

GCSAA Online News U.S. golf course development continues at near- record pace

New golf course construction continued at a near-record rate in 1996, according to the National Golf Foundation's (NGF) latest report on golf course development in the United States.

Titled "Golf Facilities in the U.S./1997 Edition," it reports that 442 courses came on line in 1996. Although slightly less than the record-high 468 two years ago, it was only the second year in which new U.S. course openings have eclipsed 400.

One more nine

Not all construction has been completely new facilities. A high percentage (40 percent) of the courses built in 1996 were additions to existing facilities. NGF's tracking data show that roughly one-third of the courses built over the past five years have been additions to existing facilities. Approximately 85 percent of these expansions have been nine-hole additions.

Other Findings

Among the other findings emerging from this year's report:

- **Affordability** — NGF conducted an informal survey of owners/operators of all 135 new 18-hole public facilities that came on line last year to determine what percentage were high-end facilities.

This survey indicated that developers may be following a trend away from high-end projects. Only 25 percent of the 105 respondents to this year's survey said their weekend green fees were above the average for similar courses in their markets. The remaining 75 percent said they have fees that are at or below the average for their areas.

- **Public vs. private** — As it has for the past 20 years, public golf course development continued to dominate last year, with 382 (88 percent) of all courses coming on line as daily-fee or municipal courses.

- **The average weekend green fee** — including golf car fee — was \$56.

Geographically, the averages were higher

among West region courses. Here they ranged from \$70 to \$80, compared with the Midwest and South, where they ranged from \$30 to \$45.

- **The real estate factor** — Although not as much of a factor as it was in the 1980s, golf community development continues to drive a good share of today's golf course development activity. Last year, 144 (33 percent) of the new

courses were part of a real estate development.

- **Beginners' slopes** — Industry observers have long believed that success in growing golf participation will depend to some degree on the increase in entry-level facilities. Last year, 21 executive courses and 20 par-3 layouts were among the 442 courses built.

Environmental Waterway Management Continues to Grow!

Services now include

Lake Management

Wetlands Planting and Maintenance

Exotics Control

Industrial/Agricultural/Vegetation Management

Right-of-Way Vegetation Control

We proudly announce new services and our new name...



Aquagenix
Land - Water Technologies

1-800-832-5253



Serving Sunbelt States Since 1974