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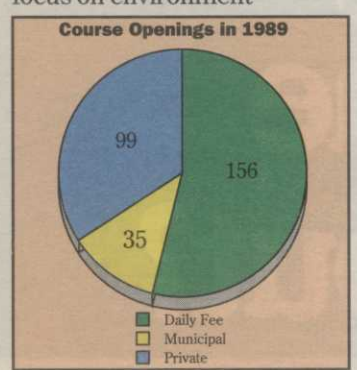
GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Ariz. law threatens growth

BY PETER BLAIS
Arizona is moving ahead with water conservation plans that include limiting the size of most new, 18-hole golf courses to 90 acres within the water management districts. The Phoenix area, because of its higher temperatures and lower rainfall, is restricted to 120 acres.

Opponents argue that the new laws will hurt tourism, the state's second-largest industry, since smaller courses are generally more difficult to play. That will discourage high handicappers, who make up the bulk

of tourist golfers, from visiting the state.

"Normally as a rule of thumb they figure on 130 acres for an 18-hole course. . . I'm sure that 90 acres is going to be very tight," said Donald Rossi, executive director of the Golf Course Builders of America, who believes that environmental concerns could do more to slow the current nationwide golf boom than any other issue.

"They (state of Arizona) have a water problem and they're trying to do something about it. Water is going to be a big problem, not only in Arizona, but all over the country

in another year or two," Rossi said.

Arizona Department of Water Resources Director Bill Plummer signed orders Dec. 5 that provide specific management plans for the Tucson, Phoenix, Prescott and Pinal County active management areas. The department followed that in late December with 10,000 letters to water rights holders informing them of the new requirements.

The law, which was originally adopted in 1986, affects any course where construction started that year. Its aim is to reduce water

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1st course planned for handicapped

BY MARK LESLIE
An Ohio rehabilitation hospital plans to build the first golf facility for the handicapped in a project that could have far-reaching effects on golf courses nationwide.

Lessons learned from the technologies and designs used at the course at Edwin Shaw Hospital in Akron may usher in a new era, especially for municipal courses that must abide by laws making public facilities accessible to the handicapped.

The project of the hospital's Development Foundation has drawn support and it promises to provide challenges for all involved, from the design work (donated by Hurdzan Design Group of Columbus, Ohio) to the construction (some part of which is a gift of Wadsworth Construction Co. of Plainfield, Ill.) and finances (which include donations from the World Series of Golf, Wilson Sporting Goods and MacGregor Golf).

The hospital's vice president for development, Linda Cinson, said officials will soon decide exactly what type of facility to add to its current small driving range and two practice greens. They are leaning toward initially building a large driving range and three holes. Another six holes could follow later.

They hope to get construction started by this fall, probably building the driving range first so that it can be used even before year's end.

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Photo courtesy of Nelson & Wright
Officials hope West Loch Golf Course has sextupled in value before evening opening.

Lease one, build two

BY MARK LESLIE
Honolulu could earn a quick \$100 million if investors bid on a proposed lease for the just-completed municipal West Loch Golf Course in Ewa.

Mayor Frank Fasi, for years Hawaii's leading critic of foreign investment, has proposed what may be an unprecedented build-lease arrangement. He hopes to lease or sell the course and clubhouse, which cost the city \$20 million to build, for \$100 million or more and use the profits to build two golf courses plus af-

fordable housing.

The West Loch project sailed through the permit process while private ventures in Honolulu remain mired in the bureaucratic red tape. Officials feel potential developers may be willing to pay the large lease fee rather than tie up funds in the lengthy permit process.

The surprise is that "no one has said that's (amount of money) out of line. Everybody I hear is saying, 'That's reasonable,'" said Dave Mills, administrator for

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Environment the major concern of architects

BY MARK LESLIE
Environmental issues running the gamut from wetlands to pesticide use are the most important problems facing golf course architects, according to a Golf Course News survey of the nation's leading architects.

Of the 55 architects who responded to the question of what is the most important issue

they face, 37 listed a topic concerning the environment.

Several other issues received from one to seven mentions from architects, including the cost of construction and maintenance; water usage; keeping design natural; financing; obtaining permits; finding qualified help; the speed of play; the distance golfers are

hitting the ball; the speed of the greens; and the influence of the professional tour on standards of maintenance.

The overwhelming response that environment was the major concern came from every region of the United States.

Denis Griffiths of Braselton, Ga., decried

Continued on page 26

High Court to hear tax case

Decision critical to golf industry

A 10-year court battle that clubs nationwide have waged over a tax ruling may soon be resolved.

The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear the case of Portland Golf Club v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue, in which the club is challenging the Internal Revenue Service's interpretation of the law governing the deductibility of losses generated by non-member activities.

The IRS has argued, since issuing its Revenue Ruling 81-69, that

clubs' losses generated by non-member activities can not be deducted against profits from other non-member activities unless there was a profit motive for the activity that produced the loss.

Clubs and the National Club Association, which has been working for nearly a decade to reverse the IRS position, contend that it is enough that the activity be undertaken for economic gain.

The distinction between economic gain and profit motive arises from the fact that financial accounting rules sometimes differ from tax accounting rules.

The U.S. Courts of Appeals have

differed as to which is the correct interpretation.

NCA legal counsel Tom Walsh said: "Above all, the court needs to settle this long dispute so clubs can plan appropriately. With the lower courts splitting on this issue, we really do not know the state of the law. It needs to be decided. We will be working closely with the Portland Golf Club to make the strongest case possible."

The court may order oral arguments to be held as early as April, which would allow for a decision before it adjourns in the summer.

The appeal is being made possible by a NCA fund-raising drive.

GOVERNMENT UPDATE

Arizona

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consumption by 10 percent in the Southwestern state.

While applauding the legislation's intent, groups like the Arizona Golf Association say there is not enough flexibility in the new law.

While five acres per hole may be excessive for an executive course (less than 5,000 yards), it can create problems for a championship

length (over 6,200 yards) facility. Championship courses have been built on 90 acres. But such "target" courses cater to the better player and prove difficult to the average (particularly older) one, according to a letter from AGA's Public Awareness & Research Committee to the D.W.R.

"Ninety acres is more than sufficient to build a golf course," said AGA Executive Director Ed Gowan. "The problem is that people with handicaps above 12 or 14 have a hard time playing a course like that in less than six hours. It's not conducive to the resort golfer. A private club can exist with it. But to ask a resort to do so is kind of unfair."

"... The resort player who comes here is not the regular player. For the occasional or resort player, 90 acres doesn't work. Let's say there is a resort here built primarily for visitors, like Japanese executives who have little time to play, where the level of expertise is somewhat less than you might expect from local players. You're looking at very long rounds and (the resort) not being financially viable."

The most recent attempt to build a public course within the 90-acre limit was architects Pete and P.B. Dye's joint effort on the Karsten course at Arizona State University, said Gowan. Twelve acres still need to be eliminated from the facility which already includes 50- and 70-yard carries to fairways.

"It's just not reasonable to expect to take 12 acres away and not impact play," said Gowan.

Architects have been adjusting their designs to what they knew would be the new restrictions for some time. Greg Nash, who has designed seven courses at Sun City West, recently completed work on an 180-acre course there that has only 82 acres of actual turf with the remainder in re-vegetated desert landscape

Realizing the new restrictions were coming, Nash approached the developers with his plan for a target course six years ago. "At that time, they (developers) said there's no way we'll ever build that type of a course," the Phoenix-based architect said. "Now what they have at Sun City is six all-turf courses and this one. Basically it's a function of they're saying we don't want to do it, but D.W.R. says we have to do it. So far it's been very well received."

Opponents argue that the state's mid-1990s goal of 4.6 acre-feet per acre (af/a) per year water allocation (down from 5.0 af/a in 1985) doesn't take into consideration the varying water needs of maximum-use areas (tees, fairways and greens) versus moderate (proximate rough) and low-use areas, according to the P.A.R. To meet

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Arizona

those different needs, the P.A.R. committee has recommended a more flexible allocation of 6 af/a for the first 70 acres, 4.5 af/a for the next 20 acres and 3 af/a thereafter.

The D.W.R. has used some of the golf industry's recommendations. The stepped allocation goal for 1992 of 4.9 af/a for the first 90 acres and 4.0 acres for the remainder was an A.G.A. recommendation, explained Gowan.

In drafting the restrictions, the state argued that since 50 to 60 percent of Arizona's golf facilities could meet the standards, the rest should, too. But the P.A.R. again points out that courses are maintained differently and so need to be treated differently. In fact, the state's three courses ranked in the country's "Top 100" by *Golf* and *Golf Digest* magazines — Desert Forest, Desert Highlands and Troon — did not meet the state's 1988 allocations.

All courses not meeting the requirements by January have filed for administrative review of their particular situations with D.W.R. and many have received favorable hearings on increased water allotments, said Gowan.

"This is D.W.R.'s way of addressing any inconsistencies in their water plan. Although it's not efficient, it will work until the Third Management Plan takes effect in the year 2000," he said.

The state hoped to require new courses to use effluent water for at least half their irrigation. But that was dropped when the Arizona Supreme Court ruled the state does not have the same jurisdiction over effluent that it does over ground and surface water. However, the high court ruling will have little effect in some areas, like Tucson, where local ordinances already require new courses to use effluent.

The P.A.R. supports incentives for the use of effluent. But it feels a course should not be required to use 100 percent effluent before benefitting from incentives since enough effluent may not be available at peak irrigation times. The low quality of effluent in some areas also requires as much as 0.5 af/a or 12 percent more water to properly leech the high salt content and make the effluent useable, according to the P.A.R.

The state also failed to consider the extra water needed for ryegrass over-seeding at some courses, according to the P.A.R. The golf association committee argued that Arizona is in competition with Palm Springs, Las Vegas and Florida — areas where over-seeding is common — to attract tourists and new businesses.

To remain competitive with those areas, many, though not all, facilities must be over-seeded, according to the P.A.R. Where upscale tourism, residential and other developments are being considered, the P.A.R. has recommended extra allocations of 1.5 to 2.0 af/a.

"You've got some people here

that don't believe grass belongs in the desert," said Gowan. "That's what the golf industry is fighting against. People understand the economic benefits to golf, especially as it relates to tourism. We can demonstrate that with an independent study by the University of Arizona.

"But there are some strong lobbyists out there that don't believe grass should be part of the environment. There's a no-growth lobby that says if you want to come here and ride horses, that's fine. But if you want to come and enjoy the sun or play golf, you don't belong."

'There are some great misunderstandings regarding water availability. There's an attitude that the sky is falling regarding water.'

— Ed Gowan, executive director
Arizona Golf Association

"There are some great misunderstandings regarding water availability. There's an attitude that the sky is falling regarding water. There's no problem with the amount of water in Arizona. It's just where it is and how it's allocated. The politics behind allocation and water rights is an old, old

battle that was started 100 years ago and continues today. That's the root of the problem — politics and perception rather than fact."

Gowan believes the use of effluent will put an end to the problem of water availability once transmission lines are built throughout the area.

"Golf courses are the perfect place to put effluent water, filtering it properly before it returns to the ground-table," he said. "The expense of the delivery systems is a problem we'll have to address, but that's not an impossible task.

"The cities will eventually be looking for effluent customers at reasonable prices.

"The result will be golf becoming recognized as an important part of the Arizona lifestyle, not only for its economic benefits, but also for its contributions to the environment by cleaning wastewater, cleaning the air, cooling surrounding land, etc."



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