They asked for it in their first-ever "listening session," and they got it — lots of suggestions to improve the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP). The "listeners" seeking feedback on the NTEP program were NTEP Policy Committee members and Executive Director Kevin Morris.

In a classic example of "be careful about what you ask for, you might get it," the audience of 52 people, most of them either seed marketers or turf trial sites across the United States and Canada, where species and their many suggestions to either broaden NTEP’s varieties (the tall fescue trials have more than 170 entries) or improve its rating system.

The question that everyone left the room with was: How many of these suggestions can (or should) NTEP professionals use? The suggestions offered at the two-hour session held during the GCSAA Conference and Show in February will give NTEP policy members a lot to talk about when they next convene in June, especially since most of the audience seemed pleased with the program in general, and nobody suggested wholesale changes.

The NTEP, of course, is North America’s unbiased source for information about turfgrass performance.

This information is compiled from trial sites across the United States and Canada, where species and their many varieties (the tall fescue trials have more than 170 entries) are evaluated and their characteristics compared one against the others. Green industry professionals use the NTEP results to select the most appropriate turf for the sites they establish and maintain.

The rating process drew its fair share of comment at the meeting. Evaluators at each location rate give each individual trial entry numerical ratings in categories such as color, spring greenup and density, among others. The ratings are based on visual inspection, which is admittedly subjective.

Several in the audience also sug-

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Off The Fringe

Before You Grab a Cup

How many cups of coffee do you drink at the maintenance facility in the morning? You might be fooling yourself if you think coffee helps you perform better out on the golf course, according to a recent study.

Men who work alone may increase their stress levels by taking a coffee break in the belief that it will help them perform faster. But men who work in teams could feel less stressed after enjoying a sharp intake of caffeine, but this may make them less effective, according to a study by the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom. Existing theories suggest that caffeine consumption can trigger stress, but there is also evidence that it boosts confidence and makes people better able to perform various tasks. The Bristol research tried to reconcile these different perspectives. The research was sparked by an anecdote from a man taking part in a stress-management workshop, describing a trip to the United States with his small business team. During the trip, coffee was freely available, and the team overindulged. Within days, stress levels had escalated, and they believed that the extra caffeine had disrupted relationships. Aiming to test this theory, the Bristol researchers found that caffeine did indeed heighten feelings of stress while performing stressful tasks, but unexpectedly, this happened especially in men. However, the effects of caffeine on performance were likely to depend on the type of task and whether participants were working alone or in teams.

"The commonplace tea or coffee break might backfire in business situations," a researcher said. "Far from reducing stress, it might actually make things worse."

Quotable

"Don't make any cracks about our accents. Remember, we're the ones speaking English, and you're the ones with the accents."

— Stephen Bernhard, president of the British company Bernhard and Co., which makes mower-sharpening machines, talking to members of the American press at the GCSAA Conference and Show.

"I've never been to an event where there's been so many positive comments about the location."

— GCSAA CEO Steve Mona on San Diego, the site of this year's GCSAA Conference and Show.

Princess 77 Provided Cimarrón Golf Course with the Cost Effective Solution for Their Renovation Project

Cimarrón Golf Course needed to renovate their fairways to a bermudagrass variety equal in quality to Tifway 419 but couldn't afford to shut down for the renovation. Princess 77 hybrid bermudagrass from seed was the answer.

"We have seen great seedling vigor in Princess 77 being over-seeded into ryegrass fairways" reports Mario. "We had full coverage in eight weeks and never shut down for the renovation. Our fairways look great and we are thrilled with the ease of handling seed as opposed to sod." Princess 77 also helped Cimarrón achieve an environmental goal of cutting their water usage for the year. Mark Goulet, Head Golf Professional for Cimarrón says "We expect to achieve a larger water savings next year by increasing the amount of Princess 77 on our course."

Available in seed and sod.


For more information 1-800-286-6100 EXT 280 www.penningtonseed.com
Jay Morrish has had enough. After 40 years in the golf course design business and more than 100 courses to his credit, he's getting out at the end of the year — and not because he wants to.

"I've had all the fun I can stand," he says, the sarcasm oozing through the phone lines all the way from Texas to Connecticut. "It's a mess. It really is. I'm disgusted with it."

What's taken the fun out of work for Morrish, 67, is the length the golf ball is flying these days, not just off the clubs of pros, but all golfers who regularly hit it more than 300 yards. Morrish isn't some hack who has been stamping out mundane work in his more than 40-year career. He is an accomplished designer with such well-regarded layouts to his credit as The Stone Canyon Club in Oro Valley, Ariz., and two he drew up with Tom Weiskopf, The Rim in Payson, Ariz., and Double Eagle Golf Club in Galena, Ohio. The pair also created Loch Lomond in Scotland, the first American architects ever to build there. Morrish also partnered with Jack Nicklaus from 1973 to 1983.

The quick and best and correct answer to Morrish's dilemma is for the USGA to push back the golf ball. You know it. Morrish knows it, and the USGA surely knows it.

"It would be so simple to slow down the golf ball," Morrish says. "Let them keep playing with their clubs that look like they have mailboxes tied onto them."

No chance.

Morrish is concerned that the classic courses are being put out to pasture by technology. He seethes at the Titleist ads that mock architects and their desire to preserve those designs.

Somewhere Wally Uihlein is chuckling. Like the chairman and CEO of Acushnet, Titleist's parent company, cares what Morrish thinks.

"We're all in this together. I hope the tour will decide this is not good for the game," Morrish says, but knows better. He tells a story of watching Phil Mickelson on television as he recalled his round: driver, nine-iron; driver, wedge; driver, nine-iron; driver, wedge; driver, nine-iron; driver, wedge; driver, nine-iron; driver, wedge; driver, nine-iron.

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three-wood, nine-iron. No long-iron approaches. All short clubs. Ridiculous.

"The only hope is if people get bored watching it on TV," Morrish says.

As a result of the "advancements," Morrish has thrown his hands up in the air. He is at a loss on how to design in a way to defend against the long hitters without building 7,700-yard layouts.

How awful for someone so talented to realize the skill and artistry that made him such a sought-after architect is now somehow out of date and irrelevant.

The simplest of tasks have become impossible to achieve for him, like an accomplished guitarist not knowing where to place his fingers to play a basic chord. "I don't have a clue on where to put a fairway bunker," Morrish says.

Sad.

Morrish says he has one way to at least make a stand against length, and that is building six par 3s into every layout (course owners who want a traditional par-72 layout scoff as his idea), which allows him to exert control to some extent. He did it years ago at a course in Flagstaff, Ariz., called Forest Highlands Golf Club to combat the length golf balls fly because of the elevation.

Given his druthers, Morrish would design one-shotters beginning at about 250 yards and working their way down in increments of 15 yards or so.

"I can at least make you hit six different clubs during a round of golf," he said. "The test use to be you had to hit 14 clubs during a round. Not any more."

The other accomplishment of six par 3s is that it allows for players of different levels to be using the same club into greens. A midhandicapper playing from the middle tees could be using the same club as a lower handicap at the back tee markers.

Morrish has some business left before he goes. There are three courses in the works with his name on them. They will be his last. His partner, son Carter, will carry on what will then be a one-man business after his father departs.

Morrish intends to travel when he retires. Yeah, he knows that sounds crazy — someone who has spent the better part of 40 years on the road, wanting to travel. But now, he says, he is going to travel how and where he wants.

Driving through rural West Texas is high on his list, as is visiting New England to see the leaves in the fall. If he heads up this way, where I live, I hope we can get together and visit some of the classic courses.

Maybe we'll stop into the Titleist headquarters so Uihlein can look us in the eye and tell us technology isn't ruining the game. Maybe Morrish and I will look him in the eye and tell him he's a liar.

Pioppi is a contributing editor for Golfdom.
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**United acquires Nu-Gro**

United Industries, which operates Spectrum Brands, will acquire the Nu-Gro Corp., based in Brantford, Ontario. The combined companies will have sales of about $750 million with more than 1,800 employees in the United States and Canada. The transaction should be completed in May.

"I see this acquisition as a strong and positive venture for both Nu-Gro and United," said Mark Barbera, Nu-Gro's vice president and general manager.

**Noer group approves studies**

The O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research Foundation recently approved funding for the following research projects: "Microbial Control of the Black Cutworm in Turfgrass using a Naturally Occurring Baculovirus," "Seasonal Biology and Pro-Active Management of Mound-Building Nuisance Ants on Golf Putting Greens" and "Developing Water-Saving Irrigation Scheduling Indices from Bentgrass Fairways."

**Coldwell creates golf division**

Coldwell Banker Commercial Nicholson Williams Realty has created a new Golf Course Sales Division. Heading up the division is Charles Smith, and Kathy Bissell.

"Coldwell Banker Commercial Nicholson Williams Realty has identified a growing niche in the commercial real estate market, one that's particularly hot in the South," said George Slusser, president of Coldwell Banker Commercial.

**Course can use Merit donation**

The First Tee of San Diego at Colina Park Golf Course recently received a donation of a year's worth of Merit Insecticide from Bayer Environmental Science. Bayer made the donation in celebration of the ten-year anniversary of Merit.

"We are very happy to receive the donation of Merit from Bayer," said Doug Sparks, superintendent at Colina Park. "We have problems with black turfgrass athenius, white grubs, and cutworms in turfgrass, as well as aphids, whiteflies, thrips, and mealybugs in ornamental plants."

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**Hall is editor-in-chief of Landscape Management magazine.**