

Turf's Up in the Inland Empire



Winter 2024

Roundtable Discussion, January 15, The Club at Black Rock *see page 8*



William "Bill" Griffith

Over the decades, Bill Griffith's contributions to the turf industry and the Inland Empire GCSA have made a difference. Griffith held the distinction of serving our board of directors for 25 years, making him one of the longest-serving board members. Well beyond his board service, Griffith dedicated himself to the industry

through his teaching turf 20 years at the postsecondary level. He has twice served as president of the NTA. Earlier in his career, Griffith spent 15 years as a superintendent in Washington and Oregon. In 2017 he retired as Director for the Agriculture Center.

Although Bill Griffith will be greatly missed in his passing, his legacy will continue. In recognition of his outstanding contributions to the association and the turf industry, the William Griffith Distinguished Service Award was established years ago and is now bestowed upon individuals who make significant and exceptional contributions to the Inland Empire GCSA.

Our heartfelt condolences extend to his wife, Pat, his family, and all his friends.

Donation of Rounds!

Mike Kingsley, retired superintendent and present chapter hero, is reaching out to our superintendents for the annual donation of rounds to our silent auction. Please respond to Mike or, more importantly, even reach out to him first! (509) 900-8843.

It is important we have your rounds in hand prior to the event so we may note any restrictions. All contributions are greatly appreciated.

IEGCSA "Nearly" Spring Meeting March 10 & 11, 2025

Walla Walla Country Club, registration opens in January!

Mike Kingsley Receives our Highest Honor

Mike Kingsley, a dedicated and respected member of our association, was honored with the William Griffith Distinguished Service Award at the Fall Meeting & Trade Show. Presenter and past recipient, Jeff Gullikson, CGCS, succinctly highlighted Kingsley's deserving qualities.

Kingsley was — and is — the ultimate association member between his past service on our board of directors and on the NTA board, as well as his long-time service to the industry and his peers. He assists with First Green events and golf tournaments in the region. Known for his course return as a "dew sweeper," as needed he will hold back his early morning golf group to ensure the grounds crew stays ahead. Many facilities could use this assistance!

Humbly accepting the award, Kingsley shared stories of his journey and lessons learned. He entertained all with stories including how he handed over his cell phone to the incoming superintendent with all 300 phone numbers of the homeowners.

Despite being retired, Kingsley continues to play a pivotal role in our association as the chair of our Spokane booth and the highly successful auction. He is a valuable asset to our group, and we are fortunate to have him as a member.



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Old Dog Learning New Tricks

Edward Wetherell
Second Assistant Superintendent
Circling Raven Golf Club,
Worley, Idaho



Some of you know me, but I thought this would be a great way for me to let everyone learn a little about who I am. I was born and raised in the Inland Northwest. My father was in the military, and I was born in Pasco, Washington. I attended Ferris High School but dropped out and received my GED in 1987. I have been married for 21 years and a day doesn't go by that I am not thankful for her putting up with me this long.

Throughout my life, I've worked in various industries. I was always looking for the job that would pay me the most without much regard for the future. I've worked on fishing boats in Alaska, in oil fields in Texas, owned a landscape company, and operated heavy equipment. It wasn't until I started exploratory drilling in the copper mines of Utah and Arizona that I figured out the job I thought I really wanted to do was to operate a crane. So, I began the process of getting certified and in 1997, I received my crane certification and Class A CDL.

I worked all over the country. I worked with Ducks Unlimited building water control structures to redevelop wetlands for the purpose of reintroducing waterfowl to their natural habitats. I worked in the oil fields of North Dakota building man camps for the oil boom. I set up and disassembled drill rigs, built water storage facilities, and large commercial septic tank systems. I worked locally delivering and installing water tanks, septic tanks, and manholes to areas all over the West for new housing and commercial developments. Needless to say, I was always on the road, always doing the job that needed to be done, except the job of taking care of myself.

In 2015, I turned my life upside down. The stress and anxiety I would get about going to work and being on the road was debilitating. The life I was living wasn't the life I wanted, and I couldn't find any sense of purpose. After spending a couple of years trying to figure out what would make me happy and reduce my persistent anxiety, my wife suggested I find a job at a golf course since I loved golf so much. So, I started working for Mike Barber at Hangman Valley Golf Course and my life from then on was headed into a brand new industry .

After my first week, I knew in my heart that working on a golf course was going to change the course of my life, and it certainly did. I had the pleasure of working under three different superintendents at Hangman Valley, now known as Latah Creek. I listened and learned all I could, and I took away many different ways of maintaining and caring for turf.

After a few times of applying for positions to become an assistant superintendent and not being successful, I had a discussion with my nephew. He suggested going back to school. I literally laughed out loud. I made the statement, "I am a high school dropout who is 50 years old that is not an option." But, after much deliberation, I decided the only way forward in the golf industry was to get a degree. In the spring of 2021, I started at Penn State University World Campus. However, before I started, I had to learn to type and use a computer, which was completely new to me. I had never owned or used a computer in my life; what was I thinking? Despite the initial challenges, I became very determined to accomplish my goal. Still, there was always self-doubt because I didn't have confidence in myself.

After a year in school, I thought about quitting with the death of my daughter, who was killed by a drunk driver. There were many people who told me it's ok to pause your education. However, my wife told me I couldn't quit because if I took the time off, I would never resume my education.

I became hyper focused and determined to achieve my goal. In 2022, I applied to Circling Raven Golf Club and was hired as the second assistant superintendent and I continue in that position today. In December 2023, I graduated and I continue to learn something new every day and I learn from my mistakes. I am very blessed to work with two people who have far more knowledge than I, and I am grateful for the opportunities given in my new career. I am constantly pushed to grow and become better at my job, and as a person. I was never been comfortable talking with new people or in group settings, but I have learned to get out of my comfort zone and become a better communicator — although I still have a hard time finding the right words on occasion.

I am grateful for all the people in my life who have supported me and given me guidance through the whole process of changing careers so late in life. I look forward to what the future brings and new learning opportunities. I am a great example of how old dogs can learn new tricks.



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Get out of Your Comfort Zone

Zach Bauer, CGCS, CDA National Reserve, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho



In the spring of 2023, I left my 17-year career growing grass on the front range of Colorado to move to Idaho. To say it was a change from my normal is an understatement!

Colorado and North Idaho have vastly different weather, disease pressures, labor, politics, industry sup-

port (last time I counted we had 12+ distributors on the front range alone), insects, and winter watering requirements. I had spent almost two decades in a climate where I had developed many skills and tricks to successfully grow grass at a high level.

This wasn't my first rodeo by moving and acting on something completely different in my career. I had previously worked in Georgia and Maryland before moving to Colorado. I spent 12 years at The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs where by the end of my tenure I was so comfortable, I was literally bored at work. I needed to get out of that comfort zone before my career could fall behind, so I took a position outside of Denver.

Fast forward five years to a new opportunity in Coeur d'Alene that would challenge my skills, my culture, and agronomic knowledge to an area of the country I hadn't even visited before. It was a leap of faith, but I knew I had the confidence in my abilities to overcome any challenges. I also had an incredible number of industry mentors who helped with the transition.

The move hasn't been without challenges. I have battled the harshest vole damage I have ever seen (after the winter of 2023), thatch issues that'll give you nightmares, crane fly infestation, and Pythium concerns (I never sprayed fungicides in Colorado, btw). I also have an equipment fleet from 2008. However, with challenges come opportunities to meet new industry professionals, adapt to a new climate, control that thatch, and move the course toward the next level of conditioning.

Our industry is growing and evolving every day. As turfgrass managers, we need to evolve with new technologies, climate patterns, and shifting norms. When we're comfortable in our career, it can sometimes lead to a false sense of security. We might fall

behind industry advancements, sustainable opportunities, or even a new job outside of the state!

As we attempt to escape our comfort zone, we should be willing to embrace failure. Surprisingly, failure is a good trait to have. Colonel Sanders, of that famous chicken place, failed over 1,000 times before he found a restaurant to sell his chicken. Our skills and knowledge mature by accumulating failures and taking those opportunities to learn.

Stepping into a new role or educational opportunity can help rejuvenate our passion for the industry. Learning an unfamiliar skill or embracing a new challenge will advance your personal and professional opportunities that maybe were not apparent before attempting to step out of that comfort zone. Adam Garr, Production Chief at Garr Productions LLC, took a leap of faith by starting his own videographer business. Benton Hodges took a similar leap and founded Mountain West Turf Technologies. I took that leap of faith and moved to North Idaho.

While I admit not everyone is willing to make such big leaps of faith, I challenge everyone in 2025 to step out of their comfort zones and try something new. Maybe it's a new job, a new management practice, a culture change, a new hobby, getting that CGCS (Dan, Tom, Kal...), new robotic mower technology, or even learning to paint.

Whatever you decide to do, you'll grow as an individual, both on and off the golf course.

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Digital Technology in Golf Course Management

Lorabeth Catterson, Syngenta Digital Platforms Specialist

Today, there is a lot of talk about implementing technology and collecting data for golf course operation, and it can be overwhelming. Using technology allows us to automate tasks and increase our productivity. Having a robot vacuum at home that runs on a schedule allows

more time for other housekeeping tasks to get done, so why not try a robotic mower to allow other course details to be tended to? There are varying levels of technology to explore and it's important to understand what the goals of integrating them would be before biting off more than you can chew. In this article, I will cover some of my experience at Hillcrest Country Club in Los Angeles, California, where using soil sensors, GPS sprayers, drone photography, and robotic mowers led to my love of a technology-based approach to golf course management.

Most golf course superintendents are already using more technology than they realize, the most common one being a handheld moisture meter, such as a TDR or Pogo. Before these tools, one might have used a soil probe to detect moisture from the feel of the sample. Now, we can take moisture readings with the push of a button and get hand watering done faster and more accurately. The new Rainbird CirrusPro software is built in a way to save time for the end user. The central irrigation computer is accessible via a web browser in the field on a phone or iPad. This alleviates the need to go back to the office computer to run station diagnostics. I would be notified that a station was not communicating before running a voltage check. The new map allows you to work with the station details all in one place and streamlines inputting changes.

In-ground soil sensors were the next form of technology that we embraced after a full golf course renovation where we aimed for uniform playing conditions across multiple grass types and soil textures. It was important for us to meet member expectations when irrigating the brand-new golf course that did not take water easily due to the water quality being high in EC and bicarbonates, and areas with heavy clay soils. We managed USGA bentgrass greens, Bermuda fairways, and ryegrass rough year-round. We had different water requirements amongst the grasses, and with sand-capped tee and green surrounds with native soil fairways in a place with not a lot of water, we needed a way to track our inputs and

results. Using a Spiio in-ground sensor, you can track moisture, salinity, and temperature in areas to help determine irrigation thresholds, flushing practices, and application timing. We knew where we wanted to allocate the water and fine-tuned the ET where we had compact or wet soils. We were able to see different seasonal effects, created historical data, and had a tool to communicate to the pro shop or membership on what the current conditions could be.

We used John Deere GPS sprayers to get the course sprayed. We saved time, chemicals, and labor. When making applications, we would choose the target area, fairways for example, and could choose how much of an overlap we would want outside of the map area. This allowed for less chemical overspray, especially when making applications on Bermuda that could harm ryegrass. We would set the section control to 0% and know that the machine would shut off before touching the boundary. This concept was also applied when making applications to the green top only, which saved chemical and saved the Bermuda collars from being sprayed when we didn't need to. The machines can communicate with one another and store a map of the application; if one machine needs to go refill, another one can pick up right where it left off. If the wind comes in and you need to pull the spray, you can pick right back up on it tomorrow. The John Deere Ops Center mobile app allows you to follow the machines in the field and track time and fuel and begins to show a map of the application output. If we had an issue with pressure in the machine, we had data that showed where that happened and if we needed to go make another application. With the GPS and Auto Steer implementation, the applicators reduced any unnecessary overlap, and reduced time spent making the application because it drove on prescribed lines for them.

We used the same AutoSteer and StarFire technology from the sprayer and put it on one of the tractors with a Lely fertilizer hopper on the back, just like they do in agriculture. You can enter the position of the tractor, swath, and target rate into the machine and begin to create GPS lines and a map of the fertilizer app. When we implemented this to our aerification schedule, we did not need people to flag, had a more uniform application, and used less fertilizer. This platform also provided us with maps of applications, creating more info to save for our site history.

The next thing we integrated was daily drone photography. We used the Greensight drone service to create a flight map and

continued page 6

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fly the drone remotely on a daily 20-minute trip around the property. I needed to get an unmanned aircraft part 107 license, and I kept an eye on the bird as it made its journey. This flight would return three images of the course in around two hours — a normal photo, thermal photo, and an NDVI (plant health) photo. We used these photos for visual aid when making irrigation decisions or planning out a chemical application. We could zero in on the areas that showed drier or wetter conditions, and when placing an in-ground soil sensor in these areas, we fine-tuned the volume and intervals that an area could take. This created more documentation for us to prepare for seasonal conditions, to reason why we had a difference in one year to the next and show progress over time.

Naturally, trying out robotic mowers was the next reasonable thing to do! Hillcrest is surrounded by a neighborhood where noise restrictions would make it challenging to get areas mowed before member play. We started with the Husqvarna auto mowers on our driving range, short course, and practice green surrounds. These areas could not be mowed before 7 a.m. with the noise restriction, but opened for member play at 7 a.m., so it was impossible not to disrupt those on the putting green with a push mower later in the day. We would need to schedule team members to come in earlier to get the driving range rough mowed and it was a lot to coordinate, but the robotic mowers made it easy. We put a base station on the driving range house and ran power for the mower charging docks off to the side of the range. Using the mobile app, you map areas for the mower to mow or stay out of and set it on a desired schedule. The mowers go out to work and

return to the charging station and we would get an app alert if the mower needed any help. This allowed us to be ready for member play, alleviated machine damage in smaller areas, and was safer than human operators when mowing slopes on the course. We could send the mowers out sooner after a rainstorm; it reduced disease pressure driven by leaf wetness, and allowed our team to focus on the acres of landscape that needed pruning. If there was an event that night, we could park the mowers from the mobile app and send them back out in the same way when ready.

This may sound like more than what you need to make your golf course shine, but one of any of the above might allow you more peace of mind or a little less time spent at work. If putting an in-ground soil sensor helps you check for ice in the winter without having to snowshoe out and dig a hole, it might be something to explore. Tracking water inputs in the West is incredibly important because we are always in threat of drought, so having data to show you are a steward of the land can be valuable. If you make a lot of foliar applications and spend a lot of time picking up flags for marking passes, maybe it's time to upgrade. Some sprayers can be retrofitted to the newer technology and the return on investment will be instant. There are a lot of options for soil moisture mapping, like drone photography or machine attachments, so understand what you want to get out of taking these readings and what you will do with them before overcommitting. Robotic mowers come in a variety of sizes now but aren't meant to take any jobs away. With labor always being a concern, it can help you get more done with less or get to those fine details that you couldn't before.

Embrace technology on the golf course, it is only meant to help you!



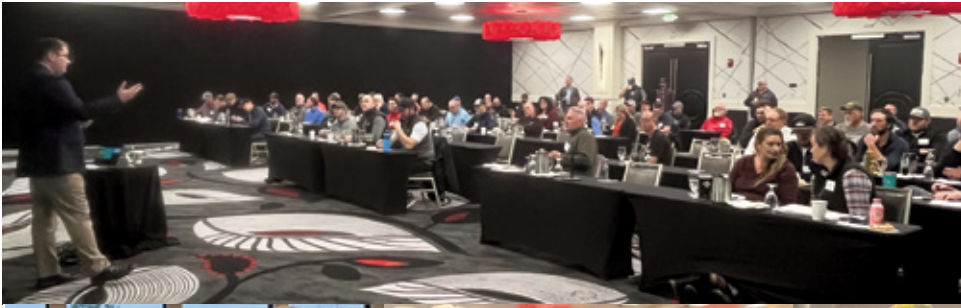
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Moderated by Dan Frederiksen

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