

## NYSTA 2010 Turfgrass Advocacy Day

**T**he New York State Turfgrass Association's Turfgrass Advocacy Day, held on March 10 in Albany, proved to be one of our most successful lobby day events. All who attended were impressed by the detailed organization of the event and effective communication of NYSTA's issues. Fifty-eight attendees made 64 legislative visits to discuss a variety of issues including the New York Farm Viability Institute,

PGA of America CEO who said that given the fiscal crisis facing New York's budget, he was concerned that the game of golf could be indirectly affected by cutbacks. He summarized the results of "The New York Golf Economy Report" which was commissioned by Golf 20/20 for the New York Golf Task Force and prepared by SRI International. The report shows golf's financial impact was \$5.3 billion in 2007 and supplied more than 56,000 jobs. We were honored to have him join us along with attendees representing the Central, Metropolitan, Northeastern, and Western New York PGA sections.

Joe Bertino, Executive Director of the Western New York PGA, thanked us for the experience and "allowing the PGA of America and its New York State section to share in your wonderful advocacy day in Albany. It was truly an honor to be part of the efforts, and I sincerely hope that you are successful in accomplishing the legislative goals your members so professionally presented to our regional politicians. We know that the efforts of your members are vital to the success of each and every golf facility and the resulting enjoyment of the game of golf by players statewide!"

The day started with a breakfast where participants listened to the opening remarks made by NYSTA President Greg Chorvas and Past President, Steve Griffen. This was followed by a presentation from Jeff Lane of The Vandervort Group, the lobbyist for the New York Alliance for Environmental Concerns. He spoke about the current legislative climate and budget issues.

Participants then had the opportunity to review issues and advocacy strategy. NYSTA past president, Steve Griffen,



*Senator Darrel Aubertine, Chair of the New York State Senate Agriculture Committee, addressed participants at NYSTA's 2010 Turfgrass Advocacy Day.*

the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund, pesticide regulations for schools, adoption of a state definition of IPM, The New York Golf Economy Report, using less than pesticide label rates, and water withdrawal permitting.

Senator Darrel Aubertine, Chair of the New York State Senate Agriculture Committee, was this year's luncheon speaker. He said that golf is an important industry that plays a major part of the Capital Region economy. Another highlight was the presentation by Joseph Steranka, World Golf Foundation Chairman and

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Co-owner of Saratoga Sod Farm, Inc., presented information on the New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI). NYFVI is dedicated to serving agricultural and horticultural producers by supporting applied research, education, information transfer, technology adoption and market analysis to reduce practical barriers to the success of agricultural and horticultural enterprises.

Funded turfgrass projects include \$80,000 for "Developing Accelerated Sod Production Methods" and \$40,000 for "Reducing Sod Losses from Annual Bluegrass." These studies were conducted by Dr. A. Martin Petrovic with Cornell University. Additional funding in the amount of \$198,948 was awarded to Dr. Daniel Peck, Cornell University, for "Curbing the Economic and Environmental Impacts of Invasive Crane

the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund. The 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09 New York State Budgets included a \$175,000 appropriation. Restoration of this funding of \$175,000 in the 2010-11 budget is needed so research to enhance environmental stewardship in New York State can continue.

The use of "Less than Label Rates" was once again on the agenda for this year's Advocacy Day. I had the opportunity to brief participants on this bill which permits commercial applicators to apply pesticides in a dosage, concentration or frequency less than that specified on the labeling. NYSTA's perspective is that turfgrass managers who are trained, licensed commercial pesticide applicators need the flexibility to apply less than label rates in order to aid their ability to reduce overall pesticide use and adopt a progressive turfgrass IPM



Fly Pests on Production Sod Farms." NYSTA recommends restoration in the New York State Budget of \$4.5 million in cuts to NYFVI reappropriations for fiscal years 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09. We also recommend \$1.5 million in new funding for 2010-11, a 54% cut from previous years.

NYSTA President, Greg Chorvas, presented background information on

program. We recommend asking the legislature to support bill number A7600 (Magee) that creates a new section in the Environmental Conservation Law that allows for using "less than label rates." The day after Advocacy Day, Senator Carl Marcellino introduced a Senate version of Magee's bill. This new bill number is S7087.

*(left to right) Larry Wilson, New York Alliance for Environmental Concerns Chairman; Tom Wright, NYSTA board member; Steve Griffen, NYSTA Past President; Greg Chorvas, NYSTA President; Joseph Potrikus, CSFM, NYSTA board member; Joseph Steranka, PGA of America CEO; Michael Maffei, CGCS, NYSTA Past President; Rick Holfoth, NYSTA Secretary/Treasurer.*

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I also presented information on "Water Withdrawal Permitting." The purpose of this bill is to authorize the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to implement a water withdrawal permitting program to regulate the use of the State's water resources. Current New York State law requires entities with the capability of withdrawing 100,000 gallons per day to file an annual report of daily water usage and pay a \$50 fee. This bill expands the existing water supply permit program that would require entities that have the capacity to withdraw a minimum of 100,000 gallons per day to obtain a permit from the DEC. The current reporting

law would be repealed.

Following the review, participants had the opportunity to meet with their legislators and discuss the issues. After the appointments, attendees reconvened for lunch to hear addresses by Senator Darrel A u b e r t i n e and Joseph Steranka. With the increasing climate of frustration by constituents who

feel that government is unresponsive to their concerns, many were relieved to have the opportunity to conduct rational, orderly discussions with their legislators that will have a positive impact on the turf industry. As Charles Robson, Executive

Director of the Metropolitan PGA wrote, "I just wanted to say thank you to everyone for an incredible job in putting the meetings and sessions together. I know from our perspective, it was a special experience and one that we were proud to be a part of. I also want to say a special thank you to Joe Steranka and the PGA of America and their support team for lending some invaluable experience, credibility and passion to the New York State presentations. I hope our organizations will continue to work closely together. I thought this was a great example of a state-wide commitment to the game and the industry and how we are stronger when our associations are allied and communicating for mutual goals and benefits."

Even though you may not have been able to attend Advocacy Day, consider visiting your Assemblyman or Senator in their district offices or writing them discussing these issues. Either way, get involved and work towards protecting our industry. All of the information you need on the various issues can be accessed on NYSTA's web site at [www.nysta.org](http://www.nysta.org).

I'd like to acknowledge the following sponsors who helped make this successful event possible: Helena Chemical, New York State Lawn care Association, Metropolitan Golf Association, Grassland Equipment & Irrigation Corp., RISE-Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, Nassau Suffolk Landscape Gardeners Association, Dow Agro Sciences and The Sullivan County Challenge 10th Annual Golf Tournament.

Be sure to join us next year in Albany!

**Michael Maffei, CGCS,**  
**New York State Turfgrass Association**

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