

February 24, 2021 Turf Breakout Questionnaire Responses

These are responses collected from a questionnaire distributed during the February 24, 2021 Turf Breakout Meeting.

(*Note: Different colors are different responses)

Do you have any feedback on the updated Non-Golf Turf Conservation Program?

No, as long as everyone realizes how important golf is to the economy in Arizona

We need to stick to the science that turf based efficiency factor is 75% -- not 80% -- as what the industry can reasonably achieve on a sustainable basis, which has consistently been the message from scientists like Dr. Brown.

Focus on getting more facilities within compliance. Specifically, there are a lot of HOA's that remain unaccounted for.

Do you have any feedback on the Golf Turf Conservation Program proposal package?

I believe that the proposed requirements will hurt the golf industry, hotel industry, restaurant industry and all other industries tied to tourism. The water restrictions are becoming unobtainable and not meeting the needs of the tourists that AZ is in need of. The 80% efficiency is not realistic and needs to be re-evaluated. Golf is a year round sport in AZ and the restrictions need to take that into consideration as well as the weather. Last year was one of the hottest, driest summers on record and variances in the weather need to be taken into consideration when allocations are decided.

Returning to science-based decisions. We have an ongoing challenge in the conversations of what the science tells us the turf base rate should be. Of particular priority is the 75% efficiency factor -- not 80% -- as what the industry can reasonably achieve on a sustainable basis, which has consistently been the message from scientists like Dr. Brown.

Please take into consideration the scientific input regarding turf base rates, specifically the efficiency factor at 75% and not 80%. Second, please consider developing a plan that is appropriately tailored and incorporates conservation measures that many in the golf industry have implemented.

No, just make sure each property has the proper allotment for water, some have already been saving and if you cut back the same on everyone some courses might not have enough.

Capturing the efficiencies currently in place at many Arizona golf courses should be the goal. We should develop a plan that is appropriately tailored and incorporates the sophisticated conservation measures that many in the industry have implemented.

1. The current proposal incentivizes changes to overseeding to reduce groundwater more so than reducing turf acreage. I recommend to continue putting the focus first on reducing turf acreage to achieve groundwater savings. A plan that includes a gradual phasing of turf reduction will accomplish more groundwater savings over time than one focused on changing overseeding practices.

2. Make science-based decisions. The golf industry is a lower water user compared to other sectors/subsectors. Additionally, more people will be paying attention to these plans in the future (this one but also if we continue with more MP's). Therefore, these plans need to be precise: based on sound science with clear paths forward. Adjusting rates to fit totals and adding in workarounds is not a path we want to continue down. It will lead to greater confusion and inequitable consequences.

3. We need to establish an "end-state" for golf turf users, even if just temporary. As mentioned, with the industry being a low water user, there are some golf facilities that are at that borderline of being able to further reduce water while keeping it economically reasonable. These MP's are getting pushed through on short timelines and there is a limit to what facilities on the advanced end of conservation can achieve in such short time-frames.

This information was gathered by the Arizona Department of Water Resources.

Does this only affect golf courses not using reclaimed water?

I asked the question about landscape water and limiting it to 18 acres. I know for a fact there are many golf courses in Arizona that still have 125, 150 and even one I am working with is 200 acres of turf. The statement that the ADWR plants don't need water after the first couple of years is false. They are low-water use, not no water use. Also, what about all of the existing trees in these areas that will need water. Plus, we will be converting turf to plants and if those plants die, the adjacent homeowners will be even more upset. Something more needs to be done to encourage and work with these facilities to convert their turf. They just can't turn off the water in the far limits of the rough. One course was already cited by ADEQ for fugitive dust so they had to turn the water back on. Think about a system like we do for our taxes where clubs can itemize their water use. Everyone takes the full credit, which in this case is 18 acres, but if you have more you document it so you get the right taxes done correctly. Another question has to deal with golf courses that recently implemented conservation efforts already and invested millions to modify irrigation, convert turf to low-water use landscape, but because there was nothing in place they still fall short of the new 5MP water allotments. Again, is there consideration for a reprieve for these clubs. I know of one that took out 41 acres of turf?

After attending several meeting with the ADWR and the Arizona Alliance for Golf I really think it's important for the dept. to remained focused on the science. The dept. seems to have confidence in Dr. Paul Browns numbers and research which clearly shows that the efficiency rate should be 75% and not the 80% that the dept. is still proposing. 80% is not sustainable according to Dr. Brown. Additionally, the golf industry has implemented a large number of efficiency measures in the last 20 years to improve water use and conservation that I think needs to be taken into consideration. Lastly, I think I saw that the AG sector has a BMP sub-committee but I'm not certain what the role and purpose of that committee is but is there any reason why the golf industry can't create a BMP sub-committee who can work hand in hand regularly with the ADWR and create recommendations and make decisions that are in the best interest of the dept. (who has the goal of reducing groundwater) and the industry who is doing an excellent job of managing water.

The technical data being used is flawed by Dr. Brown's own admission. With the massive impact the 5th management plan will have on the economy of golf in Arizona, the proposal should be based on "solid" science and the efficiency factor for irrigation systems should be based on achievable percentages. I also completely disagree with the suggestion that larger acreage course be singled out for savings. I manage both a desert style course (56 total turf acres) and a traditional parkland style course built in the early 60's (150 total turf acres) at the same property. Water use is managed to a high degree and many projects have been completed to further reduce water use. While there are opportunities for continued reductions the cost to do so is prohibitive and would potentially destroy the character and integrity of that course. The state should provide some type of funding to assist with these measures if the become mandates.

Do you have any other questions/comments not addressed above?

I noticed on your calculator there is no more allotment past 126 acres is this the way it should be or is it a mistake?
Is there a different calculator for Executive courses?
Is the 65 acre over seeding included in the calculator?
What if we don't over seed 65 acres?
Do we remove that from the calculator?
Are they going to give the courses time to convert turf without penalty after 2025?
Is there still going to be flex accounts/savings for dry years?

Golf drives the AZ economy by over 4 billion