BY ANDREW OVERBECK

MYERSVILLE, Md. — True to its name, Musket Ridge Golf Club sits on ridge here 2,200 feet above sea level one hour northwest of Washington D.C. The course, designed by Joe Lee, had its grand opening May 10 and longtime superintendent Douglas Wittcraft has been on board since the grow-in began in spring 2001.

While Wittcraft wouldn’t trade the stunning views of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west and Catoctin Mountain to the east, the location does present some agronomic challenges.

“We get wind up here every day,” said Wittcraft. “Now that helps us in drainage and keeping fungal diseases down, but water conservation and usage is a big concern.”

Musket Ridge pulls water from two wells that feed two ponds on the property that provides ample irrigation supply. This water is used to keep slopes on the greens and tees. With just 12 people on staff, that is a huge labor savings.

“We gave it a shot this year and it seemed to help greens and tees a lot,” he said. “It has held up well in the heat and we have not had to send guys around spraying. That cuts down on labor costs.”

Wittcraft has been so impressed with the performance, that he is adding enough wetting agents into next year’s budget to cover fairways. He also plans to topdress problem areas on the largely clay soil runways this fall.

ADDITIONAL NINE

Besides the other normal fall maintenance activities, Wittcraft may also be busy working on an additional nine holes.

“Joe Lee has already designed it, the permits are in place and we are just waiting for the go-ahead from the owners,” he said.

Wittcraft is looking forward to being on-site for the actual construction this time and hopes it will help improve shortfalls he has noticed on the original 18.

“The way the contours in the fairway run, water doesn’t get to the drains quick enough,” said Wittcraft. “When we grow-in and done detail work because the final grading was not done well in places.”

The new nine holes will run adjacent to the existing 18 holes on the 200-acre property. The 27-hole complex will then be set up as three individual nines that players can combine any way they want on any given day. The course has trees, but is a more links-style layout with plenty of room to recover. Though there are elevation changes, they are all downhill so the layout is easily walkable.

With 27 holes, Wittcraft said the owners hope to draw more play in from Baltimore and Washington D.C., and perhaps even the commander in chief.

“We are four miles as the crow flies from Camp David,” he said. “Some secret service people and the president’s valet have played, and we hope to one day get the big boy [President Bush] out here.”