

Another Excellent Opportunity for Your Facility to Benefit - “Almost” Spring Meeting”

Frankly speaking, you will not only enjoy attending the upcoming “Almost” Spring Meeting & Trade Show, March 4 & 5, 2024, you will leave armed with knowledge to benefit your facility. Our featured speakers will include Frank Rossi, Ph.D., New York state extension turfgrass specialist and associate professor of horticulture, School of Integrative Plant Science, Ithaca, New York; and of course, the host of the podcast, “*Frankly Speaking*,” and Edward Nangle, Ph.D., associate professor, Ohio State University Agricultural Technical Institute, Wooster, Ohio.



“Traffic Jams: How to use golf course traffic to your advantage.”

“Golf Turf Moneyball: Using Data to Make and Save Money, and Reduce Risk”

Held in Billings this year (a rollover from our cancelled spring event during Covid) the downtown will location will not only offer new opportunities to enjoy nearby restaurants, it will come at an extremely friendly hotel room price.

We are thrilled to announce we will bring back “We Made it Through.” We knew we were onto something with the continued page 18

PPGCSA Upcoming Events:

Private Webcast, PPGCSA - January 15, 2024

Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality Room - Phoenix, Ariz., January 31, 2024

PPGCSA “Almost” Spring Meeting - March 4-5, 2024, DoubleTree by Hilton (downtown), Billings, Mont.

PPGCSA Mont. and Wyo. Scholarship/Education Golf Events - TBA

Fall Meeting & Trade Show - October 29-31, 2024, Billings Hotel & Convention Center, Billings, Mont.

“2023 Year in Review, a look back and a look forward”

A PPGCSA Private Webcast

On Monday, January 15, 2024, during our chapter’s private webcast, the conversation will include what was seen in 2023 in the world of golf and turf management, and what we can expect to see in 2024. Will it be the same practices or things that are new and different? Spend a quick 90 minutes with Roch Gaussoin, Ph.D., to discuss timely topics. Come prepared to challenge him with your questions and comments.

Whether you attend as an individual, or invite fellow courses in your area for the benefit of additional thoughtful discussion and comradery, it is a great way to connect virtually!

Registration is open now! Just visit the calendar event of our website ppgcsa.org.

Website Refresh!

Heads up our website is going to enjoy a “refreshed” appearance in the very near future. The update will offer an improved experience on your mobile phone, as well as your computer.

Please remember we always welcome high resolution pictures for our website banner. For clarity, it is important they are horizontal pictures and we regret having to turn away beautiful vertical pictures. Experience has shown that pictures sent by email retain better resolution compared to those sent by text.

Via email blast, watch for the announcement announcing that the website will not be accessible for a short period of time as information is transferred and the site is finalized.

Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality Room Phoenix, Arizona

We have a fantastic spot reserved for the Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality Room at the 2024 Conference and Show in continued page 16



*“Peaks & Prairies Golf Course
Superintendents Association is
dedicated to furthering the education
of our members for the betterment of
golf and its environment.”*

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Peaks & Prairies Golf Course Superintendents Association

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President's Message

My Path

Garrett Turner, The Reserve at Moonlight Basin Big Sky, Mont.

As I write this article, our staff is working on the last of the winter preparations on the course and it's hard for me to believe this marks my 14th season at Moonlight Basin and nearly 20 years in the turf industry. As most would say, it's amazing how the time passes us by, and I think that's especially true in the golf course world. I rarely find myself looking at the clock to see how much time there is left in the day, but rather my to-do list to see how many more items I can cross off my list.

I've always had a passion for the game of golf, with my father passing on his love of the game to me at a young age. My introduction to the golf course industry started on the seventh tee box of the nine-hole golf course in northern Minnesota, the course where I grew up playing as a kid. At the time I had recently graduated from high school and had a job working night shifts as a brake press operator in North Dakota. That day my father and I were playing in a charity event at my home course and as we introduced ourselves to the other members of our foursome, I learned that one of them recently enrolled at a nearby college in a golf course management program. I still remember to this day the lightbulb that went off in my head as I immediately knew spending my days on a golf course as a career was something I wanted to pursue.

Shortly after I enrolled at Anoka Technical College in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota, where I received my associate degree and spent another two years at University of Minnesota-Crookston to attain my bachelor's degree in golf course management. During that time, I spent summers participating in internships at courses in Minnesota, as well as Colorado, learning everything I could about the practices involved with taking care of the grounds at a golf course. My experience ranged from a public facility at Majestic Oaks G.C. in Ham Lake, MN

to my first private course at Country of the Rockies in Edwards, CO. My last internship was at Interlachen C.C. in Edina, MN where they hosted the women's US Open in 2008.

After school I ended up at Moonlight Basin which is where I've been hanging my hat for almost 15 years now and continue working for fellow PPGCSA member, Mike Wilcynski, who offered me the role of superintendent in 2015. Moonlight has been such an incredible facility to be a part of that it's hard for me to picture living and working anywhere else other than southwest Montana. My son, Jack, five-years old now, has made a few trips to the course with Dad and has enjoyed helping with watering greens, looking for leaks, and operating equipment. I feel blessed that both of us get to call this beautiful part of the country home.

The Peaks & Prairies GCSA has been an important part of my career in Montana with the amount of knowledge I've gained from quality education seminars and speakers, as well as advice and other maintenance practices from fellow members at our spring and fall meetings. I always enjoy hearing from everyone about how their season went, what projects they're currently working on, and issues that they're trying to resolve. Getting together with peers in this profession has been an invaluable resource for me and I continue to gain a little more insight into the turf world every meeting I attend from speaking with other members. I look forward to serving as PPGCSA president and helping to continue this great chapter's role & tradition of educating our members and furthering the turfgrass profession.



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Help From Above

Ryan Knapp, Stockfarm Golf Club, Hamilton, Mont.

After 20 years of being open to play, the membership had finally decided that it was time to give the golf course a bit of a fresh look. We had gone through preplanning and countless meetings with our greens committee and architect to finalize the scope of the work that was intended to begin in the summer of 2018.

In the end, they had decided to reshape all bunkers on the golf course, re-grass all the tees on the golf course and even re-grass all the green surfaces; this would include the demo and construction of five new greens complexes.

Before we could begin any of the new construction, it was decided that the first step would be to remove several hundred trees from the golf course. For those who haven't been to the Stock Farm Club, it is mainly dominated by ponderosa pines that grow far out in native areas with some trees strategically placed to prevent views of cart paths and other infrastructure on the golf course. Over twenty plus years the

golf course had closed in, and numerous volunteer trees had grown up and blocked views of the valley below and the Bitterroot Mountain range that dominates the valley. After our first go-round of marking the golf course with our field representative from Fazio Design, we had marked almost seven hundred trees!

Several dozen more trees would eventually be marked in the coming weeks but there remained a very big question. How could we possibly remove so many trees over the winter preceding construction in a timely manner



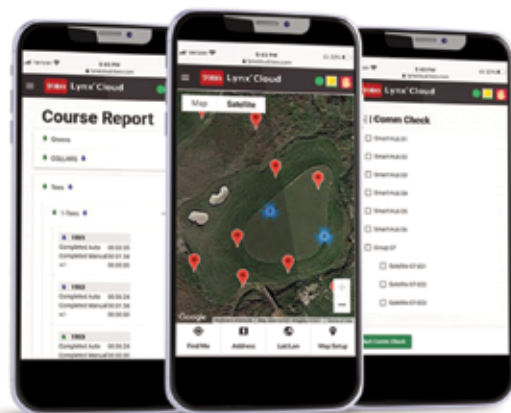
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Help from Above

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without destroying the golf course?

After reaching out to several logging operations and different tree companies, it became quite clear that removing that many trees would create a severe impact on the golf course and surrounding areas with construction of haul roads and loader pads. I was beginning to have major heartburn at the thought of demolishing native areas on the golf course that had been challenging to establish as well as potentially impacting in-play areas with heavy equipment.

That is when we came up with the idea to reach out to one of our members who owns and operates a helicopter logging company. After a meeting with our member, the greens committee and the architect everyone was convinced that this would be the best possible method for removing a large amount of trees from the golf course with little to no damage to nearby native areas and the golf course.

Fast forward to late January when the helicopters and sawyers began staging on site. The pilots assured me that they could take out seven hundred trees in a matter of a few days, not weeks and although I was skeptical at first, I would be proven wrong in short order. We were lucky enough to have an open area on the west side of the golf course to take the downed trees to and stage before they were hauled off and used as wood fuel for one of our local schools.

The sawyers began their work and soon enough I could hear the telltale sounds that there were helicopters in the air close by. As fast as the sawyers could get the trees down the helicopters would attach their choker cables to the trees, sometimes two or three in one load, and fly them to the staging area to the west of the golf course. They were making round trips every fifteen minutes and by the end of the first day they had removed over three hundred trees from the golf course. They were able to remove all seven hundred trees in just three days and it is something I never would have believed



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could have been accomplished without seeing it myself.

After the helicopters and sawyers were gone, we were able to make the rounds with a stump grinder and truly remove any evidence that there had ever been trees in some of these areas. For those that think that helicopter logging would cost a fortune, there is no doubt that although I was skeptical at first, the use of these helicopters saved us tens of thousands of dollars in repair and rehab work that would have been required if we had used traditional logging equipment. Sometimes it's hard to see the forest for the trees.



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We Can Listen

Pete Grass, CGCS
Hilands Golf Club, Billings, Mont.

Every job has stress, no matter your position, from superintendent to the high school student on their first day of work at a golf facility. As the expectations of course conditions rise each season, labor is harder to find. Expenses are rising while budgets are not. And as other pressures outside of work build up, keeping some sense of sanity to it all is at times very difficult.

At our recent fall meeting, it was discussed at the board level that there is a need to provide a "support system" for our members who may be struggling in some way with the pressures of our profession. I was asked to lead this effort and I am happy to announce that we are organized and ready help. We have three "seasoned" superintendents who have volunteered their time and experience to be available for anyone to reach for advice, support, or just an ear to vent to. Our intent is to be a safe, confidential resource to anyone who may want to talk. We are not experts in mental health treatment, but fellow members who have dealt with many different "experiences" in our careers. We will also have information about connections to

medical and clinical professionals, should that be a need.

Besides myself, Rick Hathaway from Rock Creek Cattle Company, and Mike Valiant from the Yellowstone Club are the initial volunteers on the "Support Committee." If someone else would like to join the group, please contact Lori or me.

During discussion, I think Mike Valiant summed up our mission very well. He said, "I'm here to listen and calm the nerves of fellow superintendents/assistants in need. Sometimes the stress of our job can manifest its way into our personal lives, creating a snowball that leads to an avalanche."

If you feel the snow starting to fall in your life, we are here to listen and assure you that you are not alone. We also have resources we can suggest. Do not hesitate to reach out!

"Support Committee"

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Staffing Stresses

Jacob Wilson, Equipment Manager
Stock Farm Golf Club, Hamilton, Mont.

This year I noticed the headaches of being short-staffed more so than any other year. During our playing season, we were six people short of where we normally are. This, added to the staff being responsible for event setup, preparing the course

for tournaments, and carrying out daily operations and projects became cumbersome at times. Although I may be a mechanic now and do not hire and fire employees, being short-staffed affected my daily operations as well as the daily operations of other coworkers. I don't believe that the issue of short staffing is strictly related to people not wanting to work. I believe that it is related to people not wanting to do physical work.

If you think about it, we are now at an age where people can post pictures of their feet and somehow make money from this. Apparently other options include posting a video of yourself playing a videogame on YouTube and receiving money from doing this. The ability to do this affects all employers that require people to leave their house in the morning and head to a work place to do their job, whether it is working on a golf course, or working at McDonalds. How much an employer can

pay their employee will always be a factor when competing with other businesses for hiring employees. But, I no longer believe that it is the driving factor. People not wanting to do physical labor seems to be the driving factor for staffing issues. Not a lot of people enjoy waking up before the sun to work for eight hours in the heat or cold.

Noticing this helps me understand why autonomous mowers are being pushed to replace mowers driven by people. There was a time when the thought of autonomous mowers was frustrating to me. To me it was taking jobs away from people, but now seeing what people are doing to make money helps me to understand why the industry is moving this way. It's easier to press a button on a machine to have it start mowing than it is to try and find people to work.

Noticing the current trends of the workforce has made the task of keeping the hard workers even more important than it has been before. Finding employees who are willing to wake up and go to a job that requires them to perform physically demanding tasks is becoming more difficult. The phrase "warm bodies" seems to be a phrase that is being used by multiple different employers in multiple different careers. Businesses are trying to find people to fill their empty positions, regardless of

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Staffing Stresses

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previous experience, just to help with the demands required of them.

The most important lesson to learn from the traits of our current workforce, is to try and keep the good workers you currently have. I've heard from multiple superintendents saying that if they had x

amount of employees that worked just like somebody they currently have, they wouldn't need the size of staff they have now to carry out day-to-day operations. This makes keeping your good employees more important now than it has been before, especially during a time where it is an employee's market when getting a job.

Chapters of Northwest Hospitality Room

continued from page 1

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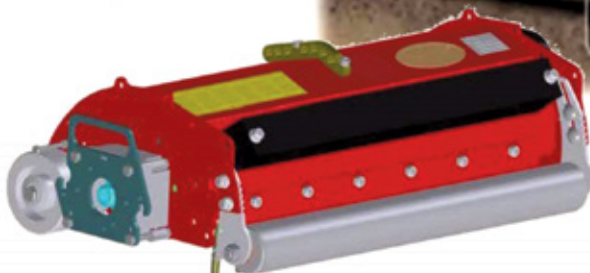
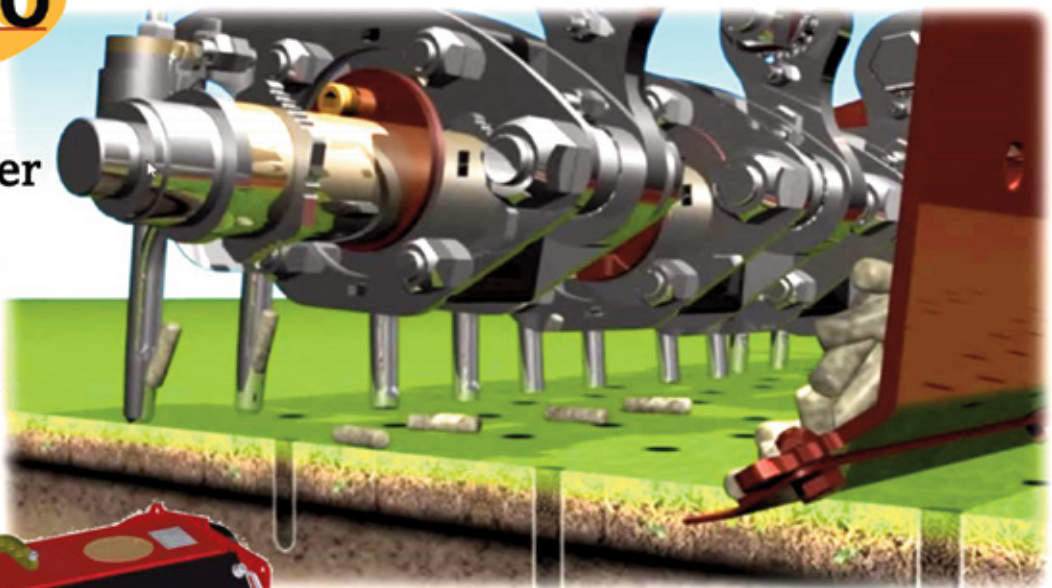
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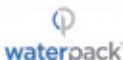
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Spring Meeting

continued from page 1
(Nangle left)

“Organic matter accumulation and PGR responses in creeping bentgrass cultivars – there are differences”

Attn. EMs: “Impacting Agronomic Practices on a Daily Basis from Your Shop”

“Drought stress tolerance as impacted by the use of biological products – Year 2 of never-ending testing.”

inaugural 2022 event. Participants of the “We Made it Through 2023” will include Cole Clark, Pryor Creek Golf Club, Huntley, Mont.; Bob Popp, Laurel Golf Club, Laurel, Mont.; Dustin Nelson, Buffalo Hill Golf Club, Kalispell, Mont.; Jason Lamb, Sidney Golf Course, Sidney, Mont.; and Ryan Blechta, Spanish Peaks Mountain Club, Big Sky, Mont.

Two more important components of our successful spring meeting formula are the evening group discussion (Billings Banter) and the silent auction.

Spring isn’t that far away, really! We are in the process of finalizing the conference agenda and

we look forward to sharing it by mid-January with our online conference registration. In the meantime, all you have to do is plan to attend and protect the date.

Congratulations to Mackenzie Tuss, recipient of a \$1,500 Peaks & Prairies GCSA Legacy Scholarship Award. She is the daughter of Cameron Tuss, Assistant Superintendent, MeadowLark Country Club, Great Falls, Mont. Tuss is attending MT State University.

Dear Peaks & Prairies GCSA Members,

Thank you so much for the Legacy Scholarship. I am honored I was a deserving candidate of the award. I know my family is proud, especially my father, who is a member himself. This scholarship will definitely help with school, supplies, and cost of living. As I work on my degree in Psychology, I feel relieved to have the extra income to help me along my journey. So once again, thank you for contributing to my future. You have helped me get one step closer to success.

*Best regards,
Mackenzie Tuss*



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Wyoming's Learning Curve

Josh Beu, Assistant Superintendent

The Powder Horn, Sheridan, Wyo.

Moving from Tennessee to north central Wyoming has been quite the learning curve. I come from a region where irrigation never gets blown out, golf is played year round, and humidity is high enough that you sweat before the sun comes up. Though the disease pressure is almost non-existent compared to the south, dealing with dry conditions has its own set of challenges. Early in my career I made the mistake of thinking that all golf courses are managed the same way. It was not until I moved across the country and learned just how different turf management can look.

My wife and I moved in January of this year. When we left Knoxville, the highs were averaging in the 50s. We arrived after three long days to a crisp -4 degrees in Sheridan, along with three feet of snow on the ground. Driving through Wyoming on snow pack with a two-wheel drive box truck will turn you into a seasoned winter driver very fast. After getting settled in and trying to learn the ropes out at the Powder Horn, it wasn't long until we were clearing the greens. As you all know, the snow cover was deep and stayed around well past its welcome this season. This was uncharted territory for a Tennessee kid who was used to seeing a couple inches of snow per year if lucky.

Nevertheless, we all got through the long winter and had lots of work in front of us.

Like many others, we experienced a substantial amount of turf loss from the five months of snow cover. Our crew laid sod continuously for what seemed like a month. I pulled the slit seeder every day for a few weeks.

Miraculously, everything filled in around a month or so after opening day. There was very little evidence of the turf loss Mother Nature had dished out. We were green and growing but the heat of summer was around the corner and I had another lesson to learn.

Taking care of bent grass greens in Tennessee obviously takes a skilled greenskeeper. From April to September,



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temperatures are regularly in the 90s by mid-morning. The nighttime temps are often above 70 and the humidity around 90 percent. Because of these factors, greens water management was extremely important to help combat disease pressure. The transition to bent grass greens in the west proved to be less of a battle with the weather. The rest of the golf course proved to be the biggest challenge. I no longer had the luxury of warm season roughs and fairways. They only needed water every couple of days and the 60 inches of rain a year generally provided that. I learned just how fast turf can dry out and just how long clay soils can hold on to it if over watered.

I definitely have much more to learn in the coming years about the differences that the West presents. It's a very different region with its own set of challenges. I am excited for the opportunity to be here and learn from all the knowledgeable members of Peaks & Prairies. It's been a memorable year and I can't wait to see what next season has in store.



The Evolution of the Great Alaskan Turfgrass Conference

David Phipps, Northwest Region Field Staff Representative, GCSAA

Per GCSAA's bylaws, Article 1, Section 1 reads: Application for Membership: Effective July 1, 1997, all Class A and Class B applicants for membership residing in the United States, except Alaska, must

be a member of an Affiliated Chapter...

When I took on this role as the GCSAA NW field staff representative, I knew that something needed to be done to bring relevant information to the Alaskan GCSAA membership. Without a local chapter to provide education and networking, their opportunities were few when it came to continuing education. My first couple of visits to Alaska were, in fact, very educational for me. Learning of the extreme temperatures and length of day issues seemed mind-boggling to me. With only a few superintendents with a turfgrass education, it was evident that there was a need to bring in some local education.

My first visit came in July of 2012. Then, I learned that Anchorage Golf Club had over 9100 rounds in June alone. I also learned that getting mowing equipment was a struggle. Many of the distributors would not spend the resources to visit the golf courses. The availability of certain pesticides was also an issue. Manufacturers didn't register their products in Alaska, feeling like it wouldn't be profitable for them. Labor can also be a challenge in Alaska. However, some have discovered the J-1 Visa program for seasonal labor.

I traveled again to Alaska in 2014. This time I started in Fairbanks and met George Howe, CGCS at Chena Bend Golf Course. George was a 33-year GCSAA member at that time (42 years today) and Alaska's only certified golf course superintendent. I was simply astounded at the quality of his golf course. My ignorance led me to believe that grass could not be

grown at that latitude. Boy was I wrong.

I then traveled down the Kenai Peninsula and visited two of the four courses in that region. Ingenuity was the keyword there. I saw how a golf course could make the most with less and also how they could make too much of a good thing. It was clear that there needed to be education on how to calibrate fertilizer applications.

With two visits under my belt, it was time to bring some education to Alaska. In 2016 Rob Golembiewski, Ph.D., was my first Ph.D. to visit Alaska. Rob and I had developed a close relationship while he was at Oregon State and I was able to convince him to come up on Bayer's dime and be the sole source of education for our first mini-conference. Rob's topics included selecting the proper nitrogen source, the benefits of greens rolling, and re-establishing greens through interseeding.

In September 2018, we held our second mini-conference. This one was sponsored by Alaska Mill & Feed, a local distributor. I was able to convince some local distributors from the Lower 48 to come up and give a talk. Jason Otto and Jeff Schwab from Wilbur Ellis came up and made a presentation on biostimulants, and Ed Price with the Andersons came up to talk on carbon usage. Scott Hollister from GCM traveled with me this time and he gave a great perspective on building community and how to take advantage of the GCSAA membership.

I returned in September 2019 to finalize the Alaska State BMP with a few of the superintendents, which led to the publication of their document, contributing to the GCSAA goal of 50 States/50 BMPs by 2020.

COVID had finally wrapped up and we were able to resume our Alaskan mini-conference. Bruce Clark, Ph.D. from Rutgers told me that he needed Alaska to complete his 50-state speaking

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Great Alaskan Turfgrass Conference

continued from page 21

and Dr. Clark provided two great presentations. Lew Sharpe from Tee2Green filled in the rest of the education on interseeding which the group found extremely useful.

The following year I returned to Alaska to volunteer for the USGA Championship where I saw the result of the last winter's education put to use. Mike Stern at Anchorage Golf Course took the information that was presented on interseeding and variety selection and provided championship putting surfaces for the event!

This leads me to 2023. This year Mike Richardson, Ph.D., and Fred Yelverton, Ph.D., volunteered to come up and speak. Alaska is a unique growing environment. Typically, a cool-season turfgrass growth curve shows two peaks, with a valley in the heat of the summer. A warm-season growth curve has a single peak in the middle of the summer. In Alaska, the growth curve mimics that of a warm-season turfgrass with a single peak in the middle of the season. That means the turfgrass is actively growing throughout the season and the proper use of growth regulators can be useful.

When I asked Dr. Richardson and Yelverton to present, they both had to step back and wrap their heads around it. With 22 hours of daylight at the peak of the season, you would think that the GDDs would be off the chart. Surprisingly, it was quite the opposite. Even in the peak of the season, the sun's path is still quite low so the amount of direct radiation is reduced. Here, shade becomes a problem if not managed. Yelverton and Richardson's presentations complimented each other's content and tied the two subjects of growth regulation and *Poa* control perfectly.

The entire visit became quite informative for everyone. Both Richardson and Yelverton told me they learned so much out of what they were asked to teach, and in doing so, they brought so much great information to the Alaskan members, which they will be able to put to use. Turfgrass quality continues to increase in Alaska and I couldn't be prouder of the efforts and the willingness of the superintendents to learn from the education GCSAA has been able to bring to them over the years. *This is an excerpt and the full version is available through GCSAA's publications.*

Pictured right - GCSAA 2023 Chapter Delegate's Meeting attended by Pat Nowlen, City of Polson, Polson, Mont.

Grover Joins Board of Directors

Congratulations to Russ Grover, Buffalo Hill Golf Club, Kalispell, Mont., who was recently elected to the Peaks & Prairies GCSA Board of Directors during the 2023 Fall Meeting & Trade Show. Also re-elected as director was Derek Hofer, Green Meadow Country Club, Helena, Mont.

Elected as president was Garrett Turner, Moonlight Basin, Big Sky, Mont.; as vice president, Ryan Knapp, Stock Farm, Hamilton, Mont.; and as secretary/treasurer, Pat Nowlen, City of Polson, Polson, Mont.



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