Frank dialogue earns industry respect from environmental activists

- 'Green' principles make debut in N.C.

By Hal Phillips
Pinehurst, N.C. — The strength and breadth of relationships forged last year at Pebble Beach will be tested this month when representatives of the golf course industry and environmental movement meet here at the second Golf and the Environment Summit, March 10-12.

This year's attendees will review and, ideally, approve a set of "environmental principles" formulated over the past 12 months by representatives of the golf course industry working with environmental activists. The principles are designed to guide — not necessarily regulate — golf course siting, development and maintenance practices.

"It's important to remember, these principles have been put together by a consortium of people of both sides," explained Ted Horton, vice president of the GCSAA. Continued on page 55

Where Earth & Sky Collide
A dramatic backdrop is only half the story at Scott Miller's Eagle Mountain Golf Club in Scottsdale, Ariz. Eagle Mountain is one of two daily-fee, Miller-designed tracks to open this year in the Phoenix area. For stories, see page 43.

Arthur Miller leads the roundtable discussion on environmental matters during the GCSAA show in Orlando. Architect Michael Hurdan (left) and superintendent Tim Hiers were among the panelists.

TIFs may hold $ promise for municipalities

By J. Barry Motthes
WYANDotte, Mich. — An economic development tool traditionally used by cities to build downtown parking garages and revitalize neglected neighborhoods was used by city officials here to help build a championship-caliber, urban nine-hole golf course and riverfront park.

The tool is known as tax increment financing, TIF for short, and it may hold some promise as a mechanism for cities aiming to build courses within defined development districts.
Environmental General Session debate brings sides together

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tional Wildlife Federation.

Others representing the envi-
ronmental movement were Mark
Massara of the Sierra Club in Cali-
fornia; Curt Spalding of Save the
Bay (Narragansett) in Rhode Is-
land; and Rich Budell of the Florida
Department of Agriculture.

On hand for the golf industry
were Tim Hiers, superintendent
at Collier’s Reserve Country
Club in Naples, Fla.; Michael
Hurdzan of Hurdzan Golf Course
Design Inc. in Columbus, Ohio;
Peter Leuzinger, superintendent
at the Ivanhoe (IL) Club; Tho-
mas Hoogheem of the Monsanto
Co.; and Dr. Frank Rossi, a re-
searcher at the University of
Wisconsin-Madison.

Miller’s remarks were one of
the few conciliatory gestures
made during the often tempest-
uous debate.

“The awards are great,” said
Spalding, referring to the Envi-
ronmental Steward Awards,
which were presented just prior
to the debate. “But unfortunately,
not all superintendents and golf
courses are Environmental Stew-
ard Award winners or care that
much about the environment.”

Communicating success sto-
ries, like Hiers’ course, to the
public at large has been a short-
coming of the golf industry, Rossi
said. The environmental move-
ment had a big head start on the
golf industry with tragedies like
the chemical release that killed
hundreds in Bhopal, India, and
the devastation to the Alaskan
coastline caused by the oil spill
from the Exxon Valdez.

“Environmental groups were
able to point to these events at
local meetings and the superin-
tendent was simply plowed over
when he tried to defend his
course,” the professor said. “We
got off to a late start.” The most
important people we have now
are those who can articulate the
positive things about their
courses and the industry. We also
need to bring the golfing com-

munity into the debate. Golfers
speaking for the industry could
even be more persuasive.”

Th e debate inevitably turned
to the role of the press.

“The press tends to sensation-
alyze things,” Budell said. “Golf
course development has been
one of the most emotionally
charged issues discussed in
Florida.”

Spalding made it clear Rhode
Island environmentalists were
ready to use the press to get
what they wanted. Frustrated
over what he called his group’s
inability to get representatives
from private clubs along
Narragansett Bay to even dis-
cuss his group’s concerns re-
garding runoff, he said, “We’ll
go to the press with our story
and use it responsibly if the golf
courses won’t listen to us.”

Leuzinger and others from the
golf industry encouraged the
environmentalists to make the
environment at the nation’s
courses and the industry. We also
are those who can articulate the
golfing community into the debate. Golfers

work together on solutions to
any problems we encounter.”
President's Award honors USGA

ORLANDO, Fla. — The U.S. Golf Association (USGA) was presented the 1996 President's Award for Environmental Leadership at the International Golf Course Conference and Show by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. The President's Award is presented based on exceptional environmental contributions to the game of golf — contributions that further exemplify the superintendent's image as steward of the land.

"With the serious challenges facing the game today, the entire industry is indebted to the USGA for its commitment to producing hard data regarding the environmental impact of golf and golf course management practices," said GCSAA outgoing President Gary Grigg.

"We're delighted the GCSAA has taken this opportunity to acknowledge the USGA's consistent efforts to promote sound environmental stewardship," said Thomas W. Chiisholm, chairman of the USGA Green Section Committee.

High expectations for Summit encore

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resource management at Pebble Beach Co. "Some will say it's too much, and some will say it's not enough."

"But there's a restriction to everything we do. We're finding that perhaps the dealing up front, the talking in advance, ends up getting the job done a lot easier — easier than getting solidly behind something and so entrenched that no one can backtrack without losing face, or losing money."

Added Sharon Newsome of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF): "I hope we can use this conference to educate people. Whether or not it's accurate, environmentalists believe that people buy land to build a golf course, then work with the architect to ensure the course does the least damage possible."

"One of our principles says: Before you buy, find out whether there are sensitive wetlands or species that would make it difficult to build."

Other principles deal with subjects ranging from water consumption to course infrastructure, pollution prevention, integrated waste management and use of indigenous plants.

The goal, Newsome said, is enlightenment of principles by a broad spectrum of interests, i.e. the U.S. Golf Association, NWF, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and Sierra Club.

In theory, a united front will emerge from the Pinehurst summit. This cross-section of interests will better efforts to influence the average golfer, who ultimately drives the industry's development and maintenance practices.

"Sometimes, when a superintendent wants to do the right thing, the marketplace won't let him," said Todd Miller, executive director of the North Carolina Coastal Federation. "We realize there's a lot of interest among elements of the golf industry in doing the right thing. There is enlightened leadership. But there are barriers to overcome."

"I think it's essential that we change the attitudes of golfers who demand certain maintenance practices."

Added Newsome: "One of the most important things golfers can do is re-evaluate the way they look at the golf course. We have to de-emphasize the 'Green Is Better' attitude."

An important outgrowth of last year's Pebble Beach conference was the demystification and debunking of stereotypes. Superintendents discovered environmental activists aren't necessarily radical no-growthers, while folks like Miller and Newsome discovered most supers are genuinely committed to conservation and preservation.

The summit, facilitated by the Salt Lake City-based Center for Resource Management (CRM), will try to further this discovery of common ground.

"We're a little concerned that dialogue would result in more polarization," said the CRM's Paul Parker. "Clearly there are differences in opinion, sometimes sharp ones. We don't want to ignore them: we want to deal with them in ways that are productive."

"Part of this is to educate each other. This process is about dialogue and enlightenment, which helps everyone make better decisions."

"A few years ago," added Newsome, "I got the impression the golf industry thought it best not to talk to environmentalists. That is what has been so great about this process. It has made people realize what good work is already being done on golf courses."

Added Horton, "I really believe that before Ranger Rick writes something down now, he might give us a call."

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