Arizona scrutinizing water replenishment district

Proposed Phoenix area ground water project would more fairly allocate water.

Mexico new frontier

Nicklaus, Burns follow in Joe Fingers' footsteps south of the border.

Pebble Beach finances

Membership question will remain unanswered until July 2 at famed resort.

Pebble Beach fix-up

Turning up the heat underground saves tiny 5th green from death.

U.S. golf course supply

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Florida lawmakers put water law on hold

The Florida Legislature will delay action until next year on a proposed water tax that could greatly impact the state's $5.5 billion golf industry.

GCSAA out $1.4M to McLoughlin

By Mark Leslie

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America will appeal a May 9 jury verdict in a Topeka, Kan., federal district court awarding $1,457,742 to former Executive Director James McLoughlin.

Developer submits chem-free plan

Sherman Hollow's Truax draws fire, support over Green Life use

By Peter Blais

HUNTINGTON, Vt. — Hoping to end a six-year battle to gain state environmental approval, Sherman Hollow developers will submit plans to manage the controversial golf course without pesticides or fertilizers.

Maintenance costs high all around

From staff reports

Paced by a double-digit increase in payroll taxes and employee benefits, golf course maintenance costs rose 7.8 percent at private country clubs in 1990, according to a recent survey of 250 facilities.

A lot needs to be worked out before the legislation goes forward.

— Bobby Brantley

Florida lawmakers put water law on hold

'A lot needs to be worked out before the legislature goes forward,' said Bobby Brantley. "We're pleased the bill didn't pass." Brantley said, "A lot needs to be worked out before the legislature goes forward with plans to tax water consumption."

Continued on page 19

Continued on page 20

Continued on page 22
Vermont developer says no-chem maintenance

Continued from page 1
goil course market.
But some golf industry officials question the company's claims that chemicals are safe and necessary.

"There is no sure-fire organic way to take care of a golf course that I know of," said Dave Otis, director of the U.S. Golf Association Green Section Northeast Region office, echoing the sentiments of several others.

And even though Truax stressed golf course chemicals have not proven hazardous anywhere in the United States, others feel his decision to use an organic program will cause the public to doubt claims by most golf industry officials that chemicals are safe and necessary.

"I feel very badly for anyone who, either acting as an educator or as an expert in turfgrass, has had their credibility questioned and their professionalism politicized by this proposal," said Mike O'Connor, a superintendent and registered lobbyist with the Vermont Golf Association, who has supported the project in the past and feels Truax was unfairly denied his permit last year.

"It seems rather strange that, after so many years of presenting expert testimony on how to manage a golf course with fertilizers and pesticides, that now this one project can perform without the use of any... I feel he's turned his back on everyone who has helped him."

Green Life President Lewis Zettell said he wrote to Truax and told him Green Life may have been the solution to his problem after reading about the Vermont developer's most recent permitting setback.

Zettell said he spent seven years researching and the last three years field-testing his soil conditioning product. Simply put, Zettell claims chemicals rob the soil of its natural abilities to fight disease and feed on naturally occurring nutrients.

By using pesticides and fertilizers, turfgrass becomes dependent on chemicals to continue growing. When pests and disease become immune to a chemical, new chemicals have to be added to fight them.

"Using chemicals is a real merry-go-round," Zettell said.

Green Life's acceptance has been slowed by superintendents, described as very conservative group hesitant to risk their turf's health to a new product, according to Horse Thief Golf & Country Club superintendent Tim Kelly, who claims to have successfully used Green Life the past four years.

The Tehachapi, Calif., facility has used Green Life since Kelly came aboard in 1988. He had used it a year previously while at Pine Mountain Lake Country Club in Frazier Park.

Kelly said he continually applies the liquid to his course through the irrigation system, with heavier applications on greens and tees. He top-dresses greens regularly with a sand-peat-steer manure mix and leaves clippings on tees and fairways for organic matter. He also uses Green Life in the ponds. The only chemical he has employed is for spot treatment of dandelions, a practice he hopes to completely stop next year.

"It was a goat farm, to put it mildly," Kelly said of the course's condition when he took it over three years ago. The decomposed granite-sand greens absorbed water "like a sponge," he said. Grass roots extended no more than 1-1/2 inches into the thatch, barely penetrating the soil's surface.

Three years later, bentgrass roots everywhere are at least five inches long with some going six and seven, Kelly said. Run times are down on sprinklers near the greens. One square foot of snow mold appeared on the course this spring, compared to 60 square feet two years ago.

"We use it in the ponds, too, and we haven't had to use any aquatic herbicides or algacides," he added.

Horse Thief has a $2,000 monthly contract with Green Life that includes unlimited product, laboratory and technical support, Kelly estimates his

"Watertronics provided a high quality, reliable pumping source..."
plan can keep course healthy despite detractors

annual chemical bill on a traditionally maintained, 18-hole course would be 50 percent more.

Afraid Luna, superintendent at Los Angeles Royal Vista, used the product for almost three years before going back to traditional maintenance practices two years ago. "We got very poor results," he said. "It looked good at first. But the root structure wasn't what they claimed it would be. The greens turned yellowish. We had weed problems because of the steer manure. We had little clumps of flow- ers all the time. It was doing more damage than good."

Putting the product on the 27 greens with a sprayer (the liquid form wasn't available) twice a week was a time-consuming process, Luna said. Green Life also recommended dumping steer manure in the lakes to clean the water, but the manure clogged up the irrigation system for the next two months, he added. The greens didn't use less water and turned "rock hard" in dry weather.

Luna was the assistant superintendent when Royal Vista started using Green Life. The general manager, not the superintendent ("He didn't like it either," Luna said), decided to use it, according to Luna.

"In my honest opinion, I wouldn't recommend using it," Luna said.

A superintendent at a major California course, who asked not to be identified, experimented with the product and said, "I've never found anything that totally removes the need for pesticides or fertilizers."

"If there were a product out there that did that (make chemicals unnecessary), don't you think everybody would be using it?" asked Green Section Western Region Director Larry Gilhuly.

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Back in Vermont, faced with dropping his multi-million-dollar project or continuing his appeals to environmental boards and the courts, Truax decided Green Life may be his best bet to finally land a permit.

"We believe in the years to come, it will be the trend for all new golf courses."

Other Vermont courses may be interested in Green Life as well. At the recently opened Vermont course that Truax was the assistant superintendent for two years ago, the superintendent said using Green Life had not increased the need for pesticides or fertilizers.

"We believe in the years to come, it will be the trend for all new golf courses."

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