer: nitrogen (41 percent), phosphate (59 percent), and potassium (54 percent) since 2006.

In 2022, with backing and support from the Florida GCSA and the Univ. of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), Florida H.B. 967 was signed into law which will exempt from local/municipal ordinances fertilizer applications made to golf courses by persons who have completed training and certification programs related to best management practices developed by the Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection and UF/IFAS. HB 967 serves as model legislation that promotes the implementation of golf course BMPs. Similar legislation may be pursued in additional states where nutrient use on golf courses has come under unwarranted scrutiny.

**GCSAA position statement:**

Fertilization practices in golf are part of a science-based nutrient management scheme that only uses the amount necessary to produce healthy turfgrass and quality playing surfaces. Healthy turfgrass allows communities to enjoy many benefits including: creation of critical “greenspaces”; providing wildlife habitat; and ensuring recreational opportunities. In addition, many entities, both public and private rely on healthy greenspaces like golf courses as a key component in maintaining financial revenues. There are also many environmental benefits to healthy turf including the capture of run-off pollutants in stormwater, temperature buffer, erosion control, and serving as a protective barrier for groundwater.

GCSAA supports the development and use of science-based best management practices (BMPs) for fertilizer applications through superintendent–regulator–university partnerships at the local and state levels of government. To support this, the GCSAA launched in 2017 the 50 by 2020 BMP initiative. The goal of this landmark initiative was to have all 50 states with a BMP program in place by 2020 to ensure protection of human health and the environment and demonstrate the industry’s commitment to environmental stewardship. This goal was accomplished at the end of 2020. GCSAA supports golf course superintendents partnering with watershed groups and conservation organizations to develop their state BMP programs.

Fertilizer laws and regulations should be based on sound science\*\* supported by credible peer reviewed data and university recommendations. Science-based nutrient management for turfgrass leads to healthy quality turfgrass and thereby leads to more effective and efficient management of other inputs.

GCSAA supports the enactment of state laws preempting regulation of the use of fertilizers and prohibiting local governments from adopting such laws. Local regulation of the use of these products is both costly and unnecessary. Only state designated regulatory agencies should be vested with the authority to regulate the use of nutrients. These agencies have the scientific expertise to properly determine nutrient requirements for each geographic region within a given state. Laws and regulations involving fertilizer applications should recognize golf properties engaged in environmental stewardship practices, and/or programs that address nutrient management through science-based BMP plans.

**Coalitions/affiliations:** Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE