

Browner looking to put the kibosh on regulation as usual?



Hal Phillips, editor

Believe it or not, the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is bending over backwards to make points with the American business community. How else can we explain the spate of market-friendly directives spilling forth from the desk of Carol Browner, who has changed her stance somewhat? After storming into office as one of the more visible FOBs, running to the agency rooftop and shouting all the traditional liberal rallying cries for all to hear, Browner's office is now talking about softening its labeling restrictions (see page 39).

Could it be that Browner and her agency have been dragged into the Clinton Administration's headlong rush to the center? Does this sea change have anything to do with... Politics!?!?

Call it what you like, but a little birdie in Washington has informed me that Browner has also announced a new policy allowing small businesses, like golf courses, to right past environmental wrongs. The Common Sense Compliance Policy, detailed by Browner in a speech to the White House Conference on Small Business (WHCSB) last month, sets guidelines for the agency to reduce or waive penalties for small businesses that make "good-faith" efforts to correct past violations under most EPA statutes.

"With this new program of incentives for small business," Browner told her WHCSB audience, "the Clinton Administration makes a commitment to reward their good-faith efforts to find and fix environmental problems. We aren't interested in giving irresponsible polluters a break. We do want to help honest business owners comply with the law and run their business as cleanly and efficiently as possible."

Apparently, this policy is part of Clinton's Executive Memorandum on the Waiver of Penalties and Reduction of Reports, which gives federal agencies the ability to waive penalties for violations by small businesses, under certain conditions.

Do you believe her? I say, it doesn't matter. If your course has

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VIT bailed out on Audubon

I know my *New American College Dictionary* is 32 years old and that English is a living, evolving language. But something troubles me here.

My 1963 dictionary in part defines "commitment" this way: The act or state of giving in trust or charge; the act of committing, pledging or engaging oneself.

The modern revision of the word reads more like: "I will stay committed until it is no longer personally convenient."

Well, it looks like we have a case in point and, low and behold, it is right in golf's own camp. Virginia Investment Trust, the apparent buyer of the Ocean Course at Kiawah Island, S.C. (see story page 3), has apparently reneged on a commitment with the Audubon Society of New York (ASNY) that the Audubon would be involved if VIT ever bought the property. VIT and New York Audubon were partners in a winning bid on the course last year, but that purchase was nixed this winter by a bankruptcy court judge.

In the second go-around of the bidding process VIT dropped Audubon as a partner, won the bid and apparently plans to proceed with no outside environmental expertise.

"There will be no environmental organizations involved," said Beverly (Boody) Anderson, a spokesman for VIT which owns Hogan, ANS Sporting Goods and other Kiawah golf courses.

And although the Ocean Course had previously joined the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program, when asked if VIT would follow through with that commitment, Anderson replied: "No, I don't think there will be any plans either way in that regard."

This all despite a written agreement which states in part that if VIT's The Ocean Course (TOC) acquires an ownership interest in the course "either pursuant to the RTC's



Mark Leslie, managing editor

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Letters

MOBILIZING THE INDUSTRY

To the editor:

Just a short note to thank you for running your article "Leslie Fund to Benefit Cleary Worker's Family" (May 1995) to publicize the Golf Course Superintendents Association of New Jersey's effort to solicit support for Bob Leslie's family after his tragic death. The emotional and financial assistance from turfgrass industry friends following tragic circumstances is very powerful when mobilized in such a fashion. As you know, our personal experience confirmed this. My family and I were strengthened immeasurably by similar industry support following our son's accident several years ago.

Once again, thanks for taking a supportive role.

Edward C. Horton
Vice President,
Resource Management
Pebble Beach Co.
Pebble Beach, Calif.

NETLON & TRAFFIC

To the editor:

In the article "Traffic control: Take your course to the next level, Otis urges", in your March, 1995 issue, the next-to-the-last paragraph mentions Netlawn fibers. It said Dr. Trey Rogers of Michigan State University states that he has found that using a mulched tire product as a soil amendment reduces traffic damage, as do Netlawn fibers.

While our product does indeed reduce traffic damage — along with providing a number of other benefits — the correct product name is "Netlon mesh elements". In Netlon Advanced Turf, the Netlon mesh elements are blended with a selected growing medium to form a stabilized turf rootzone.

The unique Netlon mesh elements act as "springs", with a flexing action that creates and maintains voids along the length of the mesh filaments. This "self-cultivating" action ensures that Netlon Advanced Turf root zones are healthier than those associated with ordinary turf, with a built-in resistance to soil compaction.

It is this combination of benefits that makes Netlon Advanced Turf an ideal solution for cart path and foot path wear, the heavy use of tees, spectator sites, surface parking areas and other problem areas of golf course turf.

Advanced Turf is well known and accepted in Europe. It has been used in many premier golf courses in England. Installation in the cart paths of St. Andrews is a prime example. Within the United States, Netlon Advanced Turf has undergone extensive successful testing by Dr. James Beard at Texas A & M.

Turf Management Specialist Noel Jackson of the University of Rhode Island is currently conducting testing in cart paths and tee boxes. In addition, the system is being installed in strate-

gic areas at golf courses across the country.

Stephen H. Guise
Sales representative
Netlon Ltd.
Fullerton, Calif.

Ed. We regret the error.

APPRAISE & CONSENT

To the editor:

I read with great interest the commentary in your May issue by Mr. James E. McLoughlin (p. 55) regarding the alleged shortage of qualified and credible consultants to perform feasibility analyses for golf course properties. As you can imagine, I strongly disagree and offer the following rebuttal:

It is my opinion that Mr. McLoughlin's opinion stems from the inability of many in the industry to consider appropriately designated and specifically qualified real-estate appraisers for feasibility assignments. As golf has become a "fad" industry to many, those with limited qualifications simply "hung a shingle" in search of feasibility consulting assignments. Real estate appraisers (good ones) perform the necessary detailed analysis on a regular basis. A comprehensive feasibility analysis is only part of a well done highest and best-use analysis done in every appraisal assignment.

Mr. McLoughlin should become familiar with my colleagues in the Society of Golf Appraisers (SGA). Those of us that are mem-

bers and have the SGA designation have submitted to rigorous qualifications and most of us have experience performing feasibility analyses, market studies, impact studies and highest and best-use analyses as well as appraisals. Each SGA member is an MAI member of the Appraisal Institute, which in itself identifies a high level of education and qualification in the real estate analysis profession. While there are "bad eggs" in any profession, I question Mr. McLoughlin's statement that there "may be fewer than five people across the country with the experience to generate a meaningful feasibility report." While the profession is a small one, I can immediately think of at least 10 individuals (not all of them SGA members) with considerable feasibility analysis experience.

I have not met with or spoken to Mr. McLoughlin and welcome the opportunity of doing so to see if I would qualify as one of the "fabulous five." Additionally, I welcome the opportunity to introduce him to SGA and its membership qualifications.

In a market where many users choose only the lowest fee, quality sometimes gets lost in the shuffle until it's too late. Like any quality product, professional and adequate consulting services take time and cost money. You can't buy a Cadillac for the price of a Chevy and you won't find one at the Chevy dealer's lot.

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Leslie comment

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Ocean Course Purchase Agreements or otherwise, directly or indirectly, with any other person, entity or qualified organization participating in the auction, TOC agrees to grant ASNY \$150,000 to enable ASNY to complete the [environmental] study..."

The agreement, which included another \$100,000 to ASNY at the end of its study, was signed by ASNY President Ron Dodson and TOC Vice President Daniel M. McCormack on Sept. 9, 1993.

Of course, that promise of \$250,000 bit the dust with the other commitments. But ASNY personnel don't wish to work with people who have shunned, and some would say "used" them. (The first bid had to include an environmental group and VIT courted ASNY to join in the process.)

Ah, commitment. They say lack of it is a reason for the high divorce rate nowadays. Who would have thought inhabitants of Golf Nation would witness it in their own family?

Meanwhile, some may have been shocked at the seeming complicity of the government in this matter. The Resolution Trust Corp., which was such a stickler for involving environmental organizations in the original auction of the Ocean Course, apparently went into an environmental fog during the second sale. The RTC essentially trashed the original sale — to the partnership of the New York Audubon and VIT — because neither would agree to a unilateral RTC provision allowing other environmental organizations to get involved, if they disagreed with how the Ocean Course was being managed.

But in the second auction, the RTC's agreement contains absolutely no language regarding environmental management of

the course.

Spokesman Mike Fulwider simply stated that, under the Coastal Barrier Improvement Act, the RTC was obligated to market the property to environmental groups only the first 90 days (two years ago). Although several groups besides the New York Audubon had stated an interest, RTC took the position that it had fulfilled its commitment, Fulwider said. "Therefore, we were free to market it to the general public... Our primary concern is meeting our statutory responsibilities and recovering as much as for the taxpayers as we can in the sale of that property."

People in the golf industry, especially in recent years, have promoted awareness that they are the true environmentalists — the ones enhancing wildlife habitat hands-on.

One entity alone can now threaten all that goodwill.

Who cares if the RTC gets another black eye in this bankruptcy mess which was arguably caused by the government itself? The golf community should not have to pressure one of its own to stand on the environmental high ground. But, one person falls off that high ground and so do compatriots from Honolulu to Halifax.

...

Like maintaining golf courses, designing them can be a stress on a family. It involves long days and sometimes long seasons for superintendents, long days and extensive travel for architects. Designer Barry Serafin, this month's Q&A subject (see page 27), puts his career and family in this perspective:

"Right now, all my projects are in central Ohio [where he lives]. I have a 6-, a 3- and a 1-year-old and I like to be home as much as possible. You have to keep your priorities straight. It's so easy to get so involved it takes over your life. Once that happens, it gets in

front of your God, in front of your family and things like that. Once your priorities get out of whack, so does your life."

...

Referring to his association's request for proposals on the construction of putting greens (see story page 13), U.S. Golf Association Director of Research Dr. Mike Kenna says builders, architects and soil labs ought to back this. It should not be left solely in the hands of the USGA Green Section and superintendents, he argues.

"Who's involved in new golf course construction?" he asked. "In the world, research is done by the architects, not the maintenance men. In effect, [the industry] is doing the same as asking the plant manager (caretaker) to design a good furnace, etc. The USGA gets dragged into this because of our [green-spec] guidelines."

Kenna added: "There's very little research into the most important factor: Ensuring you have a good property to work with and that it's built well."

...

There's no accounting for taste differences in turfgrasses, says Turf Merchants Inc. Vice President Steve Tubbs. "In Las Vegas, a desert, they are managing a New Jersey perennial ryegrass year-round. That's what they want. In Palm Springs, a desert, it's the opposite. They love Bermudagrass and want perennial ryes just to overseed and then to die out. And those two spots are only 200 miles apart."

...

Texas A&M University's Dr. Milt Engelke, a noted plant breeder, commenting on breeding turfgrasses: "It sounds like wedding preparations. You hear phrases like 'The prospects are excellent,' 'There's a lot of potential' and 'Now we have to go through generations of breeding in characteristics.'"

RFG troubles

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affected and how much small equipment there is out there used by contractors and landscapers. All this stuff, especially on a golf course, is specialized high-dollar equipment.

"I think there's going to be a lot more fallout as the summer goes on here. If there are any problems with this in the long run, it could damage our fleet and you could be talking about a lot of money."

With golf course work crews everywhere facing the brunt of the summer heat, mechanics also note engines using the new RFG seem to have problems starting and running when temperatures hit the mid-80s and higher. On top of all this, prices for the new gas have been creeping up steadily the past six months.

"You're paying a little more at the pump and you're paying for nothing," said David Pellerin, head mechanic for six years at Portland (Maine) CC. Pellerin said he recently discovered a melted head gasket for the first time on a National triplex bank mower and has had to make constant adjustments to mowers and grounds carts.

"I believe the gas is here to stay, so we're going to have to make the best of it. We'll probably start by going to a higher octane."

Tinkey comment

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defining the objectives, creating a structure, selecting leadership, obtaining funding and tracking results.

In South Carolina the course owners worked together to determine the economic impact of golf operations on the economy of the state. They desired useful comparative financial information to run their courses, objective data on the cost benefit of the state's tourism expenditures on golf marketing and facts to support the importance of the golf industry to state employment and taxes. Primary data is collected confidentially from golf course operators throughout the state.

The initial program was a cooperative project with the South Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department (PRT), the South Carolina Chapter of the NGCOA and the University of South Carolina. The study, to be repeated this year and every one or two years thereafter, will continue to receive research funding through a marketing partnership program with the PRT Department. The data on golf course operations accumulated for the most recent study was extensive, including average revenues and expenditures by various categories, age of course, capital expenditures, and percentage of in-state and out-of-state rounds.

Many owners, private and public sector leaders as well as the general public are unaware of the significant role that golf plays with tourism, business development, contribution to the tax base and providing numerous well paid jobs. In South Carolina, the direct impact of more than 300 golf course operations — not counting the impact from related businesses, such as real estate sales, lodging, travel, food and other off-course purchases — to the state was \$644 million. With these related expenditures added in, the economic impact of golf has been widely reported as \$1.5 billion.

Each tax dollar spent on golf advertising produces \$74 in spending by golfers. The South Carolina PRT 1994 marketing and advertising budget, which is funded primarily from admissions tax paid on golf greens fees, drew an 18 percent increase over 1993.

The economic impact from golf course operations has added more than 14,000 full-time jobs for the state, with a payroll for those employees of more than \$227 million. Golf generates \$5.7 million in direct taxes and over \$16.7 million in combined tax revenue.

"Attracting more golfers means more jobs, more income and more tax revenue for the state," acknowledges South Carolina's Gov. David Beasley.

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