

GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

A UNITED PUBLICATION

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 4

APRIL 2002 • \$7.00

www.golfcoursenews.com

INSIDE

Superintendents retool regs

Superintendents in Pennsylvania and New Jersey work to change water restrictions.....8

Safety goes high-tech

GPS offers a multitude of safety features from golf car tracking to two-way communication.....19



GOLFERS ON FILM

In a move to keep golfers at the club after they have finished their rounds, the owners of newly-opened Pistol Creek Golf Club (above) set up cameras on the 18th hole. The action is then shown on 15-minute tape delay in the club's restaurant. To read more about the club's other innovative ideas, see story on page 14.

COURSE MAINTENANCE

Moss invades Colorado, no cure in sight.....8
Prevent accidents with safety plan.....8
Tools of the Trade at Dalton's Copper Hills G&CC..10

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Arvida donates live oaks to 'Old Ironsides' 3
Hills and Forrest moving forward in 2002 14
Ron Garl excited about paspalum's future 15

COURSE MANAGEMENT

Industry watching NGP merger..... 19
Palmer Golf enters Pennsylvania..... 19
KemperSports focusing on growth 20

SUPPLIER BUSINESS

PBI Gordon, Griffin ready with new herbicides .. 23
Rain Bird developing soil moisture probes 24
New products galore.....27

RENOVATION WORK, LIKE THIS PROJECT AT LAKESIDE COUNTRY CLUB IN HOUSTON, IS GIVING NEW LIFE TO OLDER COURSES. SEE STORIES ON PAGES 14 AND 15.



Drought conditions on East Coast to persist into spring

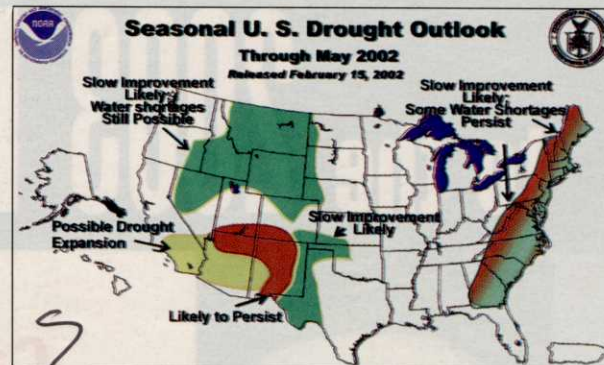
By A. OVERBECK

The warm and dry winter along the entire East Coast has helped courses increase play and has allowed superintendents to tackle more off-season tasks. However, as dry weather has persisted into March, courses from Maine to Georgia are facing the possibility of entering spring under challenging drought conditions.

Some states have already declared drought emergencies and put re-

strictions into place and many more states could follow suit. The long-term forecast from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) calls for a slight improvement but predicts water shortages will continue to persist through May. Among the more staggering drought indicators are:

- The Northeast experienced the second driest September through February in the past 107 years.
- NOAA said the



drought, which started in some areas in 1998, is now classified as hydrological because of low ground water, lake and well levels. These droughts typically take longer to end.

- Drought emergencies have already been declared in New Jersey and in 26 counties in Pennsyl-

vania (See related story on page 8). At press time, New Hampshire and Maryland were close to declaring emergencies.

"This winter drought is not unprecedented, but it is unusual for such a large area to share a drought of this magnitude," said

Continued on page 12

Organic golf activists score major victory

By A. OVERBECK

BROOKLYN, N.Y.—The Long Island Neighborhood Network (LINN) has won a major victory in its battle to make all new golf courses organic. A four-judge Appellate Division panel here unanimously reversed a lower court decision Feb. 25 and ordered the Town of Stony Point to comply with SEQRA (State Environmental Quality Review Act) by completing a full environmental impact statement (EIS) before continuing work on its \$18 million Rick Jacobson-designed golf course.

The decision builds on a

similar lower court victory and settlement in Suffolk County in 1998 (GCN June 1999) that forced the county to commit to making its two new 18-hole courses in Yaphank completely organic. The recent decision, however, could set a precedent on a larger scale since it



would apply to Nassau and Suffolk counties in addition to Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, Orange,

Continued on page 5

Gotham, First Union Real Estate to merge

By DEREK RICE

NEW YORK — On the same day National Golf Properties announced its planned merger with American Golf Corp., First Union Real Estate Equity and Mortgage Investments and Gotham Partners LP also agreed to merge. The resulting entity, Gotham Golf Corp., will be a publicly traded company.

Representatives from both companies declined to speak on the record for this story because a registration statement had not yet been filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission. There is no formal target date for completion of the merger, although if it has not been completed by August 31, payouts to First Union shareholders increase.

The deal has been in the works for some time now, and has been through many proposed incarnations

Continued on page 20

Toro, GE Capital create financial offering

By ANDREW OVERBECK

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — The Toro Co. has partnered with GE Capital Vendor Financial Services to provide a branded, single-source financing solution for golf courses and municipalities.

The move not only consolidates the company's previous financing options

but it also gives Toro access to a financing arm that is larger than Textron Financial Services and John Deere Credit.



Financing

Textron Financial Services and John Deere Credit have managed assets of \$9.1 billion and \$13 billion, respectively, and GE Capital has served assets of nearly \$20 billion.

Continued on page 25

East Coast drought already forcing water restrictions

Continued from page 1

NOAA drought specialist Douglas LeCompte. "Our historical data shows that you tend to have some improvement going from a winter drought into spring and summer. But even if we get a couple good storms we will have some lingering impacts as we go into summer because wells and reservoirs are so far below normal. We are still in drought territory."

LeCompte added that storms in late February and early March had little impact on helping reservoirs and ground water supplies bounce back.

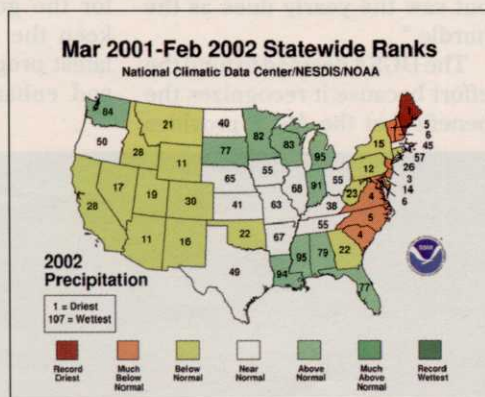
DEVELOPING A DROUGHT PLAN

Superintendents, especially those who got hit by the drought of 1999, are already starting to prepare for potential drought conditions, water restrictions and increased disease pressure.

The first step in dealing with dry weather is to develop a drought plan.

"After checking your irrigation system to eliminate leaks and ensure efficiency, you start off by watering less," said Brian Vinchesi, design engineer for Pepperell, Mass.-based Irrigation Consulting and president of the American Society of Irrigation Consultants. "After that you stop watering the rough, then you cut out the fairways except for land-

ing areas, and then fairways altogether. If things get worse you have to decide whether you stop irrigating tees, but you can't stop watering greens."



Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia and North and South Carolina were some of the driest states in the country in the past year.

Another key to efficiency is to increase the control over the irrigation system, said Vinchesi. Superintendent Tim O'Neill at the Country Club of Darien (Conn.) did just that this winter.

"We went from a system that had 230 heads to one that has 1,000 heads," O'Neill said. "With individual control I can put the water exactly where I want to put it." Such control could come in helpful if watering restrictions are put in place this summer, he added.

However, some courses are flat out running low on water resources. Superintendent Billy Lewis at Carolina National in Bolivia, N.C., pulls water from lakes that are five feet below normal. This fall his course spent \$50,000

to buy water from the county in order to overseed \$20,000 worth of seed. Conditions have not improved this winter.

AGRONOMIC CONCERNS

According to David Oatis, director of the United States Golf Association Green Section's Northeast region office, if drought continues into the summer, superintendents will experience increased disease pressure.

"Any stress-related disease such as summer patch, anthracnose, dollar spot, localized dry spot and fairy ring become problems in a dry year," said Oatis.

Lewis has already had outbreaks of dollar spot. "We have spent a lot more money this year controlling dollar spot due to the warmer temperatures and dry conditions," he said.

Drought conditions will be compounded, said Oatis, by damage caused by higher levels of winter play that many courses experienced.

"We have set a record for winter play this year," he said. "And there is a direct relationship between heavy winter play and more summer stress and disease problems."

Chris Carson, superintendent at Echo Lake Country Club in Westfield, N.J. stuck to his guns this winter and kept members playing on temporary greens.

"With the dry weather the damage is not as bad, but we feel closing in winter is better for the course in the summer," he said. "We just opened some back up this week, but will hold off on



At Carolina National (N.C.), irrigation lakes are five feet below normal.

opening all of them for a while longer."

With water restrictions and disease pressure looming, superintendents agree that the best approach is to reduce stress on the turf. Aeration and verticutting will be out and stocking up on wetting agents, surfactants and plant growth regulators will be in. The key will be having the water resources to properly apply those products.

"The money you were spending on fungicides will now go toward labor for hand watering and wetting agents," said Bill Wall, superintendent at Dauphin Highlands Golf Club in Harrisburg, Pa.

COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY

Just as local governments are starting to grease the skids by promoting water conservation habits, superintendents are taking a proactive approach to communicate the potential impact of drought conditions to members, green committees and golfers.

"I am formulating a plan right

now," said Carson, whose course is hosting the USGA Girls Junior National Championship in July. "We have a green committee meeting next week and I am going to lay it out step by step about what the possibilities and probabilities are and what the potential loss is. I also need to talk about investing in wetting agents, explain the use of plant growth regulators and discuss raising the height of cut."

While timely rains could make a big difference and help courses get through the dry spell, it is important to explain that this year could be different.

"When the water is down you have to make sacrifices. This is not the year to plant ornamentals and annual flowers. It is not the right time to do a lot of renovation work," said Wall. "We also need to educate golfers that lean and mean is better. We sell green, but the game is better played on a firm, fast and dry surface." ■

© 2002 Flowtronex PSI, Inc.

CALL FLOWTRONEX BEFORE YOUR REPAIRMAN DOES.

Trusting complicated pump station repairs like controls or VFD problems to an unqualified repairman can make the situation worse and end up costing you more. The Flowtronex network of certified technicians can handle virtually any problem on any brand of manufactured pumping system anywhere in the world. So whether you have an emergency or just want a consultation, give us a call.

FLOWTRONEX

No One Makes Your Life Easier. No One.
1-800-786-7480 • www.flowtronex.com



Trion Direct

Gives You a Straight Approach



Equipping your shop with the best turf equipment lift is incredibly easy. When you work with a factory direct sales consultant at Trion, you'll quickly get all the information you need:

- Brand comparison data
- Referral contacts
- Lift accessory information
- Shop floor plans
- Technical assistance
- Maintenance planning help
- Real budget numbers
- Custom lift option

With Trion's factory direct sales and service, you make the right choice — we'll take care of the rest!

Call Today!
800-426-3634



**Shouldn't your Grounds Crew
look as groomed as your greens?**



**GOLF SHIRTS • CAPS
JACKETS • PANTS • RAINSUITS**

**CHESTNUT
IDENTITY APPAREL**

800-336-8977

www.chestnutid.com