

Experts say science played little part in Klein's research work

By MARK LESLIE

Richard Klein's springboard to national acceptance and recognition as an expert in protecting the aquatic environment was a speech to the United States Golf Association. His invitation to speak came as a result of a paper he authored: Protecting the Aquatic Environment from the Effects of Golf Courses. Yet scientists say that paper is fraught with guesswork, laden with unscientific generalizations — and is, one said, "garbage."

Golf course architect Dr. Michael

Hurdzan, who holds a Ph.D in environmental plant physiology, said the paper is "an unscholarly work written by a layperson who selectively chose phrases and passages to make points and reach conclusions which were invalid."

Referring to the basis of Klein's study — 11 golf courses he tests in Maryland — Daft McCune Walker Vice President David Locke said Klein tested a stream at Baltimore Country Club that is the conduit for city water.

"He tested a portion of a stream

that uses chlorinated water from the city to supplement their irrigation ponds, so I'm not surprised he didn't get good counts.

"Also, he only tested at the courses. He didn't test upstream. Plus, the courses he tested tend to be in the lowlands downstream of farming communities ... most of which are fed by hundreds and hundreds of acres of drainage areas draining agricultural fields."

Locke said his firm therefore discounted a lot of what Klein reported. Stuart Cohen, president of Envi-

ronmental & Turf Services, Inc., in Wheaton, Md., said when Klein quoted a runoff study done by Drs. Harrison and Watschke at Penn State, he failed to indicate that the runoff was generated by six inches of simulated rainfall in one hour, an event expected to occur once in every several centuries.

One colleague at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources who worked with Klein thinks highly of him.

"He is extremely bright and pretty much self-taught," said Howard

King, program chief for recreational and commercial fisheries at the DNR.

However, King said that in determining the effects of a golf course on a waterway he would "certainly want to know" its condition upstream from a golf course as well as downstream. Klein did not get upstream readings.

He admitted to "a lot of uncertainties expressed in that publication," but added: "I tried to be as honest as I could in interpreting the data and interpreting the feedback that I got from people who knew much more about the specific part of the golf course than I do..."

Klein said he thought he did "a pretty good job in the publication making it clear that there are a lot of uncertainties associated with pesticides coming from a golf course."

Klein on the attack

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state and sometimes the county government. I don't know what set of rules he's playing by."

Birney said: "Rather than having to prove a point ... all a guy like Klein has to do is confuse the issues and keep [the project] dragging along until the developer says, 'Forget it.'"

The problem, said Cohen, is that laymen on planning and zoning boards know no better than to believe Klein.

"To a layperson they think he [Klein] knows what he's talking about. To a scientist, he's often wrong," he said.

A SOFTENING?

Diamond Ridge's Murphy, who has worked with Klein in Save Our Streams for eight years, said, "In the beginning it was Richard's natural presumption that superintendents were bad actors. Over the years he asked questions on how you did this and that and techniques of eliminating pesticides, things like that.

"He's come a long way."

Murphy said Klein and a member of the Audubon Society recently studied a stream on his course and "it is the first documented case" of a golf course use accelerating water improvement.

"He's [Klein] making a living on one side of the equation. But I think he was pleasantly surprised when he did this study," Murphy said.

For his part, perhaps Klein is coming around.

"I'm impressed with all the great work the USGA (United States Golf Association) is doing, and the GCSAA (Golf Course Superintendents Association of America) ...," Klein said. "Frankly, I believe pesticides are a relatively minor concern. Unfortunately, there is a big emotional reaction to them on the part of people who come to me as clients."

Does he tell his prospective clients that? He did not return repeated phone calls made to ask him that and other questions.



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