Ariz. law threatens growth

BY PETER BLAIS

Arizona is moving ahead with water conservation plans that include limiting the size of most new, 18-hole golf courses to 90 acres within the water management districts. The Phoenix area, because of its higher temperatures and lower rainfall, is restricted to 120 acres.

Opponents argue that the new laws will hurt tourism, the state's second-largest industry, since smaller courses are generally more difficult to play. That will discourage high handicappers, who make up the bulk of tourist golfers, from visiting the state.

"Normally as a rule of thumb they figure on 130 acres for an 18-hole course. . . . I'm sure that 90 acres is going to be very tight," said Donald Rossi, executive director of the Golf Course Builders of America, who believes that environmental concerns could do more to slow the current nationwide golf boom than any other issue.

"They (state of Arizona) have a water problem and they're trying to do something about it. Water is going to be a big problem, not only in Arizona, but all over the country in another year or two," Rossi said.

Arizona Department of Water Resources Director Bill Plummer signed orders Dec. 5 that provide specific management plans for the Tuscon, Phoenix, Prescott and Pinal County active management areas. The department followed that in late December with 10,000 letters to water rights holders informing them of the new requirements.

The law, which was originally adopted in 1986, affects any course where construction started that year. Its aim is to reduce water usage; keeping design natural; financing goods and MacGregor Golf).

Lessons learned from the technologies that provide specific management plans for every region of the United States.

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Lease one, build two

BY MARK LESLIE

Honolulu could earn a quick $100 million if investors bid on a proposed lease for the just-completed municipal West Loch Golf Course in Ewa.

Mayor Frank Fasi, for years Hawaii's leading critic of foreign investment, has proposed what may be an unprecedented build-lease arrangement. He hopes to lease or sell the course and clubhouse, which cost the city $20 million to build, for $100 million or more and use the profits to build two golf courses plus affordable housing.

The West Loch project sailed through the permit process while private ventures in Honolulu remain mired in the bureaucratic red tape. Officials feel potential developers may be willing to pay the large lease fee rather than tie up funds in the lengthy permit process.

The surprise is that "no one has said that's (amount of money) out of line. Everybody I hear is saying, 'That's reasonable,'" said Dave Mills, administrator for the influence of the professional tour on the market for housing.

Leasing is the major concern of architects

BY MARK LESLIE

Environmental issues running the gamut from wetlands to pesticide use are the most important problems facing golf course architects, according to a Golf Course News survey of the nation's leading architects.

Of the 55 architects who responded to the question of what is the most important issue they face, 37 listed a topic concerning the environment.

Several other issues received from one to seven mentions from architects, including the cost of construction and maintenance; water usage; keeping design natural; financing; obtaining permits; finding qualified help; the speed of play; the distance golfers are hitting the ball; the speed of the greens; and the influence of the professional tour on standards of maintenance.

The overwhelming response that environment was the major concern came from every region of the United States.

Denis Griffiths of Braselton, Ga., decried the continuing high handicap requirements that make construction of new golf courses prohibitively expensive in many areas of the country.