

Conventional Wisdom in the Balance

*Peter Huber has written a book, **Hard Green**, that many have described as a conservative alternative to Vice President Al Gore's **Earth in the Balance**. Huber's book outlines a conservative manifesto that challenges many traditional theories that self-styled environmentalists have long presented as undeniable facts.*

To get a flavor of Huber's *Hard Green* philosophy, you need only read a few excerpts on the jacket of his book. For example:

- There is no inherent scarcity of food, fuel, metal, mineral or space to bury our trash. When we exhaust economic goods, we grow, find or invent others to replace them.

- The one real growing scarcity is scarcity of wilderness. We should maintain and extend protected forests, lakes, shores, wetlands and wilderness.

- Fertilizers, pesticides, growth hormones and genetic engineering allow us to transform earth, sun, corn and wheat, chicken and cow, into edible calories more efficiently. Soft alternatives are less green because they use more land.

Huber is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and a columnist for *Forbes Magazine*. An MIT-trained engineer and a Harvard law graduate, Huber taught engineering at MIT, and served as a law clerk to then-appellate judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Huber visited Florida in April to speak to a leadership program sponsored by the Agricultural Institute of Florida. Florida Agriculture Editor Ed Albanesi and Florida Farm Bureau Public Relations Manager Rod Hemphill worked around Huber's tight schedule by volunteering to pick him up at Orlando International Airport for the 70-minute ride to the FFA Training Center in Haines City.

Albanesi warned Huber that they would be playing devil's advocate by

asking him some tough questions. Huber smiled and invited a no-holds-barred line of questioning.

Florida Agriculture: You are in favor of conserving what you call "uneconomical things" such as forests, lakes, wetlands, etc. Does this conflict with your philosophy of unleashing markets? For example, much of South Florida was drained and filled for agricultural and residential development. Was this a good thing?

Huber: You have to view it in context. First, agriculture is our main use of the environment. A lot more real estate is used by agriculture than is used by highways, homes or factories. The second really striking fact about U. S. agriculture is that over the course of two centuries, we have steadily shrunk our footprint on the wilderness. We've been getting more and more food out of less and less land. In the course of this century we've moved our agriculture to the most productive places and then used the transportation and distribution systems to get the food to where it was needed. Florida doesn't just feed people in this state. It feeds the country and other parts of the world. In that context, using real estate in Florida efficiently has been a very positive development. Viewed in isolation, there's no question if you take a wetland which could be wilderness and have a farm there, of course you have less wilderness. But the trade-off for the environment as a whole has been positive.

Florida Agriculture: Government controls many of the markets it regulates: for example, municipal-owned utilities. Given this, are things like government-mandated water conservation worth the effort?

Huber: I think agriculture has got to find efficient means to allocate water when it is scarce. Clearly, on the downstream end, you have to think about pollution and I address those aspects of water in my book. But when government gets down to the point where they're dictating size of our toilet cisterns, this is government meddling for the sake of meddling. Those

kinds of things never fit realistically with real needs and real opportunities.

Florida Agriculture: Some may see a conflict between your support of conservation of land and water and water resources and your less-than-enthusiastic view of the value of recycling. Is there a conflict there?

Huber: What worries me most about recycling is that it gives people the fake illusion that they are doing something really good for the environment. Real conservation isn't about trash. Real conservation is taking wilderness spaces that we treasure, whether it's the Grand Canyon or the Everglades, and making intelligent choices about how much we want to develop or not develop them. The notion that you can duck those hard problems, or sidestep them by sifting through what's in your trash bag is a distraction.

Florida Agriculture: You make the point that hard power is greener than

soft power because it is more efficient and consumes less material and land. But doesn't it also produce more pollution?

Huber: First, there is absolutely no question that if you dig up your fuels rather than trying to harvest them across the surface, in most places that means using very much less land at the front end, per unit of energy used. It is certainly the case that (using underground fuel sources) doesn't cause more pollution. If you tried fueling the vehicles in Florida from the farmland in Florida, you'd be talking about a massive expansion in usage of real estate and a massive expansion in your transportation system to move all that biomass around.

Florida Agriculture: You say nature has a great power to cleanse. You also say that the best way to purify water is to maintain unspoiled watersheds. Should man or nature be in charge of maintaining unspoiled watersheds?

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Huber: Some combination of both... nature begins with what we would define as unspoiled watersheds. That sure doesn't mean you can drink every drop of water in a mangrove swamp. And clearly there is an important objective of wide open spaces and wilderness areas. Nature will not leave those areas untouched on its own. Those are choices we will make and we have made. Wealth and high technology and agricultural efficiency are what have let us conserve large areas of wilderness and, better still, return large areas to the wilderness.

Florida Agriculture: Governments get involved in markets because other governments make the playing field uneven. Can the U.S. government actually serve the best interests of its commerce and economy by ignoring economic goods while foreign governments are not?

Huber: Much as I favor free trade, other countries can do ruinous things and simultaneously ruin themselves and other people as well. A coherent case can be made to say to not let (another country's) economic insanity become a plague in our country as well. But don't quote me as saying I'm for protection on everything or your favorite product. Those things have got to be studied on a case-by-case basis and you've got to know the facts.

Florida Agriculture: What do you think of EPA's implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA)?

Huber: There's no doubt that it's possible to take pesticides and other chemicals and use them badly and, if you're stupid enough, to toxic effect. We

know that these studies that have predicted every cancer and every mortality from these things 10 or 20 times over. You just add up all the ill effects they have predicted and we're all dead not once, but 20 times over; which tells you from the get-go these models are very easy to create, and most of them are wrong. Intelligent use of pesticides has one clear effect and that is they stop pests from eating your produce in the fields or during transportation. That means more food from fewer acres. And more food from fewer acres means a smaller footprint for agriculture. The real ecological catastrophes are occurring in countries that don't use these technologies, not those that do. The best thing that we could do for ecology worldwide is get a lot of these technologies in the hands of (Third World) farmers who are not using them.

Florida Agriculture: What's your take on biotechnology?

Huber: I'm vaguely heartened by the fact that despite their (biotech opponents) most desperate PR, they don't seem to have made much of a dent. I'm hoping that it will stay that way but I'm sure not sanguine. And of course in Europe, they've gone way over the top and we all know why. Europe is doing pure agricultural protectionism. There's not the slightest doubt about it. I'm heartened because, for Americans, biotech means more and better food for lower prices. For Third World it can mean more nutrition. In this country, intelligent genetic engineering can be a direct substitute for pesticides. Serious people

Wealth and high technology and agricultural efficiency are what have let us conserve large areas of wilderness and, better still, return large areas to the wilderness.

in this country are not opposed to biotechnology. As far as I can tell, there is a certain kind of mindset that says if large corporate agriculture, backed by large Monsanto-like companies has any hand in it, then it has to be bad and we're against it. There's no logic to it.

Hard Green by Peter Huber is available at most bookstores and can also be ordered through Amazon.com

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Editor's note: I attended Peter Huber's presentation to the Ag Institute in Haines City last April. While many of his comments are directed at agricultural concerns, his macro thinking may have a bearing on how the turf industry might view its footprint on the environment.

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2000 Florida Green Photo Contest

Category 1 - Wildlife on the Course: includes mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians.

Category 2 - Course Landscape: Formal Plantings: includes annuals, shrubs, trees, entrance and tee signs.

Category 3 - Course Landscape: Native Plantings: includes aquatic vegetation, grasses, shrubs, trees and wildflowers.

Category 4 - Scenic Hole Layout Shots: includes sunrises, sunsets, frosts, storms and any other golf hole view.



2000 Photo contest - Category 4 — Scenic Hole. 11th hole, Interlachen CC. Photo by Stuart Leventhal, CGCS.

course and photographer. DO NOT WRITE DIRECTLY ON THE BACK OF THE PRINT. Each photo shall be attached to a sheet of 8.5 x 11 lined paper. Line up the photo with the vertical and horizontal lines to square the photo on the page.

Attach the print to the paper using a loop of masking tape on the back of the photo. Slides must be easily removable for viewing.

4. A caption identifying the category, course and photographer should be typed or printed on the sheet of paper below the print or slide.

5. Judging will be done by a panel of FGCSA members not participating in the contest.

6. Mail entries in a bend proof package to: Joel D. Jackson, 6780 Tamarind Circle, Orlando 32819. No entries accepted postmarked after August 1, 2000.

Prizes

- 1st Place (\$100) and 2nd Place (\$50) in each category.
- Editor's Choice-Best Overall Photo - \$100.
- All winning entries published in the Fall 2000 issue.

Easy Rules

1. Color prints or slides. Only one entry per category.
2. Photo must be taken on an FGCSA member's course. Photo must be taken by an FGCSA member or a member of his staff.
3. Attach a label to the back of the print or slide which identifies the category,

Call for Articles

This is a call for articles for the 2000 - 2001 issues of the Florida Green.

Contact Joel D. Jackson, Editor for more information. Phone: 407-248-1971. Fax: 407-248-1971. E-mail; FLGrn@aol.com. All slides and photographs should include identification of persons in the picture and the name of the photographer.

HANDS ON TOPICS: Share your best practices and tips for these upcoming topics. Slides or photographs are encouraged.

- Fall 2000 - Maintaining Native, Natural and "Waste" Areas
- Winter 2001 - Personal Financial Planning
- Spring 2001 - Fertility Programs
- Summer 2001 - Utility Vehicles
- Fall 2001 - Computers as Management Tools

SPOTLIGHT: People and events making news in Florida. From award winners to chapter tournaments and other accomplishments. Send in your story.

SUPERINTENDENT'S JOURNAL:

Personal observations or experiences related to any phase of the turf management profession.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

General management topics beyond turf. Examples: Education, facilities, personnel, computers, training, etc.

INDUSTRY NEWS: News items of interest to Florida superintendents from allied associations in the turf/horticulture industry.

OPINION: Exactly what it means! Articles voicing a personal point of view on any topic concerning Florida superintendents.

RESEARCH: A section reserved primarily for university and technical authors to report on research results within the turf industry. Also reports of practical on-course testing.

RUB OF THE GREEN: Articles and anecdotes with a humorous twist.

STEWARDSHIP: Superintendents are invited to submit ideas and articles about environmental issues and initiatives at their courses.

Wanted: Slides and photographs to help tell the stories!

Forgive me in advance if this article rambles a bit — I'm trying to make sense of the current economic state of the golf industry and "the big picture" is still fuzzy. Pending changes at Palm Beach National after 21 years of service have made this my number-one priority.

Articles and conversations with peers indicate that finding and retaining good golf course employees is a superintendent's most pressing issue. We joked in Naples at the Poa that the unemployment rate was 2 percent, and that 4 percent of the population didn't want to work. I don't remember anyone laughing.

Last year a record 509 golf courses in the U.S. opened for play, with another 936 courses under construction. According to the National Golf Foundation, the number of golfers and the rounds they play have remained stagnant for a decade. Each year about 3 million people take up the

game, but nearly 3 million golfers also drop out. The reasons: golf is too expensive, too time-consuming, too difficult, and too intimidating. If these figures are correct, the math indicates that every golf course, with each year's new course openings, has fewer and fewer golfers and rounds available to draw from with which to cover its expenses.

Pride may keep most people from admitting that affordability is the main reason they left the game, but I think there is little doubt that the high cost of golf is the main culprit. The perception of growth and prosperity in golf is bolstered by our current strong economy, with the high end and low end clubs weathering the storm of competition better than many of the clubs in the middle. But is this going to last?

We have enough delinquent accounts at our club to hint that many members desire the country club lifestyle, but really just can't afford it. We also have our share of "trunk slammers" (a new word I just learned from Marty Griffin) — members who come out and play their

round of golf and leave — who will not support the bar, the dining room, or the pro shop with purchases. We used to have one older member who poured a shot of vodka from a bottle in his trunk at the conclusion of his morning round, and would toast us if we happened to be driving by. By far the weirdest factor in the mix is the rumor that one nearby club with very low rates is owned by underworld types who need some place to launder their money, and that they are looking to purchase another club in our area. Is reporting to a Godfather any worse than the typical green committee Chairman? But I digress.

For superintendents, this continued growth — perceived or actual — appears, on the surface, to be a good thing. More golf courses mean more superintendent positions. The more prestigious clubs pay higher and higher salaries, while the clubs feeling the economic squeeze look to management companies or bargain basement superintendents.

Meanwhile, the turf schools continue to churn out graduates. Is this really a good thing? Where, exactly, are we headed? Are superintendents like pro athletes, with the stars getting it while they can and everyone else struggling to make the team? I think most of us, at least those in my age group and older, expected to make a lifelong career out of being a golf course superintendent. I look around me and see how many ex-superintendents are on the commercial side of golf, and how few superintendents are age 50 or older. Is this what we want?

I'm not offering any answers; pretty much I was just thinking out loud. I do think that we have the opportunity to help shape our own futures through our organizations' activities, rather than just being kites caught in the winds of market forces. Job security and stability are issues superintendents have talked about for decades, and we still haven't made much progress.

My opinion is that anything we do to enhance the stature, prestige, and professional relevance of the golf course superintendent will help all superintendents with job security and longevity. Are you doing your part?

The Numbers Don't Crunch

Mark My Words



Mark Jarrell, CGCS

BackWords

The year 2000 seems like a good time to check the archives to see how the trends in our association and the industry have changed. Here's a few editorial snapshots from our history documented in previous Summer issues of the *Florida Green*.

25 Years Ago

The *South Florida Green* (the parent of *The Florida Green*) is two years old and 14 pages from front to back. Mike Barger is president of the South Florida GCSA. After suffering from low turnout at meetings in 1971, improved education at monthly meetings now has the attendance averaging 80-100. The GCSAA's certification program was revised to require two years as a Class A and a modification of the study materials. 229 superintendents had attained CGCS status as of 1975. Editor, Mike Barger; associate editor Tom Mascaro.

20 Years Ago

The first issue of *The Florida Green* is published in the summer of 1980 as the South Florida Chapter votes to let the *South Florida Green* be adopted as *The Florida Green* to serve the entire state. The magazine is 32 pages cover to cover. Tim Hiers is the president of the newly unified Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association. The Florida-Georgia Chapter (now North Florida) led by Amelia Island's Ron Hill's 70 wins the Poa Annuu Classic. Suntree C.C. hosts the 4th Annual Crowfoot Open. Hans Schmeisser wins Palm Beach GCSA's first Distinguished Service Award. Ed Combest is trying to recruit golf course mechanic students to Lake City. Some things never change. Editor, Dan Jones; associate editor, David Bailey; photographer, Henry McCartha.

15 Years Ago

Marie Roberts has been on the job for one year. Tom Burrows is president of the FGCSA. Chapter reporters write articles for each issue of *The Florida Green* with column titles like Central Florida Crowfoots (Joel Jackson); Palm Beach Trade Winds (Mike Bailey); North Florida Divots (Eddie Snipes); Suncoast Sails (Mike Meehan); Treasure Coast Tide-ings (Todd Miller); Gulf Coast Sun Beams (Charles Brasington); and Everglades The Gator Growls (Sandra Carmouche). The topic for this issue was vandalism. The magazine is 64 pages including a fold-out front cover which began with the Fall 1983 issue. The FTGA Conference and Show is drawing 2000 people to Tampa. Editor, Dan Jones; assistant editor, Tim Hiers; photographer, Daniel Zelazek.

10 Years Ago

Joel Jackson is president of the FGCSA and has just taken over for Dan Jones as editor of the *Florida Green*. The magazine is 84 pages from cover to cover. The FTGA raises \$350,000 to get matching funds from the state to build the Envirotron Research Laboratory. The USGA Green Section creates a separate Florida Region. John Foy the first USGA agronomist in the Southeast Region is named director. FGCSA launches new research green in Fort Lauderdale. Marcus Prevatte hired as technician.

Dan Jones's Afterwords column, "Florida's drought poses challenges and opportunities." Editor, Joel Jackson; assistant editor, Tom Benefield; photographer Brian Everhart; publisher, Janlark Communications.

5 Years Ago

FGCSA President Scott Bell. The magazine is 102 pages from cover to cover. *Florida Green* photo contest debuts. Treasure Coast Blue Pearl is two years old. Lonnie Stubbs, Joe Snook and Lou Oxnevad win FGCSA Presidents Awards. Environmentalism issues are the hot button topic. Biocontrols, superintendent Image, Golf Link weather computers fill the Hands On section. Water quality issues are covered in Heads Up section. Editor, Joel Jackson; assistant editor, Mark Jarrell; photographer, Daniel Zelazek.

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I'm not trying to get you to approve or disapprove of GCSAA's Professional Development Initiative. That is up to you. This is to call your attention to the issue, because it is important for you to know that this proposal has the potential to affect your standing in the industry.

If you don't even know the basic purpose behind PDI and what's been happening, then read the article in the Professional Development

section of this issue and shame on you. I'm not going to explain what it is, but I do want to report to you on where it is in the scheme of things. Timing of decision-making between now and the conference and show in Dallas is critical. This is what I know based on conversations and reports from GCSAA Headquarters and the FGCSA spring board meeting.

The Member Standards Resource Group has met and

considered all the feedback from around 95 PDI chapter presentations held across the country. They have made some revisions to the original set of proposed requirements. The revised PDI has been sent to the GCSAA committees which have an administrative stake in PDI: Career Development, Bylaws, Certification, Membership and Education. These committees must discuss and make their recommendations for action to the GCSAA board directors who will meet sometime later this summer and before the chapter delegates' meeting in September.

I can't give you a list of specific changes to the original plan because I have only heard a few of them. In general the proposal is not as stringent as it was before, but I will withhold any comment until the completed revised version is in print.

Several things can happen between now and September. First, if the respective committees

still have too many questions on details of the proposal they may not recommend that the GCSAA board put it on the ballot for Dallas. The committees may ratify the revised proposals and send it on for board action. The board may still have concerns and not move forward to put it on the ballot for Dallas until it has been discussed at the chapter delegates' meeting.

Hopefully we will all have a chance to see the revisions and details of how PDI would function before September. Even if we do, we will not have much time before your local chapter delegates go to Lawrence to discuss the issue. Each chapter must make a concentrated effort to discuss PDI and give your delegate a consensus view so he/she can let GCSAA know how the rank and file membership feels about the new version of PDI. This meeting will go a long way toward deciding whether PDI makes it to the ballot in Dallas and the views expressed in that forum should reflect the will of the members, not one person's opinion.

If the delegates give a thumbs up to the new PDI version and it goes to a vote in Dallas, you still have the opportunity to vote individually for or against PDI. However, it will require you to make the effort to either contact the FGCSA Voting Delegate, Dale Kuehner, directly or through your chapter to register how you wish your individual vote to be cast. While most of you have your votes assigned to the FGCSA for normal GCSAA officer and director elections, the association will gladly total up and cast the yea and nay votes of any individual members who make their wishes known.

That is why it is critical over the next few months to pay attention to all information about PDI and for each member and chapter make extra efforts to communicate and decide how they wish to vote.

Decisions are made by those who show up or step up to be counted. This decision is one of the most important you will make regarding your professional path. Ask questions, pay attention, get involved. It's pretty darn important and time is running out.

PDI: Pretty Darn Important

Green Side Up



Joel Jackson, CGCS Editor