Michaud hails success with experiments to control erosion, dust

By Mark Leslie

CARRABASSETT VALLEY, Maine — Somewhere between laissez faire and the toxic-to-turf liquid calcium used by highway crews there is an answer to dust control on golf course cart paths. The quest for that answer — and to an end to erosion along the steep slopes the cart path traverses — has led Ed Michaud to several solutions from outside the normal industry marketplace.

Michaud's Sugarloaf Golf Club is a "wilderness course" that treks up and down a mountain alongside Sugarloaf USA Ski Resort. Crucial to him is maintaining the natural feel of the course.

"You can put 2 inches of asphalt down if you want to," Michaud said, "but we're looking for a natural alternative. The asphalt gets hot in summer; plus, you have this black ribbon going up the golf course."

Referring to one of his solutions, Poly Pavement Soil Solidifier, he added, "If you can use this, it works as well and it is more appealing and natural."

Among the products Michaud has used at Sugarloaf, in addition to Poly Pavement:
- Stabilizer, a powdered, completely natural product much like Poly Pavement;
- reclaimed asphalt;
- regular concrete mixed with stone dust; and
- a byproduct of bark mulch from a paper mill.

He is also excited about the promise of Road Oyl, another soil stabilization product out of California.

Last year Michaud mostly experimented with Poly Pavement, a natural, non-toxic spray-on product that is marketed from Los Angeles.

"We have major concerns with erosion along the paths on our hills," Michaud said. "The dust control from Poly Pavement is an added plus."

A 55-gallon drum Poly Pavement cost $752, or about $1,000 after shipping, he said. "So it is not much cheaper than conventional pavement, but you don't get artificial-looking paths. We have a wilderness course and a rustic feel, and it is important to us to keep it natural looking."

The more Poly Pavement that is applied, the harder the ground surface becomes. Michaud and his crew used about 10 gallons of the product along a steep 700-foot stretch of the 7-foot-wide cart path.

The result?
"It worked quite well," he said. "Erosion control was good over the heavy fall rains. But it needs the proper environmental conditions when you apply it and it was fairly damp when we put it down, so we won't really know until midsummer exactly how well it worked."

Meanwhile, Michaud used ten 50-pound bags of Stabilizer on a hill, with good results. In fact, he said: "It was easier to use because it's a powder. We mixed it with stone dust and it cost about the same as Poly Pavement."

Using both Stabilizer and Poly Pavement as Michaud did, he said they treat a couple thousand feet of paths for about $1,000. If superintendents want the path as firm as asphalt, they will get about 500 feet stabilized, he said.

This year, he said: "I may go back to areas already done and add more until I find the right ratio to keep it from washing out and to control the dust. On the steeper hills we'll mix it more aggressively. And on a flat area where we're looking more for dust control we'll back off a bit. "Then, two years down the road, if it gets a little dusty we'll go back and touch it up."

Reclaimed asphalt, Michaud said, is excellent in areas invisible from the tee. "It has the asphalt look and it tends to have larger chunks because it is reground," he said. "But, if you can get a 95-degree day and roll it, it packs like pavement. If we had spent more time and used grade rakes pulling out chunks,
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