

It is our goal to provide playing surfaces and facilities that are maintained at a level that is consistent with the demands of our patrons and falls within the realm of our budget and labor constraints. We strive to achieve safety for participants and fields that are both playable and also sustainable. This task is not easily achieved, given the volume of games, practices, tournaments and our never ending battle with the weather. 2007 was one of the hottest, driest summers that I have experienced in 30+ years of turf management. In reality, drastic weather conditions will undoubtedly be in our future.

On the opposite side of the coin, an over abundance of rainfall, or a large rain event can cause even more problems than drought conditions. When fields reach their saturation point they are easily damaged and costly to repair. That's when games get cancelled. Rectifying a drainage problem isn't simple. When a field has to be taken out of play it usually requires an investment of intense labor, specialized equipment plus costly materials and supplies. Even fields with good drainage systems begin to fail over time. Taking a field out of play increases the wear and tear on the other fields that must compensate for the downed field.

We need your cooperation, understanding and help when it comes to managing the fields. During 2008 an additional five fields will be coming on line throughout different times of the year. The five new fields will still require some coaxing to get them from a juvenile state to where they can meet our everyday needs.

As a reminder, the soil that makes up the five new fields will continue to settle for many years. There are many areas that were filled with ten feet of soil, other areas had twelve feet of soil and stone removed. The result will be areas where water pools, stones migrate upward and a playing surface that is not always as smooth as we might want. Over time these problematic details will disappear and a high quality fields will emerge.

**Field Cancellation:** It is not in either party's best interest to cancel games, but when necessary, here are some of the many steps that we take into consideration. We start by asking questions and looking for answers. Remember player safety, field playability and field sustainability is our goals, in that order.

#### **1. Rainfall**

- a. When was the last rainfall, last night, yesterday, last week, three weeks ago?
- b. How much did it rain/drizzle: 1 inch, 3 inches, more?
- c. When is it supposed to rain: morning, afternoon, tonight, tomorrow?
- d. We keep a daily log to record the amount of rain that falls at Karst. This provides specific site rain totals rather than area averages.
- e. A good indicator that the fields are too wet is when the water comes up on the toe of your shoe when you step onto the field.

#### **2. Sunshine and Wind**

- a. Sunny skies and steady wind 15-20 miles per hour will do wonders to dry a field after 6-8 hours.
- b. In many cases if it rains 1 inch or less the night before and the fields are not saturated from previous rain totals then they can dry during the day with brisk wind and moderate sun & temperature.

#### **3. Thunderstorms:**

- a. Obviously thunder, lightning and rain coming down sideways is not a good time to be on the fields.
- b. Referees have the responsibility to clear their fields during thunderstorms.

#### 4. Field Slope/Drainage

- a. The field nearest Grandview School formerly field 7, renumbered as field (8) dries much faster than any of the other fields. This is because it was designed differently than the other fields, and at a much greater cost.
- b. The slope of each field varies and can take longer for surface water run off of the field.

#### 5. Small Players

- a. Children pose less of threat concerning field damage than larger players or adults. We will sometimes allow children's activities to occur when other games or practices have been cancelled.

#### 6. Traveling Teams

- a. In the past we have allowed travel teams to play our home teams when fields are certainly not in ideal conditions.
- b. The time lag between teams leaving their town or city on their way to Karst can be several hours.
- c. It can be terrible weather at Karst and guest teams come from towns with perfectly good weather when they left.
- d. If it appears that incoming rainfall could potentially lead to the cancellation of games, then we will try to make that decision as early as possible in the day. However, if weather radar and forecasts are inconclusive then we have set 3:00 pm as the deadline to call off play which coincides with the end of the work day for park/soccer field maintenance staff.

#### 7. Field Maintenance:

- a. Bluegrass, Rye and Turf Type Tall Fescue, fall into the category of **cool season grasses**. This terminology refers primarily to the period in which they build roots, rhizomes, tillers and heal from the ravages of summer heat and drought, disease and insect damage.
- b. September - October, April - May, are the ideal months for the cool season grasses to repair their physiology.
- c. Imagine your home lawn after last summer's toll and add the relentless wear and tear of practices, games and tournaments.
- d. The failure rate for fields under these conditions is high, but we have managed to provide good fields, but definitely not the best.

#### 8. Sod vs. Seed

- a. The soil temperatures are usually so cold that grass seed will not germinate after the fall season. If and when seed germinates the new shoots are dislodged and torn from the soil during spring season.
- b. The larger bare areas that we sod in November provide the only means to protect muddy areas for the spring season. The long cold temperatures of winter don't allow the sod to achieve a healthy root system in the spring. The sod usually wears out much faster than the rest of the field, but it also identifies the areas of intense play from the previous year.

**9. Field Renovation:**

- a. Field restoration can be as simple as airfying along with some light over seeding and fertilizer. By contrast, total renovation is an entirely different process.
- b. Total renovation was completed to Fields 5 & 6 when we converted them to Bermuda grass in the summer of 2006.
- c. Bermuda grass is in the category of **warm season grasses**, which means that the vast majority of its growth occurs during the hottest part of the summer and field usage is at a minimum.
- d. Our first attempt was made using sprigs of Bermuda grass. Sprigs are pieces of a Bermuda grass plant that are spread onto the field and they hopefully take root.
- e. The first attempt failed, the sprigs froze out in Jan.07 when temperatures rose into the 70's for several weeks and then plunged to the single digits, and it was not a good outcome.
- f. The second attempt was started with a herbicide to knock out any remaining Bermuda grass, Bluegrass, or rye grass.
- g. We allowed the adult Frisbee league on the two fields to assist in ripping and dislodging the dead turf from the soil.
- h. We followed this up with re-grading, sowing three varieties of cold tolerant Bermuda grass, fertilizing and lots of water.
- i. The Bermuda fields appeared to be in good condition at the end of 2007 year.

**10. New Field Numbering System:**

Field 1 = Field 1      Field 2 = Field 2      Field 3 = Field 3      Field 4 = Field 4  
Gulley Field = Field 5      Field 5 = Field 6      Field 6 = Field 7      Field 7 = Field 8

**11. Four New Fields:**

|                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Southeast Field = Field 9  | Northeast Field = Field 10 |
| Southwest Field = Field 11 | Northwest Field = Field 12 |

**Please direct questions or comments to:**

Chuck Stephenson  
Administrator  
Monroe County Parks and Recreation Department  
Bloomington, Indiana 47404  
Phone: 812-349-2804  
Fax: 812-349-2899  
Email: [cstephenson@co.monroe.in.us](mailto:cstephenson@co.monroe.in.us)