



The National Mall and Putting Greens

The Problem

You would not imagine a connection between the National Mall Turf Restoration in Washington, D.C. and the USGA Recommendations for a Method Putting Green Construction – but there is. In fact, the grassed area that stretches from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial is undergoing a transformation. Recently, Dr. Carolyn Olson, president of the Soil Science Society of America, highlighted the project. Dr. Olson pointed out that the 2015 International Year of Soils theme for June was “Soils Support Recreation.”

The soils and turf areas near the Capitol building were restored in 2012. An irrigation system, drainage lines and large underground cisterns that collect reusable stormwater were installed. The soil profile is like a USGA putting green – an amended, sand rootzone over a gravel layer with drain lines. Developed in the 1960s, this type of engineered rootzone withstands the high amount of traffic that putting greens receive each year. Periodic adjustments to the USGA Recommendations for a Method of Putting Green Construction by the USGA and soil scientists have occurred to improve performance and reduce construction costs of USGA putting greens.

Estimates are that more than 29 million visitors walk across the grounds of the National Mall each year. According to Dr. Olson, the number of people visiting the national mall every year is more than those visiting our three most popular national parks—Yosemite, Grand Canyon and Yellowstone—combined. On any one day, soccer, touch football, Frisbee, picnics, festivals and other activities take place on the National Mall. The National Mall has been the center of demonstrations, inaugurations and some of our nation’s most historic events.

It is no wonder that a well-tested method of putting green construction developed by scientists in collaboration with the USGA Green Section has been adapted to sports fields, and now, the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Source: Mike Kenna

Additional Information:

[USGA Recommendations for a Method of Putting Green Construction](#)

[A Quality Control Checklist for Successful Greens Reconstruction](#)

[National Mall Turf Restoration](#)

Olson, Carolyn. 2015. National Mall Restoration and IYS Resolutions. *CSA News Magazine* 60:36-37.



The National Mall in Washington, D.C. is being renovated after years of deferred maintenance. Compaction has destroyed the infiltration capacity of the soils. Within the last few years, the Trust for the National Mall has jump-started a major, multiyear renovation, which includes the restoration of the turfgrass, soils and drainage on the National Mall.