

## TPI Represents Turfgrass Industry In Washington D.C.

### NATIONAL TURFGRASS FEDERATION *Advancing Turfgrass Science for Society*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On Oct. 29-30, 2008, the board of directors of the National Turfgrass Federation (NTF) met in Washington, DC with federal officials and Congressional staff to discuss items of interest to the turfgrass industry. The group also met to discuss NTF and how the organization can advance issues important to the turf industry. Representing the turfgrass industry:

- Kirk Hunter, Turfgrass Producers International (TPI)
- Dr. Mike Kenna, U.S. Golf Association (USGA)
- Kevin Morris, National Turfgrass Federation (NTF)
- Dr. Clark Throssell, Golf Course Superintendents Assn of America (GCSAA)
- Dr. Brian Horgan, University of Minnesota
- Tom Delaney, Professional Landcare Network (PLANET)
- Kris Kiser, Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI)
- John Farner, Irrigation Association (IA)
- Bill Behan and Dr. Mark Schmidt, John Deere

The group met with Dr. Tom Bewick, USDA-Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES), National Program Leader for Horticulture. Discussions centered around the Specialty Crops Research Initiative included in the 2007 Farm Bill which allows crops, other than major program crops (i.e. corn, wheat, soybeans, etc.), the opportunity to request research dollars. This is the first significant opportunity for turfgrass researchers to compete for federal research funding. One turfgrass project (Biosolid use in sod production – University of Wisconsin & Virginia Tech) was selected and was in fact, rated the highest of any project. Bewick indicated that \$50 – \$100 million will be available for funding next year.

#### National turfgrass survey proposed

The group also met with Jorge Garcia-Pratts, Douglas Marousek and Lance Honig from the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) which collects and reports annual (and sometimes monthly) data for many agricultural and horticultural crops. The only segment of the turf industry that has been surveyed nationally is the sod industry, as a portion of horticultural crops surveyed. The group was interested in the possibility of a national survey of the entire turfgrass industry, its size, scope and economic value, similar to surveys that have been conducted by several states. Since NASS has statisticians in each state, they indicated an interest in conducting such a survey after they have determined the scope, breadth and funding required.

#### Funds for turfgrass research

The National Turfgrass Research Initiative (NTRI) was the focus of a meeting with Dr. Ed Knipling, Administrator, (USDA)-Agricultural Research Service (ARS).



NTRI is a plan to conduct high priority, long-term turfgrass research within ARS. NTRI was also mentioned in the Farm Bill as a high priority research initiative. The group expressed their gratitude to Dr. Knipling for his support and discussed how to move forward and increase funding. A follow-up meeting also took place with West Higginbotham, Legislative Assistant for Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Fitz Elder, Agriculture Appropriations staff director for Sen. Robert Bennett (R-UT) during which the need for a national turfgrass survey and funding was also discussed.

#### WaterSense for new home construction

Two meetings addressing the draft specifications of EPA's WaterSense program for new home construction were also conducted. This federal program is designed to reduce water use and protect the environment. At issue are current draft specifications that are problematic as they contain several provisions that either limit the amount of turf in the landscape, or restrict implementation of sound water conservation measures. A discussion with Kristen Brainerd, Rep. Jim Costa's staff (D-CA-20th) was followed with a meeting with Lacey Kiriakou, staff to Congressman George Radanovich (R-CA-19th). Both House members are leaders of the Congressional Water Caucus. During these conversations the group expressed concerns regarding draft specs and how the turf industry and Congress might work with the EPA to make revisions based on sound science.

#### Follow-up action steps

On Oct. 30, NTF held its semi-annual board of directors meeting of which TPI's executive director, Kirk Hunter is a member. The board discussed the previous day's meetings and determined follow-up actions. NTF will retain a lobbyist to work on issues for the coming year and develop a strategic plan for 2009. The NTF board of directors plans to meet again in March 2009 to visit with Congress and members of the new Administration.

### Cruise Ship Features "The Lawn Club" with **REAL** Turf



[Celebrity Cruises](#) announced an industry first for its upcoming [Celebrity Solstice](#) scheduled to debut in late 2008: a 1/2-acre lawn for sports and relaxation. "The Lawn Club," on the top-most deck, will feature live growing grass (not artificial turf) and a full-time grounds-keeper.

The area is three times larger than Rockefeller Center's ice skating rink and more than two times the size of Centre Court at Wimbledon's All England Lawn Tennis Club.



In addition to simply soaking up the sun or reading a book, The Lawn Club will also feature two bocce ball courts and a putting green.



[www.celebritysolstice.com](http://www.celebritysolstice.com)