MAILBAG

To the editor:
The “Goodbye Sunbelt, hello Snowbelt” commentary (November 2000) by Andrew Overbeck may be a generalization. Altitude has about as much to do with Snowbelt as latitude. He speaks of the Northeast and Midwest, but not of high altitude courses that are closed during the winter months. Our new course (Red Eagle) in northern New Mexico, at an altitude of 8,900 feet, can handle about 30,000 rounds during the season (May through October) and is closed, with very little expense, from November through April. I would assume that numerous western mountain courses are similar. And yes, we do plan to exploit this market in 2001 and beyond.

Bill Gill, President, Eagle Golf Course
Good point. Ed.

PESTICIDES VS. INSECTICIDES

To the editor:
I am bothered by an continuing error in the column “Tools of the Trade.” When a superintendent’s operation is described, including the plant protectants that are applied, you repeatedly call insecticides “pesticides.” While all insecticides are pesticides, not all pesticides are insecticides. The term “pesticide” (which, in our industry, is interchanged with the euphemism “plant protectant”) refers to all materials that control pests. This includes herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, algacides, and so on. As you can see, these terms are not interchangeable and can reveal the writer’s ignorance of the subject.

Ric Lange, CGCS, Meadowbrook Country Club, Racine, Wisc.
We’ll try to remove the bugs from the “Tools” column. Ed.
numbers, the construction of housing, industrial and commercial developments will increase. These developments often include a golf component that is used as a buffer zone in a housing development or as a greenbelt to preserve open space in an office or industrial park.

Resort golf is already making strides in China and the market is set to expand. China posted impressive tourism arrival numbers in 1999, with arrivals increasing 7.9 percent. The World Tourism Organization has also predicted that China will overtake France as the world's most visited destination by 2020.

Outside investment and strong resort development opportunities will spur golf course construction going forward, but land use restrictions and environmental issues will present challenges. Further, golf development in China so far has relied mostly on Hong Kong residents, expatriates and tourists to drive development.

Although China is a large country, much of its land is unsuitable for agricultural use, let alone golf. Land near urban centers is expensive and in high demand facing water shortages. High levels of pollution compounds the water problem. According to Washington-based World Resources Institute, more than 30 billion tons of urban sewage are discharged into China's rivers, lakes and seas each year.

In southern China, where rainfall is usually plentiful, utilizing storage lakes is an effective method of guaranteeing a water supply, but in other parts of the country developers will have to attain permits for access to municipal water systems or drill deep wells.

However, for golf to grow long term, developers will not only have to meet environmental challenges, they will also have to work to introduce Chinese to golf. While the middle class is expanding, there are other amenity items that take priority over golf club memberships, such as microwaves, televisions, air conditioners and automobiles. A round of golf, let alone the purchase of golf clubs, is currently priced beyond the means of most families.

The 9th and 18th holes at the JMP-designed 'A' course at Agile Golf & Country Club, in Zhongshan, China

Gilded age of golf

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spots, such as Cherokee Plantation. The 3,700-acre development, outside Charleston, S.C., the report says, "is the ultimate in golf, hunting, fishing and relaxation on manicured grounds surrounding a renovated 31-room mansion."

The total planned membership at Cherokee is 50, with each member paying $1 million as the initiation fee and annual dues of $85,000. There's no residential development. With the average member playing 30 rounds a year, the authors calculate, the effective cost is $6,200 for 18 holes.

The go-go economy of the last six or seven years has created whole legions of multi-millionaires, Emmerling says. Obviously many of them are eager to pump big money into golf course developments. And who knows - if the bull market gets back on its feet, can the $2-million initiation fee be far behind? •

Connections to China: Permits and water

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CONNECTIONS TO CHINA: PERMITS AND WATER

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