

USGA to fund new research projects

WASHINGTON — The United States Golf Association's (USGA) Turfgrass and Environmental Research Committee, meeting here recently, selected 15 new research projects for funding. The grants will total \$934,241 over the next three years.

Three of the selected studies focus on putting green construc-

tion. Four projects will examine the environmental impact of golf courses, and eight projects are related to turfgrass management techniques.

The largest of the grants was \$100,000 toward the On-site Evaluation of Golf Course Products: Wetting Agents, a project of the Golf Course Superinten-

dents Association of America (GCSAA). Rutgers University (course construction), University of Georgia (environmental impact), and Kansas State University (environmental impact) each received a \$90,000 grant for their respective projects, with KSU also being awarded \$89,985 for research in the field

of integrated turfgrass management.

These projects bring the USGA's research commitment to more than \$8 million for the 1998-2002 period. The funding also includes continued support for such USGA programs as Wildlife Links, the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program and the Turfgrass Information Center endowment.

From 1983 through 2002, the

USGA will have funded more than 215 projects at a cost of \$21 million. This



private, nonprofit research effort provides opportunities for university faculty interested in working on environmental and turf management problems affecting golf courses. More than 20 new turfgrass varieties, with improved water use or stress resistance, have already been produced.

The USGA research grants are funded on a five-year funding cycle. A call for proposals on the next cycle, beginning in 2003, will be made in late 2001 or early 2002.

Separately, the USGA said that its Foundation Grants Program (FGP) had awarded more than \$6.4 million through November 2000, distributed in 249 grants overall. Begun in 1997, the USGA's "For the Good of the Game" initiative is a 10-year, \$50-million commitment to making golf more accessible and affordable. The FGP targets golf programs across the country serving economically disadvantaged individuals with disabilities and minorities, as well as the construction of facilities created to help introduce the game to new audiences. To date, programs and projects in 47 states and the District of Columbia have received grants.

NGF surveys

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Barry S. Frank, vice president of membership services. "This will enable facilities to better allocate funds for course conditioning or improvements and will also allow them to develop marketing initiatives based on their existing strengths."

The NGF works with facilities to design a product best suited to their needs. Course operators have the option of either Internet or standard survey versions.

Once the surveys are completed, they are returned to the NGF for analysis. A comprehensive report then shows how golf expectations are being met at the course as well as what key features are most important to the customer.

In a simple example, a key finding from the customer satisfaction study may be that although golfers find the condition of the facility's greens to be only average, a very small percentage may have stated that this is important to them. Information such as this may save a facility thousands of dollars or more in future planning. ■

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