

Title: Sports Turf Management Resource to address Child Safe Playing Fields Act

Project Type: Implementation

Project Leaders:

Frank S. Rossi, Turfgrass Extension Program Leader, Department of Horticulture, Cornell University. 607.255.1629, fsr3@cornell.edu
Joann Gruttadaurio, Former Senior Extension Associate, Department of Horticulture, Cornell University. 607.220.7055. jg17@cornell.edu

Advisory committee:

Tamson Yeh, Cornell Cooperative Extension Suffolk County, Riverhead, NY.
Rose Baglia, Cornell Cooperative Extension Orange County, Middletown, NY
Jim Sutton, Grounds Manager, Middletown CSD, Middletown, NY
Gena Gatto, Grounds Manager, Monroe-Woodbury CSD, Central Valley, NY
Jody Rogers, Director of Parks and Recreation, Town of Cicero, Cicero, NY

Abstract:

The desire to have safe functional fields remains a top priority for all school and community stakeholders. The additional use by outside groups continues to increase resulting in a reduction in field quality and safety.

Greater expertise is needed to meet these challenging conditions while complying with the statewide Child Safe Playing Fields Act which limits applications of pesticides and the new law which impacts fertilizer use.

There is a critical need across the state for a user-friendly management resource that emphasizes best management cultural practices and encourages the adoption of IPM principles for sports and recreational fields. This resource will be beneficial to more grounds managers and users if it is accessible via a website where the information can also be printed on demand.

Background and Justification:

Sports turf management textbooks exist, but are out of date and often too technical for grounds managers to use or they lack the time to do so, as well as financial resources for purchase.

Background and Justification-continued:

A useful resource: *Sports Field Management: Maintaining Safe Sports Fields* (Gruttadaurio) was developed in 2008. Much has changed since that time in NYS which has adopted new laws that impact fertilizer practices and the use of pesticides on school grounds.

A new “management tool”, one with a step-wise, clearly stated cultural approach, is needed to provide guidance in dealing with pest pressure and environmental concerns and to build field management goals that are long term rather than reactive band aids.

Sports turf managers who care for school properties and our community fields need to be able to embrace a non-product driven strategy for long term field improvement and healthy turf, including IPM principles and learn how to adapt them to their particular situation/ operation.

The resource would provide clear non-ambiguous strategies to common challenges such as managing insect and disease pressure without traditional chemical controls and maximizing fertilizer efficiency while reducing overall inputs.

This resource will help grounds managers learn how to communicate with budget decision makers, maintenance staff, coaches, end-users and the public on the importance of adopting recommended best management practices.

Objective:

To develop an innovative, up-to-date, research-based sports turf resource accessible in a variety of electronic formats for various audiences. This resource will clearly address how to develop and implement a Sports Turf Management plan that provides safe playing fields.

Procedures:

▣ **Identify the most useful elements** in the reference: *Sports Field Management: Maintaining Safe Sports Fields* that can be incorporated into this resource.

▣ **Involve an advisory group** of sports turf managers, administrators, community stakeholders and cooperators who can provide “real world” perspective of management issues and who are most in need of this information.

▣ **Update cultural management practices** including new approaches to fertilizing fields, the use of different turf species and varieties for high use fields, improving irrigation practices that promote turf health and minimize pest pressure.

▣ **Identify and evaluate the latest science-based IPM practices or alternative practices** being explored by other research institutions that will help achieve project goals.

Procedures - continued:

□ **Outline the latest alternative approaches** to pest management of key sports turf insect and weed pests.

□ **Identify and involve innovators** who are currently field testing some IPM principles that show promise which can be used as case studies to encourage adoption.

□ **Work with the website designer and developer.**

□ **Provide a plan** to launch this new resource to stakeholders.

Progress to date, we have:

□ had several meetings with the website designer and developer to determine the website structure, functionality, content options, etc., and have decided on a draft template.

□ identified the most useful elements in the reference: *Sports Field Management: Maintaining Safe Sports Fields* and have begun to identify topics, issues to be addressed.

□ begun to identify the latest science-based IPM practices or alternative practices that can be incorporated into the resource.

□ have solicited from the Advisory committee and key Extension Educators who work with the intended audiences the current questions/issues/challenges facing the intended audiences.

Once completed this on-line Sports Field Management resource will be

- housed on the Cornell Turfgrass Team website and linked to the IPM website
- ready to use as the cornerstone resource for educational outreach programs
- easily accessible to a wide-range of end users
- the place to learn of updates to the Child Safe Playing Fields Act
- the place to find the latest Cornell turfgrass management recommendations