**USGA awards millions in research project grants**

*By Peter Blais*

Pesticide and nutrient fate along with alternative pest management are the primary focus of the 15 research grants the United States Golf Association has decided to fund as part of its most ambitious research effort ever. Contracts potentially worth a total of almost $2.8 million over the next three years will soon be offered to 15 colleges and universities, said USGA Green Section National Director Jim Snow. Some schools are involved in more than one project.

Certain projects, especially those involving pesticide and nutrient fate, will take three years to complete, he added. Some could continue farther into the future. Requests for bid for another $300,000 in research money dealing with golf course benefits will be made this winter. The USGA’s Environmental Research Committee will select the successful proposals at its March meeting, Snow said.

Japanese continue investments

*By GCN staff*

Landmark Land Co.’s anticipated sale of the bulk of its golf and resort assets for approximately $739 million is just the latest of dozens of Japanese golf facility acquisitions in the United States that have put that country’s financiers at the forefront of U.S. golf ownership. According to Mead Ventures, Inc., of Phoenix, Ariz., which provides information on international business, 120 golf course developments totaling about 160 courses in the United States were owned wholly or partly by Japanese companies or their U.S. subsidiaries before the Landmark purchase.

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**Communities finding munis money-makers**

*By Bob Seligman*

A growing number of communities are building municipal golf courses to earn money and provide recreation for their residents. According to Angelo Palermo, vice president of golf course development for the National Golf Foundation, 125 municipal courses were in planning last Dec. 1, as opposed to 85 at the end of 1989. Seventy-two municipal courses were under construction by Dec. 1, 1990, as opposed to 63 at the end of 1989. Thirty-six new municipal courses had opened in 1990 by last Dec. 1, one more than in all of 1989.

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**Beard urges: Speak out on benefits**

*By Peter Blais*

Dr. James Beard exhorted superintendents and others at December’s Ohio Turfgrass Conference and Show to speak out on the “unfounded” attacks against the turfgrass industry. Although turf is beneficial in many ways, it is coming under severe pressure at local, state and national levels by special interest groups ranging from tree and ornamental organizations to water conservation interests to anti-pollution forces. “Trees, shrubs and turf go together,” Beard said. “We’ve got enough problems from other groups without the tree and shrub people coming out against turf. It

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Municipal courses proving profitable across U.S.
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From 1983 to 1989, the number of municipal courses in the United States grew from 2,032 to 2,166 — an increase of 6.6 percent. Daily fee courses grew from 5,915 to 6,296, an increase of 6.4 percent, while private courses grew from 5,137 to 5,276, an increase of only 2.7 percent.

Palermo said 60 percent of golfers are public course players.

"Daily fee and municipal golf courses will never stop," said P.B. Dye, a West Palm Beach, Fla., architect involved with four municipal projects. "There are more people out there than there are golf courses."

"Golf is no longer the sport of the wealthy," said architect Rees Jones of Montclair, N.J., who is designing the Ladies Professional Golf Association's new municipal course in Daytona Beach, Fla. "It's the sport of everyone."

There's a growing demand for lower-level, lower-cost public courses," said Robert Muir Graves, a Walnut Creek, Calif.-based architect involved with four municipal courses. "We don't need higher-end courses. We need a good old-fashioned public course you can play for 10-15-20 bucks."

MONEY-MAKERS

Municipal courses can be money-making machines "if they're properly run and maintained," said Robert Muir Graves, a Walnut Creek, Calif.-based architect who has designed 22 munis. "If you can offer a private country club atmosphere at a daily-fee price, you'll be successful," said Dye. "If you charge a high greens fee and the course is in poor condition, nobody wants to play it. A course can handle up to 100,000 rounds a year, but you have to put the money back into it. As soon as the condition of a golf course deteriorates, everything goes downhill. Nobody wants to play a cornfield."

"In most cases, the towns and cities take a tremendous pride in the courses," said Geoffrey Cornish, an Amherst, Mass.-based architect who has designed 22 munis. "Years ago, you referred to the municipal course with disdain. Now, you try to give them country-club courses."

Graves feels munis should also present a country club-type atmosphere by offering such things as good practice facilities, a convenient clubhouse and plenty of parking. Dye said there should be such extras as every part of your course.

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Workers inspect a new green being built at the municipal Blue Hill Golf Course in Orangeburg, N.Y. Project architect Stephen Kay of Bronxville, N.Y., said communities are updating existing municipal courses to meet the needs for better quality, more play and safety.

Photo courtesy of Stephen Kay

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Low supply, high demand ideal mix at Salt Lake City

By Bob Seligman

When officials of Salt Lake City, Utah, began planning to build the city's newest municipal golf courses — Winged Point and Mountain Dell — they were faced with a low-supply, high-demand situation.

Scott Gardner, the city's director of golf and recreation, said all four of the city's 18-hole municipal courses were doing more than 100,000 nine-hole rounds annually. The city's two nine-hole courses totaled 50,000 to 70,000 rounds a year. With a population of 165,000 in Salt Lake City, and 800,000 to 900,000 people within a 20-square-mile radius, there weren't enough golf holes.

"In Salt Lake City, you can hardly get a tee time," said Gardner. "Years ago, it pretty much slacked off after Labor Day. Now, people will play in November if there's no snow on the ground, no matter how cold it is. We just ran out of golf courses."

Gardner added that Winged Point also was built to improve the city's west side region, and to attract new businesses.

The new courses are being funded by municipal revenue bonds under the Municipal Building Authority of Salt Lake City, thereby keeping taxpayers from being responsible for payment of the bond. The debt payment is $7.75 million over the next 10 years.

Despite the demand for public golf, Gardner doubts the courses would have been built if they were tax-supported.

Yet the public, or at least the golfing public, is paying the way. To be eligible for the bonds, the municipality had to show that enough money was being generated by the existing "munis."

So, greens fees were raised two years ago by $1 per nine holes.

"The greens fees are paying back the bond. If our revenue doesn't best our expenditures, we'll have to raise the greens fees," said Gardner. "We can not go after the renewal fund to bail us out if we don't make our payments."

Winged Point, an 18-hole course, opened last July. Mountain Dell, which opened in 1968, is adding 18 holes. The first nine is expected to open this spring, and the second nine is expected to open by July 1. Gardner said Salt Lake City will not build a new course for 10 years because of the debt. Existing courses also will be affected, at least for the time being, he added.

"Right now, all the money is going to pay off the debt," Gardner said. "We are still grooming and taking care of the other courses, but you won't see any major capital improvements until we make sure we're bringing in the revenue to pay off the debt."
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Munis

Scott Gardner, director of golf and recreation for Salt Lake City, Utah, said Winged Point, a new muni, was built to attract business to the city's west side.

"With the rapid pace of the world today, people are counting on the green space for a leisurely stroll or a competitive game, and that's what golf does," said Gardner. "We are encouraging people to know that life is more than just a job."

Munis also are beneficial to businesses looking to locate or relocate into an area.

"Golf courses are environmentally sound and don't disturb the natural habitat," declared Harrington, who made the course expansion an issue in his successful mayoral campaign.

He plans to meet with environmental groups who have opposed course expansion in the city's last remaining tract of open land, and has met with course architect Philip A. Wogan of Totspield, Mass.

"Any golf course architect worth their ability."