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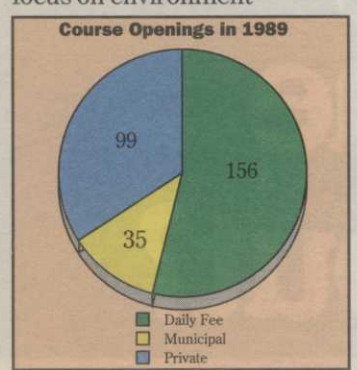
GOLF COURSE NEWS

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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

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Issues

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the fact that the maze of government regulations is different for every project.

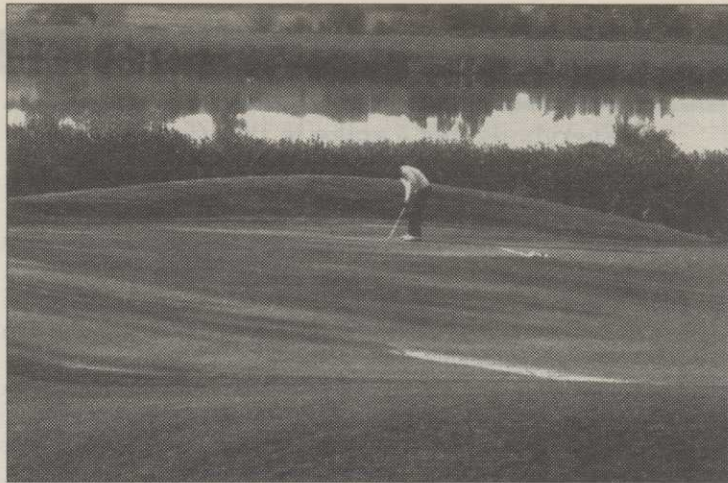
Lindsay Ervin of Crofton, Md., said many decision-makers in the environmental agencies are uneducated in the issues and have become unwilling to mitigate.

From other areas of the country the importance of environmental concerns was echoed — from Jeff Brauer and Kenneth Dye of Texas to Michael Hurdzan and Arthur Hills of Ohio; Tom Fazio and Clyde Johnston of the Carolinas; Jack Nicklaus and Gordon Lewis of Florida; Stephen Kay of Purchase, N.Y.,

and Philip Wogan of Topsfield, Mass.; and Richard Phelps of Evergreen, Colo.

Griffiths, who in 1989 finished courses in Georgia, Florida and Texas, said, "Every project is taking an education for us to find and satisfy what the regulations are... Every new project entails different regulations, more stringent regulations. And that means it costs our client more time and more money."

Five years ago, Griffiths said, wetlands laws were lenient enough to allow filling some areas and enlarging others.



Architect Bob Lohmann incorporated wetlands into this hole at Oak Knoll Golf Course in Streamwood, Ill.

"That has slowly changed to almost everywhere they say, 'We don't even want you in the wetlands,' " he said. "There are some

cases where you have limited land, boundary constraints, whatever, and in some cases your project won't work if you can't infringe (on the wetlands)."

Griffiths said "one of the really scary things we're seeing now" is that now that the Corps of Engineers and EPA are going to regulate the wetlands together.

"That is going to mean more problems. It has far-reaching implications," he said. "We're heading to where it's going to be literally impossible to touch wetlands."

Ervin said there is mass fear about the use of nitrogen and pesticides on water quality.

"A lot of this fear is a lack of education by the agency people, at least as far as golf courses are concerned," he said. "A lot of studies are coming out now showing that there is some but not nearly as much pollution as the agencies think (from golf courses). I think educating them and showing them that golf courses are good for the environment, not bad, is a process that's going to take a while; but I think it has to be done in order to help lessen the impact on golf courses."

Ervin, who is designing courses in Maryland and Virginia, agreed that the wetland issue is a problem. "It's getting more and more stringent. They (agencies) don't want you to get in there to touch it," he said, adding that cutting trees in some areas of the country is being stopped.

Ervin believes many regulations start on the local level before becoming nationwide.

"One state, or one county might implement something, and then over the course of a few years, other states or other counties look at it and do the same. Like sediment control. At one point there was no sediment control at all. Now it's spread throughout most states. At one time Virginia wasn't too bad to work in at all; but now it's a bear to get anything approved," he said.

Citing industry efforts to compile information and knowledge to persuade control agencies that golf courses do not pollute the environ-

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Patent Pending

ASGCA

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ASGCA President Dan Maples. "We usually have a pretty good turnout. I'd say out of 100 members, we should have 60 to 70... It gives us a chance to see other courses as architects when we go to an area like that. You have 60 or 70 architects who are going to be playing three, four or five courses in that area. So that's part of our education, too."

Four associate members face a vote for full membership, and about 15 are applying for associate membership, Fullmer said.

Pointing to years in the past when there were no architects eligible for membership, Fullmer said, "Part of the golf boom is reflected in the number of our applications. Last year a record (seven) number of people were brought in. The society is changing quite dramatically."

Issues

ment, Ervin said, "I think it's just going to be a matter of time. I think like anything else, anything new: People are somewhat skeptical at first; and then you keep ... presenting information to them, and pretty soon they become convinced that this is really true."

But he said until then he is finding that some regulatory agencies "don't want to mitigate with you. They don't want to try to solve a problem" by finding ways to preserve a marsh, for instance. Rather, they will say, "You're not going to do this, period. If you want to, you're going to have to fight us." And that's probably the most frustrating point."

Griffiths said the environmental snags are affecting another of the crucial issues facing architects: costs of construction and maintenance.

"It's a bit scary," he said. "One of our major goals is to fight cost increases in construction of golf courses. Twenty years ago we could build a relatively difficult project for \$500,000. For the same project today, we're lucky to get it under \$2.5 million to \$2.8 million."

"We're very fortunate that in today's industry, a golf course venture can be a very lucrative business. Four or five years ago that was not the case. But as these things keep climbing it's going to make the economics of golf courses more and more difficult."

Griffiths cited as an example the Chi Chi Rodriguez course in Clearwater, Fla. The initial budget for drainage was about \$130,000. "When we got all done running the water every which direction to satisfy all these agencies that came in, the drainage budget had pushed \$500,000. That was literally 25 percent of the cost of the golf course."

Gary Panks of Phoenix, Ariz., one of seven people surveyed to point out the rising cost of construction as the major problem, contributed the escalation to recent trends in design.

"So many of the architects are trying to outdo their competitors, trying to make the golf courses more interesting, more photogenic. They have added more features, such elaborate waterfalls, that tend to raise the costs... We need to temper that enthusiasm for producing a new and exciting product with who's going to be using the golf course and can they afford the cost? Because all that cost has got to be passed on to the golfers, who pay the bill."

"I don't think you'll get any argument that the 15-20-handicap golfer is paying most of the bill."

Panks argued that it is "still possible to design a golf course to challenge the best players in the world and have a course that is suitable for the majority who are playing — such as Augusta National."

He added that highly contoured designs are "a lot more labor-intensive for the superintendents."

X.G. Hassenplug of Pittsburgh, Pa., agreed, saying the most critical issue was "to build and design

golf courses... at a reasonable cost," avoiding the "danger of pricing golf out of the market."

And John Watson of Lachute, Quebec, Canada, added that architects must "fulfill the need for more public facilities at reasonable costs!"

More than one architect pointed to quality help.

Robin Nelson of Honolulu, Hawaii, said, "Both quality contractors and architects are in short supply."

He explained that while many landscape architects are capable at their jobs, golf course design "is hard to grasp" and takes a lot of

experience.

Ron Fream, of Santa Rosa, Calif., said he feels the major issue is "to continue to provide high-quality levels of service while dealing with increasing volumes of work."

Still others — Johnny Miller, Ed Seay and Geoffrey Cornish — said keeping designs natural, playable and fun is the most critical issue.

Miller, of Los Angeles, said architects should keep designs natural and simple, eliminating artificial features, and make greens "more mellow."

Cornish, a former president of the ASGCA, said from his Amherst, Mass., headquarters, that the ma-

major task is "creating a golf course that is a true test for those who yearn to excel and at the same time provide a comfortable round for those out to relax and enjoy themselves."

Seay, Arnold Palmer's partner and another former ASGCA president, said architects should not lose sight of playability and fun.

In recent years, course designs have become too difficult, Seay said, "and I think that was because of the competition. One owner wanted to outdo the other owner, therefore putting the architect in the situation of being told to build a course tougher and better and

'Both quality contractors and architects are in short supply.'
— Robin Nelson

more talked-about than the one down the street."

"There's no question that most of the courses that are 'rated' are the ones that beat your brains out... But the average player doesn't have the skill or the time to put into his golf game to play that course. We've always considered fun as the primary thing and beauty the second..."

"My one thought on golf design of the '90s is 'wider.' "

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