



Third Golf and The Environment Conference

Cooperate or Agitate, Issue is Here to Stay

BY JOEL JACKSON, CGCS

The third Golf and The Environment conference took place in Orlando last December. This series of annual meetings by people representing the golf industry and those representing major environmental groups has been educational for both camps. It has provided a forum where understanding and dialogue can occur without mud slinging and rhetoric getting in the way.

While contrasts and concerns were voiced in the various panel discussions, there were also points of concession and acknowledgement in statements by and or about each others' viewpoints. The GCSAA was represented by Steve Mona, Joe O'Brien, Dave Bishop, Kim Heck and former government relations liaison, Cynthia Smith. Speaking on behalf of Florida superintendents were Ron Andrews of Grand Harbor (Wetlands) and Gary Meyers of Disney (Water Quality and Quantity). There were other golf industry folks there as well including, architects Mike Hurdzan, Jan Beljan and Mark McCumber. The media was represented by The Golf Channel, *USA Today*, *Golf Digest*, *Golfdom* and *Golfweek*.

"The flavor of G&E group will be changing," said O'Brien, "because they can see golf course superintendents are willing and in many cases already do the right thing. So now the focus needs to be on education of others and that will be a topic to be pursued."

The GCSAA, under the leadership of Information Services Manager Dave Bishop, has been fine-tuning a voluntary data collection project that was a pilot project this past year. They will be trying to get it online and more user friendly in 1999.

Real use and exposure-risk data is going to play a very important role in how EPA deals with pesticides used in non-food crop use. It will be imperative that superintendents be prepared to share their chemical application records to



GCSAA's Joe O'Brien poses the question, "Where do we go from here?" to the attendees of the 3rd Golf and The Environment conference in Orlando. Photo by Joel Jackson.

document reality instead of letting EPA make overly conservative default assumptions. I have heard over and over again from superintendents claiming less and less use of pesticides. It is getting to be time to prove it with a reliable data-collection system.

Here are some of the other comments and concerns from the conference:

Welcome

Terry Minger, Center for Resource Management (Host): "The old verbs like legislate, litigate and agitate are out. Now is the time to cooperate, facilitate and disseminate and even celebrate. We are shaping the next generation. Have we picked all the easy low hanging fruit? The curve will get steeper as we progress."

Paul Parker, Center for Resource Management (Host): "The meeting in Pebble Beach was tense but productive. In Pinehurst we had 22 groups endorse the Environmental Principles. We have seen new projects like Widow's Walk and retrofit projects like the Presidio use them. Now here in Orlando we

strengthen trust and relationship and set objectives for a national agenda."

State of the Environment

Daniel Botkin, Center for the Study of the Environment, Keynote Speaker: "Henry Thoreau viewed nature as it affects man and how it benefited man in every way. Modern environmentalists often take themselves too seriously and are too puritanical. On the other hand golfers also often take the game and course conditions too seriously. People who work in nature often have a truer relationship with nature than the idealists who have expectations but no practical experience."

Paul Portney, Resources for the Future: "State of the Environment. Better than during World War II. Air Quality — lead content down 95 percent and sulfur dioxide down 30 to 60 percent; Water Quality - some improvements depending on area. Philadelphia, New York, Detroit, Chicago improved. Chesapeake Bay in trouble; Hazardous waste and solid waste disposal better than in

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**Mike Hurdzan
Golf Design Group**

the 1970s; Less progress in wetlands management. 25 percent loss in last 200 years. Florida, Georgia and Minnesota greatest losses. Warnings: Water availability will be a critical problem. Population shifts like those to the Southwest. Water quality concerns from runoff of non-point sources.

Bart Blackwelder, Friends of the Earth: "Two issues. Urban Sprawl and Food Safety. Sprawl drains energy and resources. Food affects global economy. May depend on foreign food sources. What are their safety measures?"

Climate change, global warming: Weather events costing \$1 billion a week in damages. Energy sources — The Federal budget is skewed. Fossil fuels are subsidized to the tune of 65 percent. Renewable source development only gets 14 percent of funding."

State of Golf

Bob Maxon, *Golf Digest*: "There are 16,010 golf courses in the U.S. 11,000 or 70 percent are public, not private elitist courses. Many super ranges/practice facilities are being built. More and more management companies are taking over operations. Lots of mergers, diversification and reorganizations. We need something beside 7,200-yard designs. Golf needs to be accessible and time effective to prosper and grow."

Mike Hurdzan, Hurdzan Golf Design Group: "Golf needs to be affordable, accessible and sustainable. Sustainability is

the the key issue. Golf courses are challenged to preserve wetlands, water quality, habitat and green space. We must learn to do more with less pesticides, fertilizer and water. We are subjected to needless studies, unrealistic buffer zones and unrealistic management practices."

There were many more presentations that detailed specific projects and accomplishments that showed what can be done when both sides make a commitment to work together for the betterment of the environment.

There were two realities that I took away from the conference. One, it is possible for both sides to agree to disagree and still work together to make progress and reduce the bitterness. Two, the environmental issue is here to stay.

You and your club can chose to be proactive and find ways to participate in the process or you can be dragged kicking and screaming to the table by rules and regulations that you didn't help to write. Educate yourself, your staff, your golfers and your community about what you can and are doing for the environment.

Water Reclamation Project Offers Valuable Lessons

BY PAUL MOSES

Water Specialties, Inc.

Editor's Note: Water resources will be

the number one issue facing golf courses as growth and development continues in Florida. This information is presented for those who may be involved in discussions with state and local water authorities as one example of what can be done. During the drought of 1998, Jacksonville had water pressure problems because development and demand have outraced the system's capacity to deliver the water. Now Jacksonville officials are looking to cut turf and horticulture uses. Even reclaimed water is fast becoming finite resource. You need to talk about this issue with your club officials.

Commercial and agricultural uses for reclaimed water are gaining popularity in municipalities across the country. Formerly forced to pay top dollar for fully treated water, governments and businesses are realizing major benefits from reclaimed water usage.

Additionally, when the indirect benefits to the environment are considered, it's apparent that water reuse is no longer merely an attractive theory, but an environmental and economic necessity.

Many commercial and agricultural water users in West Orange and Southeast Lake counties are seeing dramatic benefits since the inception of their water reclamation project 13 years ago. The project, Water Conserv II, is a cooperative venture among the City of Orlando, Orange County, and the agricultural community.

At 4,000 citrus acres, it is the largest water reuse project of its kind in the world a combination of agricultural irrigation and Rapid Infiltration Basins (RIBs) that divert water into the ground. Water Conserv II was the first water-reuse project in Florida allowed to irrigate crops produced for human consumption with reclaimed water.

The Water Conserv II project is connected to the city's McLeod Road Water Reclamation Facility and the county's South Regional Water Reclamation Facility by a 21-mile transmission pipeline that also runs to the main distribution center in West Orange County. The center distributes reclaimed water to 47 RIB sites on 1,700