Audubon Int'l thinking big

By ANDREW OVERBECK

HARTWELL, Ga. — On the heels of announcing its “Fifty in Five” initiative, Audubon International revealed yet another ambitious plan to expand its programs during its first-ever industry summit held Feb. 12 at Cateechee Golf Club, a facility in Hartwell. The initiative, titled the Sustainable Communities Campaign, will build on the group’s environmental certification of golf courses.

The new plan will dramatically increase Audubon International’s profile and will require more participation from the golf industry if it is to be successful.

“We have become known as that golf environmental group,” said Audubon president Ron Dodson. “We want to think really big and promote the principles of sustainability.”

The goals of the sustainability-focused initiative will be to provide adequate supplies of clean water, to maintain and increase biological diversity and to create livable and equitable communities.

Audubon has divided the country into 18 level-one watersheds and will be launching programs in New York, North Carolina, and the Pacific Northwest.

One of the main drivers behind the merger, which the two organizations have talked about for three or four years, was the need to deliver more of those qualified buyers to the show floor, said GCSAA CEO Steve Mona.

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Debate over Roundup Ready bent rages on

By ANDREW OVERBECK

ATLANTA — Scotts and Monsanto are moving ahead with the development of Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass despite several recent challenges.

Bill Rose, president of Hybrigene, Turf-Seed and Tee-2-Green, announced at the GCSAA Conference and Show in Atlanta that his researchers had officially produced a male-sterile bentgrass plant. Rose contends that this method reduces the risk of gene flow and contamination of traditional bentgrass varieties during the production process and that using any other method would result in gene escape.

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Mountain Lake restored

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Seth Raynor's design, and we knew that Brian Silva was very qualified for this type of restoration," Blackwell said. Silva advised the club not to overseed this fall, which would give the features time to grow in. While this left many of the greens looking brown for a while, superintendent Steve Ciardullo said he is impressed with the end result.

"The greens came out great, if not a little fast," Ciardullo said.

Many of the members, Blackwell said, are not so sure about the new number and shaping of the bunkers. Many were replaced and re-sodded, so the course decided to make them out-of-play for the time being.

"A lot of our members are older, so they have a hard time climbing down into the bunkers," Blackwell said. "There is a low spot on each one, but instead of walking all the way around, some of them have come up with a way of getting their ball out using a wedge and a rake.

Among the other Raynor features Silva restored were signature holes, such Eden, which was inspired by the 11th hole at St. Andrews, and Biarritz, a tribute to the chasm hole at the original Willie Dunn course in Biarritz, France. Versions of these holes, along with many others, can be found in each of Raynor's designs. The seventh hole at Mountain Lake is a tribute to the Road Hole at St. Andrews, with a bunker to the right of the green filling the role of one of the most famous stretches of pavement in golf.

Mountain Lake is a private club surrounded by a gated housing community that was founded in 1915 and landscaped by Frederick Law Olmstead Jr.

Golf Industry Show

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GCSAA past president Michael Wallace. "We have a duty and an obligation if we're going to put on a show like this to deliver buyers to that arena," Wallace said. "We take that very seriously. We see this as one way of doing that because we see buyers and superintendents coming together and working toward that common goal."

At the press conference to discuss the merger, some in attendance expressed concern that this show would blur the lines between the two associations, but the NGCOA's Walt Lankau, who owns Stow Acres Country Club in Stow, Mass., dismissed those concerns.

"I have two people here, my superintendent and head of construction, and there's plenty of room for all three of us," Lankau said. "They know what they want and I know what I want, so I don't think that's going to be an issue at all. When we have our combined conference, we're going to have separate educational stuff, but I'm hoping there will be some cross-pollination there as well. It's a huge win-win for everybody." Wallace agreed and praised the potential the combined show will present.

"Realistically, the ability to bring owners to a show and be able to take them around the floor and be able to explain to them or show them what different options are open to them as far as equipment purchases, it's huge," Wallace said. "It enables them to come to a place where they can see what options are available to them. I think it allows the superintendents to gain some credibility and it allows the owner to see that the super has done due diligence."

Because very few superintendents have free reign with a checkbook, Wallace said, the Golf Industry Show will enable owners to make more qualified purchases more quickly.

"Now you've shortened the chain in that decision-making process and hopefully the decisions will be made quicker and the industry will have the ability to interact directly with the ultimate decision-maker," he said. "As superintendents, yes, we make a lot of decisions on what piece of equipment we're going to recommend, but when it comes down to the ultimate decision-maker, it's usually going to be the owner."

—Michael Wallace

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