Mount Snow first to gain Vermont's approval to build

BY MARK LESLIE
Mount Snow Resort in West Dover, Vt., has won the state's first approval to build a golf course in Vermont. Coming in the wake of the rejection of the years-old Sherman Hollow golf course proposal in Richmond, Vt., Mount Snow's victory may mean a breakthrough for others interested in building courses in the state.

Since Act 250 took effect more than a decade ago to control development, Vermont has been one of the most difficult states in which to win approvals. Mount Snow Director of Golf Jay Morelli attributed the resort's success to Joe Launstein. The Scientific Turf Inc. of Scotia, N.Y., consultant developed an extensive In-Program Pest Management pro-gram for the nine-hole expansion. "Joe Launstein is on the cutting edge of new construction methods. His program includes a lot of organics... plus very localized pesticide use," Morelli said. What Joe did was prove a golf course can be built and opened with no run-off at all... Hats off to Joe. He was our hired gun, the expert. But, it was also very important — from a practical standpoint... to have our new superintendent, Tim Madden, at the hearings. The board wanted to make sure the guy on-site knew what he was doing. Tim had the depth and background to know their answers," Morelli said. Morelli also said one advantage Mount Snow had over Sherman Hollow was complete community support. He said there was no opposition to the course's addition to Mount Snow's 18-hole course, home to one of the largest golf schools in the country. Sherman Hollow had local sup-porters, but it also ran into vocal community opponents.

Two different five-member Act 250 boards handled the Mount Snow and Sherman Hollow applica-tions. Morelli said those "board members are not professional agronomists, and that's where the problem lies." For his part, Launstein pointed out that while there's "no generic IPM out there so that you can take it and rubber stamp it," he said, "The thresholds levels vary and what pesticides can be used varies. The procedure, though, will be standard."

Morelli added that his proposal was developed with input from within the state and Vermont, where a short growing season means less time for grubs to infest and for such things as pythium blight. "Just think of the future," he said. He said using the IPM thresholds, the superintendent monitors conditions with data from three weather stations and checks disease areas, primary and secondary land-ing areas, primary and secondary roughs, out-of-play areas, buffer zones in cases of lakes or ponds, wetlands, et cetera.

"We set fertilization rates and develop parameters for measures to fight pests or disease. The first is cultural control. Second is biological control. Pesticide use is the least," Launstein said. He added that the program could be used anywhere in the country.

Rivervale Realty Co., a subsid-ary of United Water Resources, has reached two agreements to sell a total of 198 acres of golf course land in Haworth, Oradell and Emerson, N.J. The properties will continue to be used as golf courses.

My International, Inc., which operates Haworth Golf and Coun-try Club, has agreed to buy about 74 acres of the club now leases from the realty company, adding it to the 71 acres it already owns. The entire course is in Haworth.

Also, the entire golf course leased to Emerson Country Club by Rivervale Realty will be sold with the absolute assurance of continued operations, forever, as a golf course. This includes 113 acres in Oradell and Emerson. The prospective buyer of the Emerson Country Club property is the same one that hopes to acquire a nearby 100-acre site in the Borough of Emerson to build a new golf course. The sale of the site for the new golf course hinges on state approvals pertaining to about 29 acres.

Laurino said the new course property addresses the public's desire for more green, open space, but added that approved plans for an office and condominium complex on the site serve as a safety net in case the golf course plan fails to win the required approvals.

United Water Resources Chair-man Robert A. Gerber said several of the firm's real-estate holdings have attracted strong market interest for golf course use, contrasting favorably with the soft general real estate market in New Jersey and New York.

The Emerson and Haworth golf courses were transferred in Janu-ary to Rivervale Realty from Hackensack Water Co., another United Water Resources subsidiary. The transfer also included 97 acres in River Vale and Harrington Park, which is leased to the Passaic Golf and Country Club.

As part of its Evergreen Formula, the utility placed permanent deed restrictions on the land before transferring it to ensure its preser-vation for golf courses and related real estate use. The deed re-strictions require future owners of the golf courses to follow environ-mentally responsible practices in managing storm drainage and the use and storage of chemicals. The restrictions also limit the amount of impervious surface (roof surfaces or paved areas other than golf cart paths) permitted at each site.

The Evergreen Formula was written to help meet the recognized need for more green, open space, in northern New Jersey.

"Already this year, through Ever-green and related initiatives, Hackensack Water and Rivervale Realty have played a key role in preserving more than 600 acres of recreational open space," Gerber said.

"We're now working with county and state officials on a second stage of the Evergreen plan, which could save or upgrade hundreds more acres of open space for public parks in Bergen and Hudson counties."

The Evergreen Formula's sec-ond stage established a fund earmarked to benefit water company customers. The utility proposed that the money be used to acquire new open public space in counties served by the water company. Water con-sumers will pay for the program through a usage fee that will replace existing water fees, which are used to preserve additional open space.

Consisting of half the net pro-ceeds of the 1990 land transfer and a long-term golf course lease, the fund is approaching $10 million because of accumulating interest.

"The sale of the Haworth and Emerson country club lands will lend a provision of the 1990 land transfer that could have reduced the acreage protected by the permanent golf course deed restric-tions if certain other Rivervale Rea-lity properties were condemned. The provision, which has not been invoked, pertained to the land only while it remained in Rivervale Realty's ownership and would have expired in 1995. As soon as the transactions are consummated, this provision will be removed and the property will be permanently deed restricted as open space as golf courses."

**California**

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The biggest obstacle opposed CAREFUL, which called for more government-sponsored research and education on the effects of pesticides rather than an immediate ban. While pleased with the outcome, Davies said he firmly be-lieves environmentalists and pesti-cide users can find a common ground.

"Hopefully both of us can have input next time into something that is of benefit to everyone and not devastate the economy," Davies said.

"The trouble has been that everyone is so intent on just proposing the laws. But they're the last people you want writing legislation. If they would just come down off their pedestal, we could come up with something that takes care of everyone."

**Government Update**

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Golf Course News

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