New twists tried in teamwork, problem-solving
Adaptive Management Planning for tough issues

Editor's Note: This is the first of a three-part series on Adaptive Management Planning. This first article introduces the main elements to this approach to solving problems. The second will provide some illustrations of the application of this approach from the golfing industry, and the third will be answers to questions from our readers.

By DR. ROBERT R. ABBOTT

Whether confronted with how to control a pest on the 16th fairway, or how to deal with an endangered species on the site of a new nine holes, some in the golf industry are turning to a new strategy called Adaptive Management Planning (AMP).

AMP is not rocket science, but it can be a winning alternative to the courtroom. And it can break the toughest gridlock, whether between developer and environmental regulator, or between superintendent and general manager.

How does AMP differ from other kinds of management?

Good management of people and financial resources, or real-time management, is the name of the game in the front office. Good management of the soil, turf and water features, often with a trial-and-error approach to solving problems, is the name of the game for the golf course superintendent.

Best management practices are the benchmark for critical evaluation of how well a superintendent or manager is running their end of the business. In today's high-velocity, action-oriented business environment, understanding of the site — the vegetation, drainage patterns, soil conditions, slopes, natural elements such as wind and climate, and to understand where the powerful points of the property are, those areas where people naturally gravitate to — is the key to success.

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Smyers ‘in tune’ with the rhythm of life
Steve Smyers graduated in 1975 with a bachelor’s degree in business from the University of Florida, where he played on a three-time national champion golf team, won the All-American Intercollegiate Championship and played on several U.S. Amateur championship tournaments. He worked for architect Ron Garl for eight years before opening his own design firm in 1983 in Lake-land. His first solo, 18-hole course was the critically acclaimed Wolf Run Golf Club in Indianapolis, which opened in 1989. Old Memorial in Tampa was recently voted among the top 10 new private courses in the United States by Golf Digest magazine. He is married to professional golfer Sherrin Smyers and is the father of two boys, Scott, 6, and Trent, 8.

Golf Course News: What is your design philosophy?

Steve Smyers: Design is a multi-layered process. Each step is a building block for the next. The first step is to get a thorough understanding of the site — the vegetation, drainage patterns, soil conditions, slopes, natural elements such as wind and climate, and to understand where the powerful points of the property are, those areas where people naturally gravitate to.

From there you develop a routing plan, which is absolutely key to developing a strong golf course. If you understand the land, and come up with a solid routing, it sets up the strategy, flow, shot values. When we build courses, it’s not a feature-by-feature situation. It’s the entire trip, the whole 18 holes, that fits together and makes a great course.

A round of golf is not just about hitting golf shots. It’s the person’s interaction with the landscape.

GCN: What is the importance of having a course like Old Memorial rated among the upper echelon of new courses in the country?

Smyers: The average period to develop a golf course is 40 to 42 months, from the time you are hired until the course is complete. There is a lot of hard work put into developing a course. We’ve had Wolf Run (Indianapolis), Chart Hills Golf Club (County Kent, England) and Southern Dunes (Jaines City, Fl.) that have been very well received. It’s nice to be recognized for your efforts.

GCN: Has your wife, an accomplished professional golfer, had an impact on your course designs?

Smyers: My wife is a fantastic influence in my life. She has provided me with the ability to understand what is important to a woman golfer when we are designing a course. She has provided me with valuable feedback to make sure our courses are suitable for women golfers.

Dennis Lyon, second from right, manager of golf for the city of Aurora, Colo., leads a contingent of people involved in new golf construction over the project site.

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