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**Water crisis looms in S. California**

**By JOEL JOYNER**

SANTA ANA, Calif. — Radical changes in California water policy could leave Southern California golf courses in "a world of hurt," according to agronomist Mike Huck, of the U.S. Golf Association’s Green Section. From his base here in the southwest region, Huck has been tracking a complicated battle between environmentalists, farmers, municipalities, government officials and others over the future of water distribution in the Golden State. Indeed, the unfolding situation portends such dire consequences that one water-resource specialist, engineer Dana Ripley, is urging that Southern California continue its eastward march with dramatic new Dragon course opens in remote ‘Lost Sierra’

**By DOUG SAUNDERS**

CLIO, Calif. — The surging economy has been the catalyst for numerous golf-driven real estate developments around the country. Every region has seen the creation of new golf courses, including some areas where you would least expect it. A prime example is Gold Mountain, located in this tiny hamlet in California's Sierra Nevada mountains.

Here, in a town of 200 located in a county that has only one stop light, is a 1,300-acre development situated on a two-lane mountain road overlooking ranch land, the Feather River, a solitary railroad track, and the towering Sierra peaks. Is this where you want to retire? Why not, is the philosophy at Gold Mountain. The developers, Darrell and Peggy Garner, have made their mark in such various business ventures as marketing wood by-products overseas, developing banking software, and growing specialty vegetables. Their diverse interests and imagination lead them on a search for a natural setting, a place to settle down. They stopped looking when they found this remote area of Northern California known as the Lost Sierra.

“We were trying to find a place that we could retire to, but what we found was a place of such solitude and natural beauty that we felt we should share it with others,” explained Peggy Garner.

**SELSING SOLITUDE**

To make that dream a reality required a different approach to development. From the beginning, the Garners would make their remote mountain setting the cornerstone of its appeal. To incorporate these features the Garners took careful steps in the design process by bringing together an interesting mix of collaborators.

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Water crisis

Consequently, Huck said, Southern California is "positioned right now to be in a world of hurt, potentially, because there's yet another issue with the Colorado River. The federal EPA has mandated that, by a certain date, we are going to have outflow going into the Gulf of California. Currently, it's pretty much a dry stream by the time it reaches the Mexican border."

Complicating the picture is the stunning rise in California's population, already at about 35 million people. The next 20 years are expected to see 15.4 million new arrivals, primarily from immigration. "We're growing at a population rate throughout the state that probably cannot be supported by the amount of available water," Huck said. "They are pumping groundwater faster than it's being replaced in most areas, and we're taking more out of the rivers than is good for the environment."

ON-SITE RECLAMATION STRATEGY

Against this grim backdrop, the hundreds of golf courses in Southern California are being encouraged to seek protection. One solution is construction of on-site reclamation plants.

"This is Dana Ripley's idea," Huck said, "He figures you can build on half an acre a plant that would supply you with adequate water. Basically, it would be a little satellite plant that would scalp off water before it goes downstream to the regional reclamation plant.

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to fight moss invasion. These days, some superintendents spray bleach or dish detergent to desiccate the grass and suppress moss growth.
Noel Jackson, a Ph.D. plant pathologist at the University of Rhode Island, explains that "the mercury fungicides had a good suppression effect on spore germination of mosses. The mercury supplies are now exhausted and the ban against manufacturing them leaves nothing else on the market that has the persistence of the mercury against moss. With the iron sulfate, superintendents get a quick knock down, but it's only a temporary expedient."

COPPER HYDROXIDE STRATEGY
Frank Rossi, a Ph.D. horticulturist at Cornell University, is working on a micro-nutrient of copper hydroxide to help prevent moss growth. He has discovered that four applications, two weeks apart in the fall, not only reduced moss populations on the order of 80 percent, but also prevented new moss growth in the plots even after the treatments stopped.

"In the summertime, at higher concentrations, there has been some injury to annual blue-grass," he said. "On the plots we only topped dressed and didn't treat, the top dressing obviously made the moss problem worse."

Rossi is now testing "extremely low levels of copper hydroxide that are applied throughout the golfing season. We are working towards copper being used as a micro-nutrient that not only prevents moss invasion, but doesn't injure the grass," he said. According to Rossi, superintendents have two possible approaches at the moment. "There's the desiccant route, which is probably a variable means for getting control of existing plants," he said. "And there's the nutritional route, where we strive to get suppression and prevention of further moss invasion."

"The desiccant methods will knock back what's there," he said, "but they won't prevent moss from returning. We have a lot of questions about spray volumes, availability, injury, and long-term effect issues. But for now, I think we're on the right track."

For Cybulski and many superintendents in the Northeast, the fight to control moss on the greens goes on. "The most effective procedure would be, ideally, to raise the height of cut on the greens," said Cybulski. "But golfers demand green speed and performance, and that makes moss tough to control."

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Water crisis
Continued from previous page

"The problem," he said, "is that your older sewage systems are gravity-flow, so the lowest end is the regional plant and at the upper end you have homes, businesses and golf courses. Unfortunately, there aren't water lines to deliver reclaimed water back up to those areas. So Ripley's idea is to build a system that taps into the sewage line -- you get the water as it comes downstream. You'd dump the solid waste back in and let that go down to the regional plant. That allows you to claim some of the water. You'd recycle it on-site, and deliver it back to the golf course."

For the time being, that approach would not be cost-effective, according to Huck. "It's not yet perceived that we're into a serious situation in regard to water availability," he said. "But five or 10 years down the road, the guy that builds his plant now will be ready to go, and the other guys might be looking at brown fieldways for a couple of years until they could install their own plants."

It remains to be seen how quickly Southern California golf courses react to an emerging crisis. Pat Gross, the Green Section's south-west regional director, isn't optimistic. "The unfortunate thing about golf course owners, whether it be private clubs or public courses, is that they don't pay attention until the water company is going to turn off the tap," he said. "I don't think the awareness is there yet about how these changes are going to impact the industry."