

# Beard ——— Navy to build course in Lemoore NAS

By Peter Blais

The U.S. Navy plans to seek bids from private companies to build and operate an 18-hole, championship golf course at the Naval Air Station at Lemoore near Fresno, Calif.

If Congress approves the project, which Navy Golf Program Manager Roger Patrick expected it to do in late January, the Navy will send out requests for proposals on the course, clubhouse and driving range.

The master jet base at Lemoore was selected for this unusual joint

military/civilian venture because of the base's stable population, the area's shortage of public golf opportunities and the availability of land along the base's perimeter, which could allow for civilian access to the course.

The Navy hopes the project will excite private developers, despite their lack of interest in renovating and managing the course at the Naval Air Station at Cecil Field near Jacksonville, Fla.

"Things just didn't match up at Cecil Field," Patrick said. "What the industry wanted back was more

than we were willing to give up."

The major sticking points at Cecil Field involved greens fees, civilian access and the timetable for renovations.

"We wanted the capital improvements up front rather than phased in slowly. The course did 47,000 rounds last year, so it wasn't a fire sale. The course will just make the improvements itself," Patrick said.

The Cecil Field project became less attractive to private developers because courses recently built in the Jacksonville area diluted the

market, Patrick said.

Too many courses shouldn't be a problem at Lemoore, where the nearest public course is a 45-minute drive.

Building a new course eliminates any capital improvement problems. And the possibility of civilian access should make Lemoore more attractive to private developers, Patrick said.

Golf is a profitable business for the Navy. The service's 59 courses showed a net profit of \$5.2 million in 1990, up 16.5 percent from the year before.

## RECREATIONAL BENEFITS

Recreational benefits of turf include better health of participants, protection against injury and a low-cost playing surface.

A \$1 million injury lawsuit has been filed against a town because it didn't maintain adequate turf to protect the plaintiff from injury. The cost of maintaining the turf would have been far less than the lawsuit, Beard argued.

The cushioning effect of natural turf has not been duplicated on artificial turf. Grass still supplies greater protection against injury, and at a much lower cost than artificial surfaces, Beard said.

In urban areas, town officials often contend they cannot afford to build recreation areas for inner-city youth because it is too expensive.

"But in the long term, what happens when you put these kids out on the street day after day after day. There's something about green grass that has a positive impact on the attitude of people versus hard, concrete streets.

"We say we can't afford green, recreational areas. And yet we'll turn around when a certain percentage of those people become part of the criminal element and spend great amounts of money putting them in jail for many years.

"What about some front-end investment to protect these kids and save the expense of ever having to put them in jail."

## ORNAMENTAL BENEFITS

Turf provides ornamental benefits, complementing trees, shrubs and ornamentals. That's why, Beard said, he finds it so frustrating when the tree, shrub and ornamental people work against the turfgrass industry.

"They need to get back with us in speaking out on the overall benefits of landscaping instead of having active programs trying to reduce one segment of the industry," he said.

Other ornamental benefits include improving beauty and aesthetics, mental health, social harmony, work productivity, physical health and quality of life, especially in urban areas where 85 percent of Americans live.

"Properly maintained lawns and recreational turfs contribute a diverse array of benefits that make turfgrass one of the best friends of urban environmentalists and greatly enhances the quality of life," he concluded.

"...Watertronics saved us money and time."



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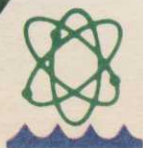
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*Bruce J. Worzella*

Bruce Worzella, CGCS  
West Bend Country Club

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