

Nuisance water studied as water source for Nevada

By Peter Blais

LAS VEGAS, Nev. — University of Nevada researchers are studying ways to use untreated nuisance water to irrigate turf in the water-strapped Las Vegas valley.

The reclaimed liquid could water as much as 3,000 additional acres of golf courses and parks, according to researcher Robert Morris.

Nuisance water, Morris explained, is the salt-laden runoff from lawns of homes and businesses. Most of it collects in a perched water table 20 feet below the ground and travels west to east below the valley floor.

The water resurfaces in a wetland area of the eastern valley, before being dumped back into the Colorado River. Wetlands covered hundreds of acres before the recent development boom. The nuisance water has killed off all but about 12 acres, Morris said.

Still, grasses exist that could flourish in nuisance water, Morris noted. Some types of Bermudagrass can tolerate water with Electrical Conductivity levels (a measure of salinity) of 20 or more. The nuisance water's EC level ranges from nine to 15.

Some tall fescues also show promise of adapting to nuisance water, Morris added.

The one-year study will determine whether grass irrigated with nuisance water can be maintained in golf-course condition.

"We want to see what it will look like and how it will have to be managed," Morris said.

Superintendents would likely have to use more nuisance than potable water since stressed turf irrigated with high-saline water is more susceptible to disease, Morris predicted. Drainage water would also have to be checked closely to make sure salts weren't left behind in the

La Crosse CC's members vote to pursue plan for \$6M course

LA CROSSE, Wis. — La Crosse Country Club members apparently will golf on a new course east of Onalaska in 1995.

Members recently voted to pursue the new course proposal at a cost of \$6 million.

Local businessman Charles D. Gellat gave 163 acres to the country club, along with \$1.5 million to help develop the course. He will retain the land surrounding the course and develop homesites on the property.

La Crosse residents last November revoked the country club's lease on city-owned land. The city must buy for \$1.5 million the existing course and facilities when it takes over in 1984.

Country club officials may request annexation to the city of Onalaska because of possible water and sewer problems.

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soil.

But if just half of the available supply proved useable, it would be a major payoff for Las Vegas developers, who have trouble obtaining construction permits when plans call for water taken from the Colorado River. Las Vegas is already using 280,000 of its 300,000 acre-feet-per-year allotment, leaving little for future golf course development, Morris said.

"For years, nuisance water wasn't considered to be worth



Robert Morris

what we can do with it.' Here's a possibility."

The Las Vegas Water District is funding half the \$140,000 project and the university the

remainder. "The Water District has been great to work with," Morris said. The state considers nuisance water a resource, despite its poor quality. Developers would need a permit from the state engineer before tapping it. But the cost would be minimal, Morris said.

anything," the Nevada researcher said. "Our philosophy is, 'We've got this water, we can't get rid of it, so let's see

what we can do with it.' Here's a possibility."

Keeping the water in the eastern valley would be more cost efficient, Morris added. The 54-hole Sunrise Golf Course sits directly over a pocket of nuisance water and would be an ideal user,

Morris said.

Sunrise is converting from potable to effluent irrigation water, Morris said. Effluent costs about 70 cents per 1,000 gallons. The only cost of nuisance water would be pumping it out of the ground.

If courses turn their backs on nuisance water, no shortage of potential customers exists, Morris said.

"There's even talk of using it to fill canals that would be used to ferry visitors from casino to casino," he said.

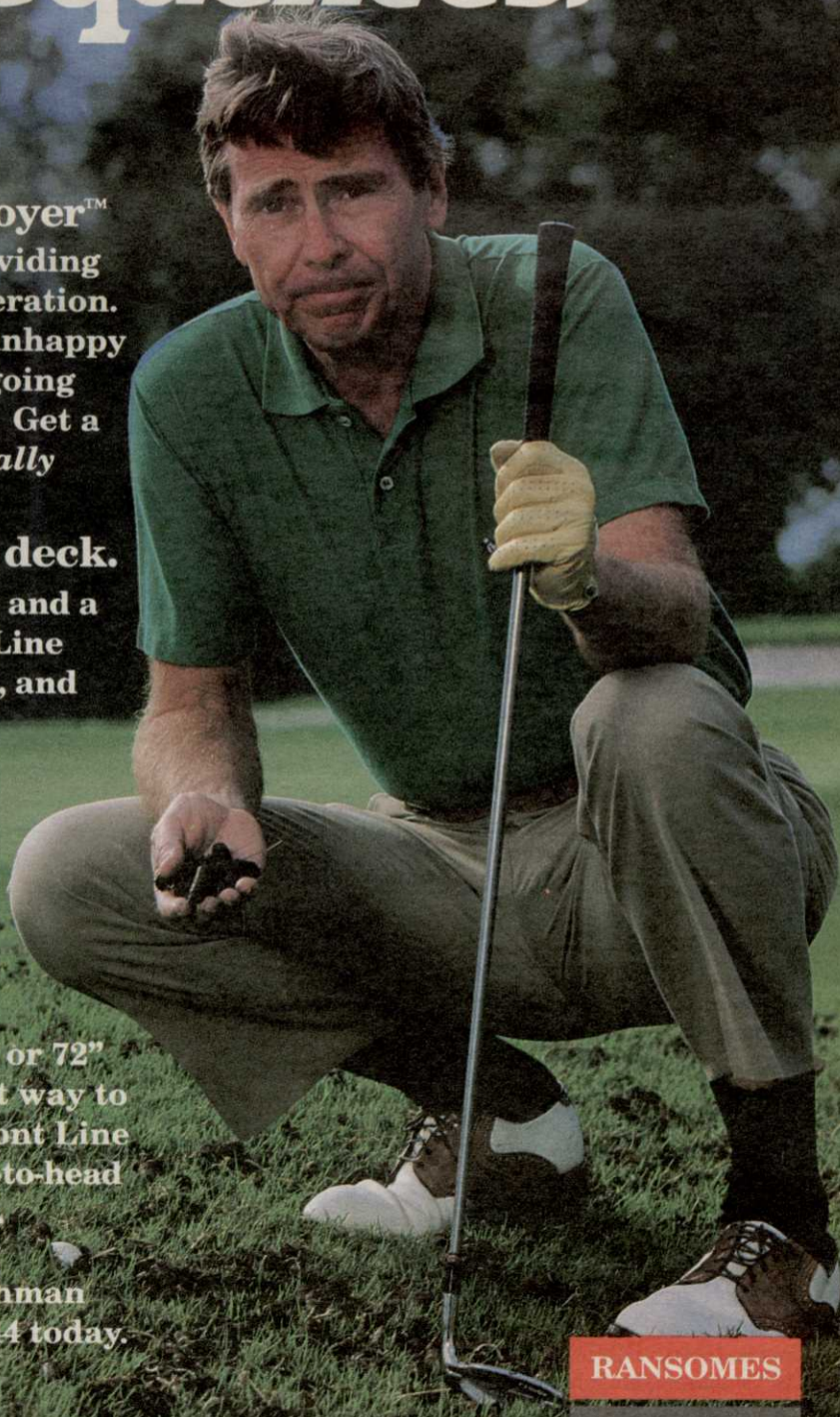
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