USGA, wildlife groups cooperate on research

By Mark Leslie

Washington, D.C. — Extensive research investigating golf courses as ecosystems will be undertaken as early as this fall, thanks to funding from the U.S. Golf Association (USGA) and enthusiastic support from several environmental organizations.

After a meeting here with environmentalists, Ron Dodson, president of the Audubon Society of New York and chairman of the USGA Wildlife Sub-committee, said: “The collective agreement of all those attending was that instead of spending so much time looking at particular species, we should be looking at golf courses as ecosystems.

“...We should focus our attention on ecosystems where there are many golf courses and lots of potential for new courses to be built — like Florida, California, New England and the coastal mid-Atlantic region.”

Enthused by the input

Summit illustrates need for image-building PR campaign

By Hal Phillips

Scottsdale, Ariz. — The recent Golf Summit yielded this stark realization: Poor public image stands as the largest hindrance to golf industry growth.

If image isn't everything, it's darn close. Many still consider golf a pastime of rich, white males. Whether this assessment is less accurate than it was in, say, 1970, is irrelevant. The public at large has this perception, and it's particularly damaging because it adversely affects golf's other two major obstacles: the environment and player development.

This became crystal clear during Golf Summit '94, the two-day strategy session sponsored by the National Golf Foundation (NGF) here in November.

In response, Summit attendees agreed that golf

Golf Communities USA bucks public trend

By Peter Blais

Orlando, Fla. — Golf Communities USA President Warren Stanchina has always run against the tide.

When everyone was building private golf course communities in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Stanchina was buying and selling daily-fee facilities. "I usually made money," said the head of the Orlando, Fla.-based firm.

Now it's the 1990s. The consensus is that daily-fee developers are the kings and private course developers the jesters. While some may view Stanchina's recent purchases of several high-profile private course communities as acts of a fool, he plans on laughing all the way to the bank.

"The United States is fast becoming a two-class country, the rich and the poor," he said. "That's why affordable, private courses will boom in the late 1990s. There are simply too many up-

PINHURST PLANTATION is one of the private clubs in the Golf Communities USA portfolio.
New product pinpoints golf demand

MIDLOTHIAN, Va. - A new product that claims to quantify golf demand and potential for specific market areas down to the zip code level is now being marketed by Fore-cast Golf Group, Inc. The Golf Course Sales Potential Report is aimed at developers, investors and management companies.

Forecast has been providing similar sales potential data for range developers since 1990 and has expanded its methodology to the course segment of the industry to identify greens fee sales potential for public golf courses. Forecast says it maintains an ongoing in-house database that can generate reports within days of a request.

"Many companies rely solely upon basic demographic information," said Forecast President James Murphy, "This information is essential, but it is only one piece of the puzzle. What makes Forecast unique is our ability to define golfer demand, in terms of dollar sales potential, for every zip code in the U.S."

For information contact Forecast at 804-379-5760.

Golf Communities

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Since 1974, started his real estate career in 1977 as assistant manager of a Michigan golf community. A few years later he formed his own company, U.S. Golf Services and Development, which acquired and operated 15 golf properties from 1983 to 1993.

The firm’s purpose was to acquire, construct and operate country club communities in prime golf destinations throughout the United States.

The company quickly acquired Pinehurst National and Pinehurst Plantation in Pinehurst, N.C. Pinehurst National has an Arnold Palmer-designed course and Pinehurst Plantation a Jack Nicklaus layout. When fully developed, the two communities will have more than 100 homesites. The company plans to pump $7 million into property development and a new clubhouse.

Shortly thereafter, Golf Communities purchased Cutter Sound Golf & Yacht Club in Marin County. In addition to an 18-hole course, Cutter Sound includes 96 boat slips and 200 homesites. Extensive course improvements and a new waterfront yacht club are planned.

"Our first priority with any project is course condition," Stanchina said. "I have two brothers who are superintendents. We’re more concerned about the turf than the presentation of the filet mignon in the clubhouse."

The company is also developing Montverde Country Club in Orlando, a 400-lot subdivision with a Stanchina-designed course scheduled to open next fall; operates Pleasant Hills Golf Club in Mt. Pleasant, Mich.; is under contract to acquire a 900-acre project in Tennessee; and is pursuing developments in Naples, Fla., Atlanta, Arizona and the Carolinas.

"Once we get through all that, we’ll tighten our belts a little," Stanchina said.

In evaluating potential acquisitions, Stanchina said Golf Communities looks for clubs with roughly 250 members where membership and developer goals may conflict; a quality, modern course with large greens, tees and landing areas; at least 200 surrounding, undeveloped homesites; and a minimum price of $5 million.

After purchasing a golf property, Stanchina turns it over to a management team whose members have different responsibilities but equal authority. A general manager oversees the entire operation with a superintendent, food and beverage manager, golf pro and business manager contributing their expertise.