

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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#### THE SECRET OF TROON'S SUCCESS

Troon North (above), Troon Golf's flagship course in Scottsdale, Ariz., is one of 54 courses in the company's fast-growing portfolio. By 2005, the firm expects to have 200 courses worldwide. For a look at Troon's formula for well-managed courses, see page 20.

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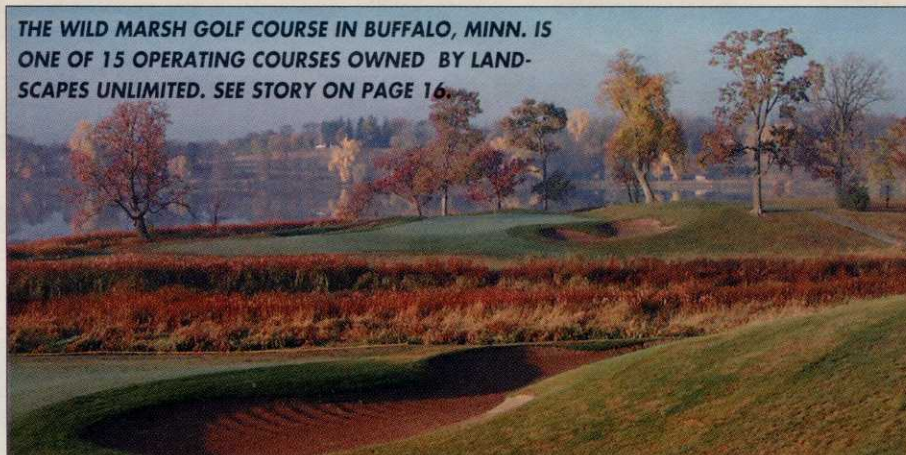
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PERIODICAL

THE WILD MARSH GOLF COURSE IN BUFFALO, MINN. IS ONE OF 15 OPERATING COURSES OWNED BY LANDSCAPES UNLIMITED. SEE STORY ON PAGE 16.



## IRS expediting golf course tax decision

By ANDREW OVERBECK

WASHINGTON — The National Golf Course Owners Association has scored a major victory in its battle with the Internal Revenue Service.

The legal maneuvering centers on the depreciation of golf course improvements in the federal tax code. The IRS put the course construction matter at the top of the seven-issue list that it will study under its new Industry Issues Resolution pilot program, aimed at setting a consistent IRS position on industry issues.

If the depreciation decision comes down in the NGCOA's favor, the average 18-hole course constructed using modern techniques could see tax savings of \$400,000.

The NGCOA has been working with "big five" accounting firm KPMG for the last two years, trying to convince the IRS to update tax laws to allow modern golf courses to depreciate greens, bunkers



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## California's deepening energy crisis striking fear in superintendents

By JOEL JOYNER

SAN DIEGO — California, crippled by an energy debacle and facing financial straits, may leave golf courses with a dark, dry summer as power usage peaks. With predictions of widespread blackouts and staggering energy bills, superintendents in the Golden State are deeply worried.

Moreover, electricity blackouts could spread to Arizona, Nevada, Oregon, Washington and other western states this summer, according to government authorities. For golf courses and other businesses, the potential financial consequences are disturbing.

"It's possible that budgets will be destroyed and, in the case of limited-resource facilities, energy bills may not be paid," said Corey Eastwood, superintendent at the Stockton Golf & Country Club, east of San Francisco. "Who knows what will happen?"

Eastwood's Central Valley course requires enough energy to pump up to one million gallons of water a day during June, July and August. "If we're caught without power, a lot of the grass on the putting greens will be lost," he said.

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The 18th hole at Barona Creek, with casino site in background

## Native Americans prospering from golf development

By DOUG SAUNDERS

SAN DIEGO — Gambling and golf are proving to be a powerful economic combination for Native Americans.

Seventy years ago, the Barona Band of the Mission Indians was one of 550 native American tribes struggling for cultural survival. Today this nation is cruising into the new century as a financial juggernaut. And golf is a big part of

Continued on page 17

## West Nile virus spreading south and west

By JAY FINEGAN

ATLANTA — West Nile virus, already found in about a dozen northeastern and mid-Atlantic states, is expected to spread further south and west this summer, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

The CDC is monitoring the virus along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, from Maine to

Texas. West Nile is carried by mosquitoes.

The virus' first U.S. appearance came in metropolitan New York City in 1999. It has since been detected in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Connecticut. Farther south, the potentially deadly microbe has invaded New

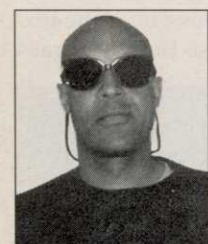
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## Tools of the Trade...at 'Roe' Sherbert's Heritage at Eagle Bend

AURORA, Colo. — The Heritage at Eagle Bend, an active-adult community golf club, has provided unique opportunities for superintendent Ronald "Roe" Sherbert — like working out of a tent.

The new layout completed its grow-in last September as Sherbert and his crew hunkered down for a tough, mile-high Colorado winter. "They've just started to



Ron "Roe" Sherbert

build the clubhouse, maintenance facility and housing for the community this year," said Sherbert. "It's been pretty difficult working out of a tent, especially this winter."

Lacking certain luxuries, the 5,000-square-foot tent provided storage for equipment and a modified shelter for the mechanic. "We basically put up four walls and a roof and placed a big old space heater in there for him," he said. "It provided him with a little bit of comfort to use his grinders."

Sherbert will settle into perma-

nent quarters this month, when his new maintenance facility goes operational. It's an 8,000-square-foot building that will include soil storage bins and an exterior chemical-storage facility.

The 18-hole Arthur Hills-design cruises through 150 acres of native areas. "I've had a long-standing desire to work on the development of a high-altitude course," Sherbert said. "It's been challenging as well, with the holes that play across Aurora's natural areas and with the elevation changes we have here. We had a good six months last year, but this will be our first full season."

As a construction grow-in superintendent with Western Golf Properties, Sherbert is responsible for the \$20-million golf course and facility construction project. "When the course was being built, my duties were to inspect Niebur Golf Construction on the shaping and seeding of the course, as well as the installation of the irrigation and drainage systems," he said.

"Then I had to get a pre-opening budget together, as well as a full-year operational budget for this year that totaled nearly \$2 million," said Sherbert, a gradu-



A new maintenance building at Sherbert's course is expected to open this month and replace his tent storage/maintenance facility.

ate of the golf course operations program at Lake City Community College, in Florida. "It's been a busy year for me."

The retirement community development encompasses a total of 1,100 acres, with 1,300 home sites. The golf course provides a 7,100-yard championship layout to play and maintain.

**Greens mowers:** 6 John Deere 220As with groomers

**Tee mowers:** 4 John Deere 220As

**Fairway mowers:** 2 John

Deere 3235A

**Rough mowers:** 4 John Deere 2653As

**Riding bike rake:** 1 John Deere 1200A

**Turf utility vehicles:** 8 Electric E-Gators, 2 Pro-Gators

**Aerifiers:** 2 John Deere 800 Aercore, 1 John Deere 1500 Aercore

**Topdressers:** 2 John Deere TD-100s

**Tournament speed roller:** Greensroller/Turf Iron

**Reel grinder:** Peerless

**Bedknife grinder:** Peerless  
**Irrigation pump station:** PSI Flowtronex, 1,875 GPM, 3 mains at 75 hp; 2 boosters at 25 hp

**Irrigation system:** Rain Bird - Eagle series 500, 550, 700 and 750 heads

**Golf car fleet:** 80 Club Car, gas; converting to electric

**Flagsticks:** Eagle One, 8-foot tournament

**Computer & accessories:** Compaq MV 520, Translation program

**Primary herbicide:** Trimec

**Primary fungicide:** FFII/Fungicide 7-n-9

**Primary slow release fertilizer:** Grow-in, wall-to-wall Scotts starter 19-25-5; Season, Fairway-n-rough 20-10-20; 60 percent AgricoTurf, 4 percent Fc

**Cannot live without:** My staff — 5 year-round and 20-plus seasonal

**Oldest piece of equipment on course:** Me. Besides that, all equipment was purchased new in May 2000

**Total sq. footage of maintenance building(s):** 8,000 sq. ft.

**Annual rounds of golf:** 32,000

**Normal green speed:** 9' to 10'

### CALIFORNIA ENERGY CRISIS

## California superintendents preparing for power shortfall

Continued from page 1

### IRRIGATION SYSTEMS CEASE WORKING

A fast-growing number of golf courses now irrigate with the aid of computerized systems. These systems help control costs and water usage, but power interruptions cause them to crash.

"Pump stations will stop running during a blackout or grid shutdown, and more than likely will not start up until they can be manually re-set," Eastwood said.

To escape exorbitant daytime energy prices, most courses are now committed to irrigating only at night. "I've heard that we'll be notified a few hours before a shutdown, but I'm sure that all I will find is a message in my voice mail the next morning," Eastwood said. "Golfers at my facility will not stand for water being run during the day to make up for lost water during the night."

### SKYROCKETING POWER RATES

The superintendent at The Meadows Del Mar Golf Club here, David Elliot, has already had first-hand experience with rolling blackouts. It was enough to effect his entire irrigation computer.

"We're a beta site for the Toro SitePro system," Elliott said, "and we lost all of our information. It took us a couple of days to recover and get a new computer disk from Toro. We basically had to start over to get the system operational again."

The course was unable to irrigate during those couple of days. "It shouldn't happen again," he said. "I now have a hard copy of that disk to fall back on for the next blackout, and we'll definitely have more blackouts this summer, guar-

anteed. It will be a long, rough summer."

Elliot's primary concern is skyrocketing rate hikes. "I've dealt with it big-time as a homeowner," he said. "For the course, it's still very unpredictable. We've actually tripled our costs in the past 18 months."

"But it's also tough for some of my employees as well," said the superintendent. "It's becoming extremely hard to live here while earning \$8 an hour." Financial pressures preclude any raises, however.

### FEARS ESCALATE

Steve Fackler is plainly worried. "There hasn't been a lot of discussion within the association," said Fackler, superintendent at The Ridge at Auburn and president of the Sierra Nevada chapter of the California GCSA. "I'm not sure if there's a silent panic, or what. There's also the concern that we won't have enough water this year, either."

"When there's not enough power, they generally spill more water to generate hydroelectric power. That may possibly reduce the quantity of water that we can use," he said. "It could be a double whammy. We're definitely at risk, and none of us likes to live at this level of fear."

### RIPPLING EFFECTS ON OPERATIONS

Power outages, considered guaranteed to occur by many superintendents, will have a rippling effect on entire golfing operations.

"The clubhouse will feel the power crunch as well," said Fackler. "Most of the blackouts will probably take place during the day. They will have to deal with comput-

erized tee times, reservations, registers for food and beverage facilities, air conditioning, kitchens, you name it."

If the club can't prepare and serve food during blackouts, then, on top of already high rates, this summer will hurt the course financially. "The general manager isn't about to say, 'Food and beverage didn't meet their quota last quarter, but maintenance can still keep their budget the same,'" Fackler said.

"Superintendents know how power shortages will effect them. They see things in terms of turf loss," he said. "But I think, realistically, we'll be able to handle blackouts better than the food and beverage and pro shop operations this summer."

### NORTH VERSUS SOUTH

The nation's most populous state is large enough that there is a distinct difference between many Northern and Southern California courses. "In the south, most courses have warm-season grasses like the Bermudas that can tolerate drought conditions more than we can here in the north, with our cool-season grasses," said Fackler.

"If we go two or three days without irrigating because of blackouts, we're going to lose a lot more turf than some of the southern courses," he said. "Here in the Sacramento area, I've seen temperatures in the past reach as high as 112 degrees. When it starts getting over 105, that's when things start to get iffy."

### BRUTAL RATES, LIMITED OPTIONS



An energy crisis of such magnitude hasn't been seen in the state since the Arab oil embargo in the early 1970s. The Public Utilities Commission, which approved another rate hike last March, is considering raising prices by as much as 46 percent this summer. That's in addition to the nine-percent to 15-percent rate increase approved last January and the 10 percent planned for next year.

In the meantime, Pacific Gas & Electric, one of the state's largest power companies, has gone bankrupt.

"We're doing all we can to conserve energy," said Bob Tillema, superintendent at the Riverside Golf Course in Fresno. "All unnecessary lighting is turned off, and I only irrigate when I need to. I'm trying to determine what we are going to do this summer about changing our water practices."

"Last year, I converted the irrigation satellites to a fully automated system so that 99 percent of all of our watering is done during the night," he said.

### OMINOUS LONG-TERM OUTLOOK

With widespread rolling blackouts anticipated, utility companies aren't the only ones leaving superintendents in the dark. The politicians who created the fiasco are apparently so embarrassed at their ineptitude that they're trying to duck out of sight.

"It is just amazing how much we hear on national television and how little we hear locally [from government officials]," said Don Parsons, the semi-retired superintendent at the Old Ranch Golf Club at Seal Beach. "I think they're trying to ignore the problem. But it is very serious. On the news recently, they were discussing the

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GOLF COURSE NEWS



## Mel Summer named super at Black Gold

YORBA LINDA, Calif. — The City of Yorba Linda has appointed Mel Summer as superintendent for their Black Gold Golf Club, a 6,900-yard, par-72, 18-hole public facility opening this spring.

Prior to joining Black Gold, Summer worked for more than 26 years in maintenance, care, construction and growth of golf courses

as a superintendent, project manager, assistant superintendent and construction foreman for various Southern California golf facilities. His most recent postings were at Summit Golf in Corona, Costa Mesa Country Club in Costa Mesa and Pelican Hill Golf Club in Newport Beach.

Summer is a Class A member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and is active in the California Golf Course Superintendents Association.

The Black Gold Golf Club is managed by KemperSports Management of Northbrook, Ill., and was designed by Arthur Hills. The course, located 10 miles northwest of Disneyland, will include a lighted driving range, practice putting green and a 20,000-square-foot clubhouse.

## California

Continued from page 10

10 criteria California had to meet to have electricity this summer. The possibility of meeting all 10 was slim to none."

The long-term outlook is equally ominous. Federal immigration policies are flooding the state with millions of new people. California's population has surged 75 percent just since

1970, to 35 million. Now, more immigration-driven growth is projected to put California's population at 55 million in a few more decades. In the next 40 years alone, California will add the population equivalent of the entire state of Texas.

### GOVERNMENT PESSIMISTIC

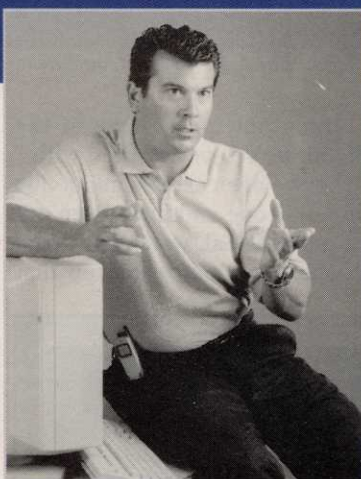
Given the massive population growth, demand for energy is certain to soar. California plans to build new power plants as fast as

possible, but with a booming population, they might not bring much relief.

The United States faces "a major energy supply crisis" over the next 25 years that could swamp the economy and radically lower living standards, said Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham. "The bad news is that the situation in California is not isolated, it is not temporary and it will not fix itself."

Matthew Simmons, president of consulting firm Simmons & Company International, said the convergence of pending shortages in oil, natural gas and electricity are the energy equivalent of "The Perfect Storm." "The power shortages in the Midwest last summer and the current energy crisis in California are but the first tremors that are about to send shockwaves through the world's economic system," he said. ■

## Who Says You Need a Million Dollar Budget To Upgrade Your Irrigation System?



Televised tournaments have created high expectations. Players, club managers, greens committees — everyone wants a course that looks like Pebble Beach, but without the big expense.

That's where Hunter Golf comes in. Hunter specializes in helping you upgrade your course with top-of-the-line retrofit equipment. And we're ready to work within your time frame — whether it's five months or five years. Switch out a few inefficient heads and replace them with reliable Hunter rotors. Add Hunter field controllers with a two-mile maintenance radio...when your budget allows. Or install an easy-to-use Hunter central control system...in affordable stages.

At Hunter Golf we offer an extensive, not expensive, range of options and the service to back it up. Call today for an on-course evaluation — we'll work out a realistic renovation plan that suits your site to a tee.



## Pennington seed

Continued from page 9

granted exclusive worldwide marketing rights for Penn G-6 bentgrass to Pennington Seed. Penn G-6 is a highly rated bentgrass for fairways, tees and putting greens with a good tolerance to the most common diseases.

Penn G-6 creeping bentgrass, released in 1984, has an upright growth habit, fine leaf texture and minimum spiking from golf shoes. It demonstrates a high level of brown patch resistance, moderate dollar spot susceptibility, moderate copper spot susceptibility, good leafspot resistance and moderate fusarium patch resistance. ■

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