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Lake chemical killed golf greens

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Written by Chris Mayhew

ALEXANDRIA — Campbell County has identified the chemical responsible for killing the greens at A.J. Jolly Golf Course.

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The county-run golf course was shut down early for the season Aug. 13 after the greens on all 18 holes were damaged.

Flouridone, a chemical normally only used around and in the lake at A.J Jolly Park, killed the greens, said Campbell County Administrator Robert Horine.

The chemical is an herbicide used to weeds or algae that grow in ponds, Horine said.

“It is a mystery to us that we have not been able to solve as to how flouridone was found to be on the greens,” he said.

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Initial testing of soil and grass samples from the greens found nothing, and further test results received around Aug. 28 found the presence of flouridone, he said. The chemical basically bleaches plant material and causes it to turn white and stop growing, Horine said. That’s exactly what happened to the greens, he said.

“It’s not anything we use on the greens, fairways or tees,” Horine said. “The bottom line is we have no idea how this product was found to be present on the greens.”

The courses’ greens superintendent has been at A.J. Jolly for 23 years and has never had anything like this happen before, Horine said.

Grass has already been replanted on the greens, he said.

“We have grass growing on the greens right now, and we’re making

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good progress toward the restoration of the greens, and fully expect we'll back in full operation early next year, but the work continues, Horine said.

The cost of the fixing the damage, and the fiscal impact of the course being closed early this year is still being assessed, he said. Each year the county provides additional support for the golf course out of the county budget. The 2012 budget included \$155,000 of program support for the golf course.

"We will probably increase that program support number," Horine said.

Audience members at the Aug. 5 fiscal court meeting in Alexandria questioned county officials about the cost of the golf course damage.

Ken Moellman Sr., of California, said he wanted to know an estimated cost of the repairs of the greens. Moellman also asked if anyone has been disciplined.

Campbell County Judge-executive Steve Pendery said the repairs are not complete yet.

"The details are not ready to be told just yet because it's not over," Pendery said.

There is still not any good evidence of how the chemical reached the greens, so there is nobody to discipline, he said.

Horine said the greens are 50 years old and were originally built by the county road department. The fiscal court did decide not to reconstruct the greens, he said.

"We're doing the most cost-effective thing which is simply reseeding the existing greens," Horine said.

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