Environmental clubhouse operational by mid-summer?

BY PETER BLAIS

CHARLESTON, S.C. — A clubhouse for environmental information regarding golf courses could be functioning by mid-summer, according to the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) Executive Director Michael Hughes.

Representatives from the Allied Associations of Golf decided to move forward with the program during their late May gathering here.

Exactly what information the yet-to-be-named clearinghouse will provide was undecided, Hughes said. The Allied Association’s environmental subcommittee, chaired by Hughes, expected to put the finishing touches on the program by late June, the NGCOA staffer said.

Prepared printed responses to some of the most commonly asked questions, particularly those involving wetlands and pesticides, will likely be available, Hughes said. Most will be written in laymen’s terms since many requests are expected from the media and general public.

For more technical questions, lists of qualified professionals who could help will be provided.

While much of the information may already be available through the Turfgrass Information Foundation, U.S. Department of Agriculture library and various colleges and universities, the general public either is not aware of its availability or it is too technically written.

American Golf leaps into private club market with both feet

BY PETER BLAIS

When you think of American Golf Corp. you generally envision a public golf colossus. “It’s ironic considering AGC’s roots are in the private club business,” said David Pillsbury, executive vice president of American Golf Country Clubs (AGCC). American Golf’s recently formed private country club division.

“In my mind,” Pillsbury explained, “it was a private course in the Yorba Linda, Calif. The public side has just grown much faster than the private side.”

Fast indeed. Santa Monica, Calif.-based AGC added an average 10 courses annually through the 1980s. It now numbers a whopping 180 facilities, most of the public variety.

Price began restructuring the firm two years ago to bring additional attention to AGC’s private clubs and members. The company added 15 private clubs in the past year, giving it 27 in the United States and five in Great Britain. Plans are to double those numbers in the next five years, Pillsbury said.

Formed earlier this year, AGCC is de...
Environmental clearinghouse
Continued from page 40

"The clearinghouse will be manned by people knowledgeable in the golf business and publicized so people know it is available," Hughes said.

Hughes expects the clearinghouse to maintain regular business hours. Requests will likely be handled through a toll-free telephone number and/or by mail. An on-line computer service could also be available.

Those requesting information should expect no more than a nominal reproduction charge for accessing clearinghouse information, Hughes said.

The members of the Allied Association will share the cost of the program, he said.

One member association is likely to take the lead on the project. It has not been determined which one that will be, he added.

"This is an indication the various golf associations are willing to work together to benefit the game and to better address the challenges facing the entire industry," Hughes said.

He said the Allied Association has identified three target areas needing addressing and assigned subcommittees to research each one. Junior golf and promoting the game during National Golf Month (August) are the other two.

In addition to the owners association, composed of public-access golf course owners, the other groups represented on the environmental subcommittee are the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, United States Golf Association, National Golf Foundation, Golf Course Builders Association of America and American Society of Golf Course Architects.

AGC — private
Continued from page 40

voted exclusively to the acquisition and management of private clubs throughout the United States and abroad.

Among the most recent additions were Hershey (Pa.) Country Club and Canyon Oaks Country Club in Chico, Calif. National Golf Properties Inc., a Real Estate Investment Trust founded by Price, purchased both properties and turned management over to AGCC.

"What separates us from most management companies is our 25 years of experience, management expertise, company resources and willingness to put our capital at stake rather than just sign a management contract to operate the club," Pillsbury said. At Canyon Oaks, for instance, AGCC is investing $2 million in a clubhouse and $400,000 in fairway enhancement and course drainage.

"Many country clubs are at a crossroads," the AGCC executive said. "They are more capital intensive and competitive than their members realize. To make needed improvements, the club must go into debt, have a special assessment on members or hire a management company. We can make the improvements without over-burdening the members."

There are other advantages to being an AGCC club member. The Member Advantage Plan gives full golf members access to more than 100 private, resort and daily-fee AGC courses. Members receive complimentary green fees with the rental of a golf cart at participating U.S. courses. They pay only a guest fee at U.K. clubs.

It is up to the private club members whether to participate in the program. Some don’t, but most do, Pillsbury noted.

Other AGCC member services include golf excursion planning, travel discounts, national tournament competition, discounts on pro shop merchandise, charge privileges at all participating clubs, tournament and event planning, child care and youth golf programs.

Sullivan credits regional membership directors Sandy Maclver (East) and Jim Allison (West) with developing many of the programs and helping AGCC membership grow "at a time when we are seeing downward pressure on initiation fees and other charges at private clubs."

Except at the top of the management pyramid — where Chairman David Price, Executive Vice President of Acquisitions Joseph Guerra, Vice President of Human Resources Loretta Raffety, Executive Vice President/Legal Counsel James Stanich and Vice President of Maintenance Michael Heacock reside — AGCC has a separate management team from American Golf’s resort and public division.

As AGCC executive vice president, Pillsbury supervises the operations of all private courses and field services. Senior Vice President of Operations Dave Seidl, Eastern Region Director Terry Clark and Western Region Director Bill Ryan oversee the daily operations of the 32 facilities.

AGCC emphasizes the career path available to superintendents within the company. "We can start less-experienced superintendents at an entry-level club and move them along a career path to a premium facility," Pillsbury said. "They can advance without having to work for four or five different employers while enjoying all the benefits available through our company."