



## BRIEFS

### FOX NAMED SUPERINTENDENT AT NEW JERSEY NATIONAL GOLF CLUB

BASKING RIDGE, N.J. — Brad Fox has been named superintendent at the New Jersey National Golf Club, a high-end, public facility here. Fox earned a B.S. in Turfgrass Science from Penn State University before taking a position at the Bethpage (N.Y.) State Park courses. He has spent the last 18 months at Bethpage learning the profession under superintendent Craig Currier. New Jersey National is managed by Empire Golf, a subsidiary of Bergstol Enterprises.



Brad Fox

### SRO'S BENTGRASS INITIATIVE PROGRAM PAYS OFF WITH REBATES

CORVALLIS, Ore. — Seed Research of Oregon has contributed over \$1,000 to local golf course superintendents associations as part of a bentgrass rebate program. Thirty golf courses and their distributors participated in the 2001 Bentgrass Initiative Program. SRO made the contributions to the superintendent's choice of GCSAA-affiliated association, based on qualifying Seed Research brand grass seed purchased in 2001. Qualifying products included: creeping bentgrasses SR 1020, Providence, SR 1119, Brighton, Dominant and Dominant Plus, colonial bentgrass SR 7100, and velvet bentgrass SR 7200. The Rocky Mountain Golf Course Superintendents Association was the biggest beneficiary.

### GOLF MANAGEMENT APPOINTS ZICKAFOOSE AT MARYLAND NATIONAL

FREDERICK, Md. — Golf Management, Inc., based in Jacksonville, Fla., has appointed Brian Zickafoose superintendent at Maryland National Golf Course, an Arthur Hills-designed semi-private course opening July 2002 near Frederick, Md. Previous positions for Zickafoose include director of golf construction for T.A. Turner Construction Services of Gaithersburg, Md. Before that, he managed construction and grow-in of a Jack Nicklaus Signature-designed course for Rocky Gap Lodge and Golf Resort in Cumberland, Md.

## Spring snowmelt provides important maintenance hints

By KEVIN ROSS

One of the most important times of the year for a golf course superintendent is during the spring snowmelt period. Of foremost importance is observing what the ravages of winter have done to the fine turf areas of the golf course.

As the snow recedes, first thoughts are to analyze snow mold infection, ice-re-

cellent way of charting those hot spots.

These charted areas can also be used in determining the water requirements or timing of irrigation. Turf areas that lose their snow cover first, will have a greater zone timing than areas losing it later.

### DRAINAGE CLUES

Drainage is also an area that should not go unnoticed. Low pockets and wet swale

areas can be evaluated and mapped for future drainage installation projects. Other than heavy rainstorms, this is certainly the best time of year to identify these areas. It may even be better than a summer rain event, because the turf is not actively growing and the soil could still be frozen. These two factors can result in a much

higher water run-off

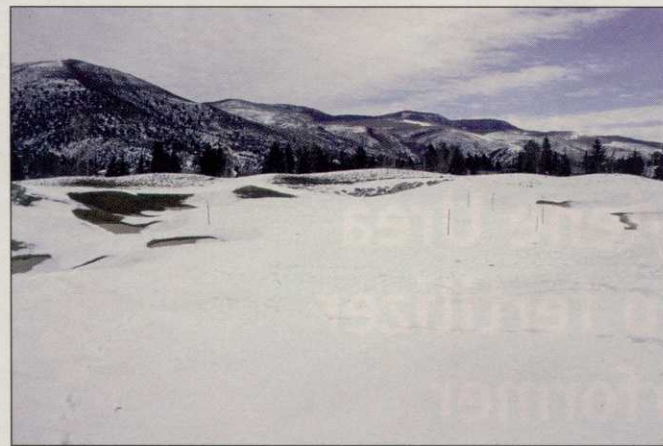
potential. With this increased run-off potential, areas can be noticed at this time that may not be during summer rain events.

### ANIMAL DAMAGE

Another issue to watch is animal damage. For example, some golf courses have heavy vole infestations throughout the course, which can result in severe turfgrass destruction. Vole damage tends to be the highest in areas where snow cover lasts the longest. These areas can be charted and filed for potential future fall applications of animal repellants.

Many golf courses have deer or elk herds that take up residency during the winter period causing extensive turf and tree damage. Damage and migratory routes can be

Continued on page 12



Spring snowmelt reveals hot spots

lated damage, and possible desiccation. However, superintendents need to look beyond winter damage to see the hints this once-a-year phenomenon has to offer.

By watching snowmelt patterns, superintendents can quickly chart dry spots, wet spots, drainage patterns and animal damage on the course. This information is especially valuable if you are at a newly constructed facility or in your first year at an established course.

### WATCH FOR HOT SPOTS

One of the most important set of observations is to identify hot spots on the golf course. Areas where the snow recedes first are usually an indicator of the "hottest" or "driest" spots on the golf course. The combination of the sun's angle to the slope of turf on the golf course is a very unused, but

## Maine superintendents take steps to prevent ice damage

By ANDREW OVERBECK

CUMBERLAND, Maine — After suffering major ice damage during the brutal winter of 2001, superintendents here are employing numerous techniques to keep their greens free of ice this year.

Last year, superintendent Jim Hodge lost all 18 of his greens at Val Halla Golf & Recreation Center. With five feet of snow last winter, and only a small layer of ice, Hodge thought he would get through to spring in good shape. But Mother Nature always surprises.

"We learned a big lesson last year," Hodge said. "It was a combination of a little bit of ice and the fluctuation of temperature. I didn't see turf for more than 120 days. That added up to a lot of turf loss."

This time around Hodge is not taking any chances. After 30 days of ice cover, he

is plowing off the greens and melting the ice layer by applying either Profile soil amendment, black sunflower seeds, or pelletized gypsum and lime. Breaking up the ice allows air exchange and prevents widespread winterkill.



Sunflower seeds and Profile reduce ice buildup

"So far the Profile and sunflower seeds work best," he said. "Profile eats into the ice and doubles as a topdressing material. The sunflower seeds absorb sunlight and melt through the ice, but then I have a mess

Continued on page 12

## Audubon survey highlights golf course successes

By JOEL JOYNER

SELKIRK, N.Y. — Golf courses continue to improve their environmental performance, according to Audubon International's 2001 *Managed Lands Survey for Golf*. The survey is comprised of more than 470 of the 2,000-plus golf courses



enrolled in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) for golf courses. It revealed that courses are

saving water, using less chemicals, and preserving more wildlife area.

The following are a few of the leading indicators:

- When examining water quality and water conservation efforts, 89 percent of courses that responded had improved their irrigation system or the way that water was applied to the site. As a result, these golf courses saved an estimated 1.9 million gallons of water per year, per course since joining ACSP — totaling over 500 million gallons per year. Likewise, 86 percent of golf course managers and superintendents have increased efforts to monitor water quality.

- In the area of chemical use reduction and safety, 82 percent of respondents reduced pesticide use while 75 percent reduced pesticide costs. Additionally, 92 percent of respondents used pesticides with

Continued on page 11

### Editorial Focus: Hiring

## Reduce turnover by implementing hiring plan

By RAYMOND DAVIES

Maintaining and managing a staff can be a challenging, but not an impossible task. By taking into account local demographics, developing a best worker profile, and discussing job responsibilities and goals, superintendents will be better prepared to handle employment issues and reduce turnover.

Hiring issues depend largely on local labor conditions. Many superintendents do not have a significant challenge because of modest or high unemployment or the availability of a large number of college students or active retirees. The main



Raymond Davies

Continued on page 11



## Volunteer 'regulators' maintain private golf course at Dinosaur Dunes in western Kansas

By JOEL JOYNER

SHIELDS, Kan. — "It's unlike anything you have ever seen before," said Greg Strong, volunteer superintendent and one of the "regulators" here at the private Dinosaur Dunes Golf Club.

The course is unique indeed. Dinosaur Dunes is an 18-hole, 3,413-yard golf course located within the Cat House Outdoor Recreation facility in western Kansas. The owner, Clayton "Cat" Davis, designed and built the layout in 1988 along with the owner of the local John Deere dealership, David Kuhlman.

"We went out on the property with a case of beer and did all of the design work out in the field," said Davis. "I had some volunteers with me who helped with the construction work, and we built the course to our own standards. We've just continued to make changes over the years such as add bunkers, move tees around, and make changes to the design as we went."

Davis used to maintain the course himself with the assistance of some employees at the recreation facility. As other priorities at the recreation area and his cattle feed business required more of his attention, Davis has allowed golfers who are interested to volunteer their time and tools to maintain and make improvements at the course.

Superintendent Strong has volunteered at the course for about six years, and quite heavily during the past two years. "All of the volunteers are members of the club, and most are very active golfers that are out golfing every weekend. Last year, I got in 219 rounds myself," said Strong.

All of the greens at the course are either buffalograss or Bermudagrass. "We use a John Deere grooming mower on greens, fairways and roughs," Strong said.

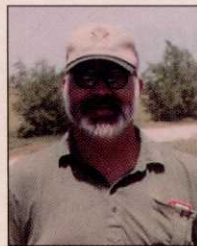
"Five of our volunteers, or regulators as we like to call them, are trained on the mower. The rest bring their own pruning saws, chainsaws, rakes, trimmers, blowers and whatever else is needed and do the work that is set out in the yearly planner. Sometimes we purchase the seed and tools needed ourselves."

The recreation area sits on about 1,100 acres. "It's one of the greatest deals in golf I've ever found," said Strong. "Membership to the recreation area is only \$125 per year. That entitles

### REBUILDING THREE NEW HOLES

This year will be an ambitious year for Strong and his regulators. "We are planning on building three new holes – to replace holes that are affected by spring flooding – reseeding five greens, building three bunkers, and adding women's tees and stretching tips to increase playability and to lengthen our course by more than 400 yards," said Strong.

The course is only a par 62, but challenging, said Strong. "It plays through canyons. I've always felt that if you can play



Greg Strong



The sixth fairway at Dinosaur Dunes Golf Club

you, basically, to unlimited golf. There are no set tee times. If you are the guy standing on the tee box, it's your tee time."

Most of the regulators are weekend warriors, but Strong tries to be out on the course about every evening during the peak playing season. "There are a couple of members who even carry pruning saws in their golf bags," Strong said. "They'll go out and play 18 holes, and then head back out to mow five or six holes."

Dinosaur Dunes, you can play nearly any course in the world," he said. "There are drops in elevation up to 100 feet in some places. It's more of a target golf course, but none of the holes are very long."

The only par 5 on the course is 414 yards. "A lot of our par 4s are in the 246 yards to 287 yards range," explained Strong. "But if you are off target, you're off a cliff or in a plowed field. In the summer time, there are silage crops that

Continued on page 28

## Audubon survey

Continued from page 8

lower toxicity levels.

- Efforts to address wildlife and habitat management have been equally effective, with 89 percent choosing native plants when landscaping, as compared to 49 percent before joining the program. In addition, the average number of acres devoted to providing wildlife habitat increased by 50 percent – from 45 acres to 67 acres per course – on average.

All of these strides were taken without compromising the quality of the game itself, according to the study. Nearly 100 percent of courses surveyed reported increased or maintained golf quality and player satisfaction.

### ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Combined, the golf courses that responded to the survey provided 40,214 acres of wildlife habitat, an increase of nearly 10,000 acres due to program participation. However, there is more room for improvement in categories such as: improving spill containment for pesticide mixing and containment areas (64 percent); removing exotic invasive plants (56 percent); and installing a contained equipment wash-off area (45 percent).

"We need to continue to work with courses to reduce runoff, employ BMPs [Best Management Practices] in the maintenance facility, and monitor water quality," said Jean Mackey, director of educational services at Audubon International.

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for golf was launched in 1991 in conjunction with the United States Golf Association (USGA). The average course covers 150 acres, with just 30 percent generally used for greens, tees, fairways and buildings – leaving 70 percent as rough, woods, water and other habitats, according to the USGA.

"Golf courses offer a unique open space in landscape for wildlife to exist and thrive. Ongoing stewardship actions and education efforts lead to habitat protection, natural resource protection, and a reduction in the overall impact of golf management practices on the surrounding ecosystem," said Joellen Zeh, staff ecologist with Audubon International. ■

## Reduce turnover with hiring plan

Continued from page 8

objective here is to sift through the many applicants and identify those most suited for the work using a best worker profile. A best worker profile identifies the qualities of your current workforce that makes them a successful team.

Many other superintendents find themselves faced with labor markets that are challenged by low unemployment, high housing costs, and few responses to the traditional methods of seasonal staffing. For those in a tough labor market, it is important to effectively compete for candidates that fit your best worker profile.

### WORKING WITH NEW EMPLOYEES

After selecting the right individual, steps need to be taken to increase the odds of their success. It is critical to know how the position meets their needs. You need to know what brought the person to the job. This information will allow superintendents to better motivate the person and will help reduce turnover.

After the decision to hire and before communicating this news to the applicant, it is important to manage expectations. Share all the negative aspects of the job up front; it is

important that they understand and accept that they will be doing manual labor, getting up early in the morning, working weekends, etc. Do not hire until you have clearly communicated the aspects of the work that have caused some to leave your operation. Rather than selling them on all the great aspects and hope they can handle the challenges, it is much wiser to undersell the positives and focus on gaining acceptance of the challenges.

### MOTIVATING WORKERS

When applicants are looking for work, they know the very lowest wages they will accept. It is important to learn this number. If the goal is to obtain effective staff with limited turnover, then it may well be counter productive to agree to pay someone the very lowest wage they can accept. Paying somewhat more than the minimum they will accept allows you to exceed their expectations and helps them to accept the challenges of the position.

Having a plan that addresses the challenges you face in hiring staff is site specific. The better one understands the community and its dynamics, the better they will be able to identify opportunities to attract successful applicants. By taking full advantage of this experience to establish and manage staff expectations, superintendents can dramatically reduce future turnover. ■

## Thomas' Tools

Continued from previous page

maintenance operation at Oak Creek.

"Our main battles at Pelican Hill are the poor soil conditions, transition problems and using reclaimed water," said Thomas. "With a 75-man maintenance team, we have created an intense cultivation, irrigation and fertilization program to combat these issues."

One tool Thomas has recently implemented is the use of a Drill-N-Fill machine. "This machine helps us with our heavy clay soils by injecting sand and helping with drainage and compaction," said Thomas. "We've done complete fairways with it, traffic areas in the rough and other high compaction areas such as green walk-ons and the driving range tee.

"I currently spend most of my time at Pelican Hill, but I also oversee Oak Creek as well," explained Thomas. "It's a wonderful challenge to keep both facilities in tournament condition on a daily basis." ■