

# 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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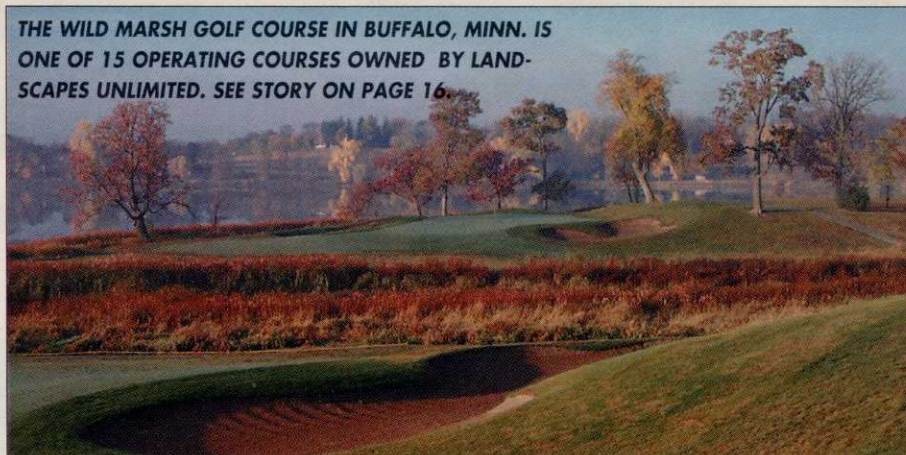
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PERIODICAL

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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## Golf on reservations

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the resurgence.

Indeed, all across the country, golf is exploding on tribal reservations. With 56.2 million acres under their jurisdiction, Indian tribes control that most essential of golf course assets — land. Moreover, as sovereign nations, reservations are exempt from local permitting, impact studies and approvals. They are subject to EPA edicts, however, because the tribes are regulated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

### A DESTINATION RESORT

Barona Creek Golf Club is emblematic of the fast-growing trend. It opened last January as the first phase of a \$255-million expansion of the Barona Valley Ranch Resort and Casino. The complex will include a 400-room hotel and 300,000 square feet of alcohol-free gaming and hospitality space.

The Mission Indians' goal is to turn their reservation into a destination resort for vacationers, convention-goers and golfers. All this has sprung up from a



Clifford LaChappa

humble bingo hall in 1989. Today the tribe has totally eliminated the need for welfare on the reservation, and unemployment, which used to run around 70 percent, is nonexistent.

Set in a peaceful valley 30 miles east of San Diego, the Barona Creek Golf Club is a Gary Roger Baird design, stretching to 7,088 yards. "We're looking forward to sharing our beautiful land with the community," said Clifford LaChappa, tribal chairman. "Our vision for this golf course is to convey the Barona Band's rich tradition of living in tune with nature, in hopes that visitors will be enriched."

### \$12- MILLION PROJECT

Baird took the natural features of the site and his own beliefs about golf course design into careful consideration.

More than 170 mature native oaks were transplanted from around the reservation. Some 90 acres of Bermudagrass sod were laid, making Barona Creek only the second course in the San Diego area to sod all fairways. Nearly 100 bunkers and an elaborate network of lakes and ponds were strategically placed to enhance shot values. The championship layout will accommodate everything from formal tournaments to recreational play.

California-based Cook & Solis, a lake and stream contractor specializing in golf courses, was brought in for water-feature work. California Turf, a Toro distributor, spearheaded the irrigation work. Wadsworth Golf Construction handled the heavy lifting on the project, which cost about \$12 million.

### SOVEREIGNTY AS A NATION

Since 1778, the U.S. government has signed 370 Indian treaties, which were meant to form compacts with the tribes as separate nations. The tribes paid a heavy price by giving up their ancestral lands. In return, they obtained recognition as sovereign nations. These rights to act as their own countries, with their own laws and government, are fiercely

guarded by Indian tribes today.

After decades of struggling to become self-reliant, the creation by Congress of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act in 1988 opened the gates to gambling on reservation land. And gambling begat golf. Decisions concerning golf course construction and operation are free of any regional or state regulatory bureaucracies.

The Barona Band, a once-nomadic group that has lived in the area for 5,000 years, was moved to this ranch in 1932. The gaming act finally gave it a way to create economic independence while protecting the environment.

### SANDY CLARK, SUPERINTENDENT

"The introduction of gaming here was very successful because we're so close to a large population base," said head superintendent Sandy Clark. "That success led the tribal council to look into expansion and see that the golf course should be part of that plan."

Clark explained that the tribe's freedom from state and local regulations don't give him free reign in maintaining the course. "The tribe's heritage dictates a deep respect for the land and nature," he said, "and that's a guiding force in anything we do. When I was hired, it was made clear that the course should accentuate and enhance their most precious natural resource, the land itself."

"To this end, we have built a course that flows across the land," he added. "Roger Baird did a wonderful job laying out the course through the rock outcroppings. We moved only 850,000 yards of land in building the course."

### WILD HORSE GOLF IN OREGON

Today, 130 tribes in 24 states are involved in gaming, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs has approved 267 gaming compacts. The natural evolution of the gaming model is the creation of a complete Las Vegas-style destination, which includes lodging and golf. Many tribes are joining in the development movement.

Sean Hoolehan, CGCS, is the superintendent at Wild Horse Golf Resort on the Umatilla Indian Reservation near Pendleton, Ore. His course was built in 1997 as an



Sandy Clark

amenity to the small casino and hotel. He believes the challenges of golf operations on Indian lands are poorly understood. "The tribal councils are strict here about doing things in an environmentally conscientious way," he said. "At other courses in Oregon, the local regulations have progressed significantly as agencies have become more familiar with golf course operations. With the EPA, the issues surrounding golf are relatively new, so there is the need to educate the agency about what I need to implement to maintain the facility."

### NETWORK OF SUPERINTENDENTS

No one knows how many reservations have golf courses — there's little contact between these facilities. Hoolehan, however, is trying to forge a network between the reservation-course superintendents.

"It's interesting how individual each

project is because of the nature of each tribal council," he said. "Barona Creek is part of a huge resort destination and has to be run like a resort course. Here at Wild Horse, the casino business only has 400 slot machines and a 100-room hotel. The tribe operates the resort, and 60 percent of the employees are tribal members. Where resort play is the focus at Barona Creek,



Third hole at Barona Creek

here at Wild Horse 30 percent of our play is Native Americans."

### FOXWOODS ADDING TWO COURSES

The scope of some of these reservation projects is impressive. Consider the Pequot Indians' Foxwoods Casino and Resort, in Mashantucket, Conn. Since 1992, the complex has added \$1.1 billion in taxes to Connecticut's coffers. Foxwoods is undoubtedly one of the most successful Indian gaming establishments. The casino is the world's largest, with 330,000 square feet of casino space and over 4,000 slot machines.

Foxwoods operates one golf course, Foxwoods Golf & Country Club, and is currently in the permitting process to build two more layouts across from the casino property. Director of golf Pete Smith, a Native American, for years was the head superintendent at Shinnecock

Hills. Smith, a graduate of both Dartmouth College and Rutgers University, is intrigued by the growth of golf among Indian nations.

"Golf has grown in popularity among the tribes that have adopted golf to their lands," Smith said. "Our annual Tribal Golf Invitational tournament draws 250 players from Indian lands nationwide. I'm not sure how many courses exist around the country now, but I am sure it will continue to grow."

### BRINGING IN TOP DESIGNERS

Tribal councils have learned the importance of doing such projects correctly. They have learned, for example, the importance of hiring first-rate designers, construction crews and management firms. Golf architects such as Ben Crenshaw, Roger Baird, Rees Jones and Tom Doak have designed reservation courses.

The Piate Indian Resort near Las Vegas has two Pete Dye-designed layouts, with a

third Dye course under construction. The Oneida tribe in New York operates 36 holes of golf around the Turning Stone Casino near Syracuse. At Talking Stick on the Salt River-Maricopa Reservation, near Phoenix, Troon Golf manages two golf courses.

### EACH SITUATION UNIQUE

"Since doing the project at Talking Stick, we've been contacted by other tribal councils around the country," said Dana Garmany, Troon's chairman and CEO. "Golf has become a part of economic development for many tribes. We don't feel that we have any special advantage concerning these types of projects, because each nation presents a unique situation."

Garmany finds the projects a good fit for his company because of the tribes' desire to create four-star quality projects dedicated to strict environmentalism. ■

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