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630-954-2753

EDITOR

Cathy Miles Ralston
276 Lincoln Terrace
Buffalo Grove, IL 60089
Phone & Fax: 847-537-7883
E-mail: on_course@hotmail.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

John Gurke
E-mail: Boomding@aol.com

GRAPHIC ARTIST

Mark Karczewski

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FRONT COVER

A dark-eyed junco perches atop a sprig of winterberries. (Photographer Tom Maple retired this spring after a long and distinguished career as varsity boys basketball coach and dean of students at Grant H.S. in Fox Lake. He has won awards for his nature photography.)

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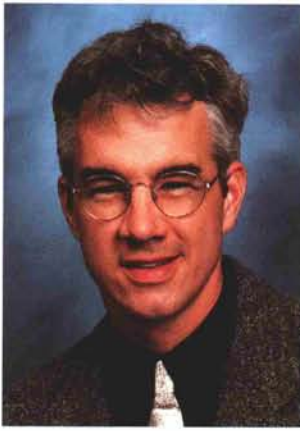
30 **The 48th Annual Midwest Turf Clinic,** **Revisited**

Don Ferreri

The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS), founded December 24, 1926, is a professional organization whose goals include preservation and dissemination of scientific and practical knowledge pertaining to golf turf maintenance.

We endeavor to increase efficiency and economic performance while improving and enhancing the individual and collective prestige of the members.

The MAGCS member is also an environmental steward. We strive to uphold and enhance our surroundings by promoting flora and fauna in every facet in a manner that is beneficial to the general public now and in the future.



A Season of Thanks

Deadlines require that I scribe this greeting in late October. Using history as an indicator, I suppose I'm safe putting this together prior to the annual meeting and election. I can't think of a vote recently, that has gone the other way on an unopposed slate. Serving as your president is indeed an honor and a responsibility I will meet with all my energies. It has been a great opportunity to serve on the Board over the years, and I am confident that the current Board will do a great job leading the Association in the year ahead. Please know that I am always available for your comments and questions.

To all the superintendents and those aspiring to be, a big thank you for the day-in, day-out, professional effort you give. Some are honored more than others are; but every superintendent has the daily opportunity to provide a truly enjoyable experience to a golfer.

As we embark on our 75th anniversary year, I believe the level of service and support the Association provides is at an all-time high. Based on our most recent survey, the membership strongly agrees. Not negating the challenges and changes ahead, I think we should reflect, celebrate and thank the many responsible for bringing the Association (and our industry) to where it is today. Highlighting some and unintentionally omitting others, a big thank you to the MAGCS members who show up and participate at monthly meetings, pay dues, host meetings, volunteer for committee service, log in on the Web site message board and write articles for publication in *On Course*. To all the superintendents and those aspiring to be, a big thank you for the day-in, day-out, professional effort you give. Some are honored more than others are; but every superintendent has the daily opportunity to provide a truly enjoyable experience to a golfer. The level of respect for our work has never been so high and is well-deserved.

Thanks go out to the Past Presidents' Council (PPC) for linking past leadership with the present and providing vision for our future. We are currently at the point where we need to format another long-range plan and look for the PPC's input. Enough can not be said for our commercial members, too. They continually step to the plate: sponsoring monthly meetings and the hospitality room, securing ad space in *On Course* and providing a high level of service to our industry. Speaking of *On Course*, Cathy has filled the large shoes Fred left behind and raised the bar several notches. She is a true professional, all the while being a mom, WOW! For several years, George Minnis has kept us moving forward like a well-oiled machine. He chugs along behind the scenes and deserves our highest praise. Don't know who he is? Just for starters, with the exception of this publication, he sends every piece of mail your way and handles our membership directory.

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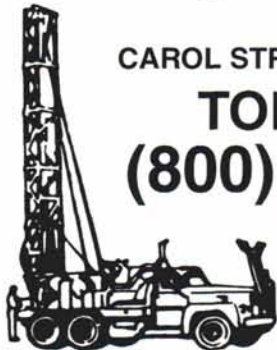
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Visions of PDI Dancing in Your Head?

How to Cast Your Vote

December is the best month of the year. If you are lucky enough to be in the family way, it's just golden. The kids behave, at least until Christmas morning. The golf course is quiet. The boss is busy with his/her own holiday preparations, and you can burn some of that accumulated vacation time. I love December. It's a chance to kick back, reflect on blessings and thank the powers that be for the good fortune that put you in the driver's seat of running a golf course without having to worry about the cash register. Here's hoping your holiday season is filled with joy.

The MAGCS is fortunate to be one of the largest voting blocks in the GCSAA. Our chapter delegates, Don Cross and Don Ferreri, carry a big stick when it comes to leveraging candidates on our behalf, so while it is completely acceptable to vote individually, it erodes our collective strength.

On to business—the PDI initiative is coming to a vote in Dallas. The final version is significantly different from the rendition we learned about last January at Arrowhead. The MAGCS Education Committee is putting together an update for those of you who will be attending our January meeting so you can make an informed decision when it's time to vote. Following the presentation, we will be polling the voting members in attendance and our chapter delegates will divide the MAGCS voting block along the lines of this poll at the GCSAA Annual Meeting. Make plans to attend this important meeting.

Since this issue has generated so much attention, both pro and con, and is soon coming to a head, here's a brief review of some of your rights as a voting member of the GCSAA.

There are three ways voting members can cast a ballot at the GCSAA Annual Meeting:

- **Individually**—You, as a voting member, must attend the annual meeting and election and cast your own vote. You must also check in at the voter check-in booth at the Dallas Convention Center.
- **By Proxy**—This means a GCSAA member in good standing who is eligible to vote will attend the annual meeting and election and will cast an individual vote on your behalf. To designate a proxy, you must complete an official proxy form. The proxy holder must hand-carry and present the original with your ink signature on it at the voter check-in booth at the Dallas Convention Center.
- **With the MAGCS Chapter**—This means that the MAGCS voting delegates will attend the annual meeting and election and will cast all

(continued on page 20)

Leave a Legacy: Consider a Conservation Easement for Your Golf Course

Golf courses are among some of the most beautiful open spaces in northeastern Illinois. Rolling terrain, water features, vistas, trees and other naturalistic features are at least part of the allure of golf. In a region where land development occurs at a stunning rate, these open spaces are all the more important “breathing” spaces.



Mistwood Golf Course in Romeoville features a 65-acre lake that is near a heron rookery, which made it a desirable candidate for an easement. Today, roughly 180 acres of the course are protected by an easement.

ASK THE "EXPERT"

Nancy Kaszak Executive Director, Corlands

Some golf courses are permanently protecting their land from development. Conservation easements make it possible.

A conservation easement is a written legal agreement between a golf course owner—or any landowner—and a government agency or nonprofit organization that permanently limits development of the land. It enables the owner to protect the environmental value of the land while continuing to own it. Even if the property is sold or passed to heirs, the conservation easement remains effective.

Every conservation easement is unique, responding to the particular needs of the landowner and the conservation goals for the property. A course's clubhouse, maintenance buildings and other

facilities may be exempt from the easement, for instance, to allow the owner to modify or expand them. What's more, an easement may be a narrow buffer of a few acres, or it may be several hundred acres, encompassing the bulk of a golf course.

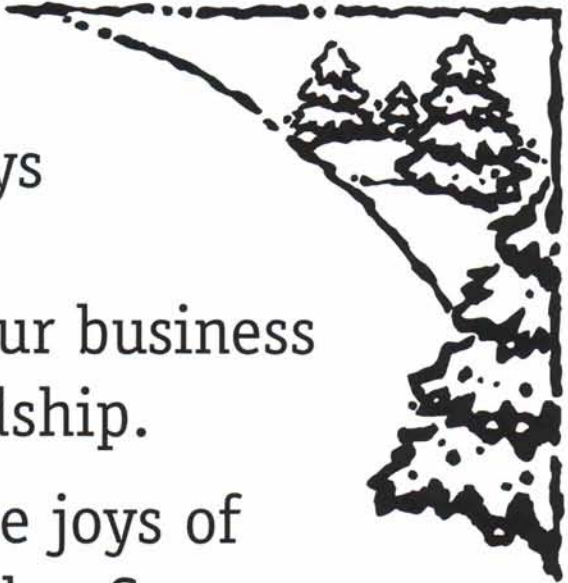
Certain organizations are qualified to accept conservation easements and are referred to as "grantees." A nonprofit conservation organization can be an easement grantee. So can various government agencies. While a nonprofit organization must be devoted to conservation purposes to qualify as the grantee of a conservation easement, a public agency need not. It can be a county, township, village, city, forest preserve district, park district or other unit of government.

Conservation easements are an increasingly popular tool for saving open space. Superintendents are in a unique position to advocate that a golf course owner or municipality consider granting an easement on the property. Along with permanently protecting a course's natural beauty, easements can provide a wealth of other benefits as well.

Tax Benefits

By granting a conservation easement, golf course owners may qualify for a variety of tax incentives. Easements that are donated and meet certain Internal Revenue Service criteria are considered charitable gifts that are deductible from income taxes. Because easements reduce the fair market value of the land by removing the devel-

(continued on page 8)



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opment rights on it, they may qualify owners to receive substantial property tax reductions. This may also reduce estate taxes when the golf course is transferred to heirs. Owners can even grant conservation easements in their wills, with the same results.

Aside from the tax savings are some intangible benefits, too. By placing a conservation easement on a golf course, an owner sends a message to members or customers, as well as the community at large, that the golf course and its open spaces are here to stay. People who play the course know they will always be able to enjoy it—not return one day to find townhomes in place of tees.

Further, for those who relish and want to preserve the beauty of a golf course, a conservation easement provides the satisfaction that those natural amenities will be protected for generations to come.

Easing Into an Easement

A conservation easement is indeed a practical and flexible tool

Conservation easements are an increasingly popular tool for saving open space. Superintendents are in a unique position to advocate that a golf course owner or municipality consider granting an easement on the property.

for preserving the open spaces of your golf course while potentially reaping significant tax benefits. But the decision to grant an easement is nothing to rush into. Golf course owners must be 100% certain they want a conservation easement on their property. They must be sure they can live up to the terms of the easement agreement. In many ways, entering into a conservation easement agreement is like entering into a marriage: it is best to proceed wholeheartedly and with the future in mind.

Let's say an owner has done the appropriate soul-searching and decides to explore the possibility of placing a conservation easement on the golf course. The first thing to do is call CorLands, a 22-year-old nonprofit organization that has worked with landowners since its inception to use conservation easements and other methods to protect open space. At no charge, CorLands can provide basic information about easements and direct you to other appropriate resources. The only cost is your time.

If, after you've familiarized the owner with the nuts and bolts of conservation easements, he or she wants to dig deeper into the process, it is time to consult an attorney and accountant. Be sure, though, to work only with professionals who are familiar with conservation easements and the laws governing them. Many are not, thus limiting their ability to provide the best guidance.

While an owner learns about easements and evaluates their ability to meet his or her goals, the agency that will potentially accept the easement on the golf course will assess the property's natural amenities. This is because there must be a conservation value associated with the property for it to

qualify for an easement. Is the land part of a stream corridor? Is it adjacent to a forest preserve? Answers to these and other questions will help determine if the land is a good candidate for a conservation easement.

Now The Details

You've helped the owner research the nuts and bolts of easements. You've consulted the appropriate professionals. There's a commitment to placing a conservation easement on the golf course. And the property is a good candidate for an easement. Now it's time for the easement document.

Remember, all conservation easements are unique. The easement document should be as specific to the golf course as possible. This will particularly be reflected in the "restricted uses" section of the document, where the owner and the grantee organization will specify which activities and uses will not be permitted in the various areas of the property. This section should be as unambiguous as possible, to avoid possible future disagreements between the golf course and the grantee—simply because the terms of the easement are unclear. This section should be so clear in its intent that someone unfamiliar with conservation easements should be able to read it and understand it.

While it is possible to amend a conservation easement after it has been granted, it is best to avoid doing so. Staying out of trouble with the IRS is the top reason. If an owner receives property tax benefits from an easement, and later modifies it in a way that changes the value of the land, the tax implications can be complicated. All the more incentive to get the easement right the first time.

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What to Expect

Once the decision to grant a conservation easement is made, the easement process typically takes anywhere from six months to a year. Some of that time includes familiarizing the owner with the benefits and responsibilities of granting an easement. Once an owner is informed and committed to granting an easement—and the property is found to be a good candidate for one—preparing the easement document can usually be accomplished in 60 days.

You can expect that the grantee will need to inspect the areas protected by a conservation easement on a regular basis to ensure that the terms of the agreement are being met. A representative from the grantee organization will need access to those areas somewhere between

one and four times a year. The organization should provide a written report indicating what it finds during its inspections.

If the grantee is a nonprofit organization, the golf course will likely be asked for a contribution to help offset the costs it must incur to perform the long-term monitoring and defense of the easement. Generally, units of government that accept easements do not ask for such contributions, which means they may not have the funds to protect the easement over the long term.

Whether the grantee is a nonprofit organization or a unit of local government, expect it to be familiar with the needs of a golf course and to be flexible in accommodating those needs. For instance, CorLands has held a conservation easement on the 320-acre Merit Club since

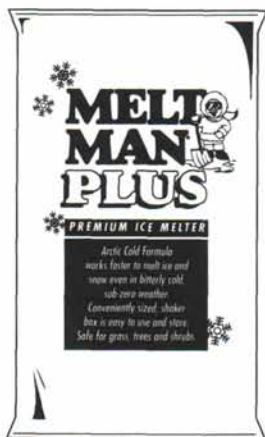
1993. When the club hosted the U.S. Women's Open this summer, it needed to erect viewing stands and other temporary structures in some of the easement's restricted-use areas for the event. After discussions with the golf course owner and staff, CorLands concluded the temporary structures fit within the approved use of the land.

Growing Interest

The Merit Club conservation easement was part of the inspiration for an easement that the owners of Mistwood Golf Course granted to the Forest Preserve District of Will County, with CorLands serving as an advisor. Mistwood is an 18-hole, par-72 golf course comprising more than 200 acres in Romeoville. It features a 65-acre lake that is near a heron rookery,

(continued on page 22)

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