

# Building a cooperative atmosphere new EPA golf official's goal

Golf industry, agencies, environmental groups and neighbors share many of same goals, Scott says

By PETER BLAIS

Building a coalition between the golf industry, environmental groups, consumers and the Environmental Protection Agency is the primary goal of the EPA's new public liaison officer for golf course issues.

The chance for cooperation exists because the four groups share a common goal, a healthy environment, said Michael Scott, recently named the EPA's first liaison officer for agriculture and golf.

Like any outdoor sport, golf is dependent on a healthy environment, Scott said. If a course's air isn't clean or water pure, golfers won't come. So the golf industry and EPA want the same thing. Yet, often, they are at odds.

"The agency has really missed out on an opportunity in outdoor recreation over the years. Every outdoor sport has an environmental interest," the 20-year veteran of the EPA's public affairs office said.

Scott said his job will be to make sure the EPA recognizes the golf industry as a potential friend, rather than an enemy. National EPA Director William Reilly has done much to foster a cooperative attitude among business and environmental groups, he said.

The national office's recent approval of the Homestead Resort project in upstate Michigan showed the EPA will cooperate with the golf industry if circumstances warrant it, Scott said.

"But we'll look at things on an issue-by-issue basis and do what we have to do," he said. "Inevitably, some decisions will leave environmentalists saying we're siding with business while others will leave business people complaining we're crippling their industry."

Like liaison officers in other EPA divisions, Scott will be responsible for informing industry associations, manufacturers and suppliers how proposed EPA regulations could affect them.

"If a golf course pesticide was being considered for cancellation, I'd go to the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, U.S. Golf Association and businesses to inform them of any possible cancellation order," he said.

Other issues Scott will deal with include promoting less-toxic pesticides and other alternatives to chemical and fertilizer use; interpreting wetland regulations; and informing the industry how possible Clean Air Act legislation could affect the golf industry.

"Our research could lead to regulations on off-road and small-engine emission controls later this

year," he said. "That could affect tractor, mower and gas-powered golf car makers."

Scott said he can also help "penetrate the EPA bureaucracy and tell people who they should be dealing with."

"One out of 10 times I'll know the answer to a question," Scott said. "More often I'll be able to put the caller in touch with the right person."

"Environmental problems have become so complex that there are many overlaps in responsibility. Back in the early 1970s, things

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- Mike Scott

EPA golf liaison officer



were easily segmented. Air pollution belonged to one division and water pollution to another.

"Things are not as easily compartmentalized now. Ground water, for instance, is a major concern of four EPA

offices — pesticides, water resources, toxic waste-Superfund, and resource conservation and recovery. Who knows what department they should contact when they call? That's where I can help."

In the future, EPA would like to move away from specific regulatory formulation and toward conceptual environmental planning, Scott said.

"We'd rather bring groups together to share ideas rather than taking specific action," he said.

"The big thing around here right now is pollution prevention. Mr. Reilly has us looking at everything we can do to prevent pollution before it occurs rather than just cleaning it up all the time."

