

Study compares maintenance budgets nationwide

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number of facilities known for high-quality maintenance programs in each region. The NGF foresees the publication as a help to golf course owners, developers, prospective buyers and club members.

For instance, it states:

- In the Southeast, water management districts are requiring new and existing golf courses to begin using reclaimed water within the next five years; and because equipment inven-

tories have swelled, many courses have hired a second mechanic.

- In the Midwest and Northeast, private new course development is shifting from the residential community/golf course type of development, to the strictly membership-owned golf course and country club. The economy, and lack of usable land, have caused developers to scale back to "core" golf course operations.

- Surface drainage of fairways and roughs is now a major

consideration for new course construction in the Northwest. Surface runoff, in combination with internal drains to lakes and water features, is used for irrigation. Because this was not done on many older courses, the result has been "soggy, often unplayable courses during rainy periods, with a resulting loss in revenue."

- It is not uncommon for courses in the Southwest to spend more than \$1 million for an irrigation system and pumping

station, with a drainage infrastructure in excess of \$200,000 per 18 holes.

"If used properly," Hinckley said, "the report provides operators with a benchmark for taking a course to the next level of conditioning."

He added that the book "emphasizes that your maintenance budget may be the biggest expense at a golf course. In fact, most healthy golf operations tend to have the maintenance budget as their most expensive line item—even above debt service.

"It also shows how complicated

maintenance is and how important it is to have good quality people."

Because of different terrain, weather conditions, grasses and membership demands, there is "no magic cost" for a well-maintained course, Hinckley said. "But if you are building a good golf course and you spend lots of money to get an expensive designer, it's all meaningless unless you spend the money necessary to maintain it."

The agronomists who conducted the survey provide an overview of each region, along with budget and labor trends, environmental factors concerning maintenance, water use, turfgrass use, pest and disease problems, machinery uses and professional training.

"The maintenance costs at a well-conditioned facility on the coast may be dramatically different from a facility away from the coast. This guide will help explain the variation and shape future cost projections," said Steve Batten of Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., who coordinated the panel of agronomists.

Among the panel's findings:

- In the Southeast, the installation of subsurface drainage systems has become standard practice.

- In the Midwest and Northeast, more and more public facilities are opting for bentgrass instead of bluegrass and ryegrass on their fairways and tees.

- In the Northwest, operators are frequently top dressing fairways to create better surface runoff and improve turfgrass and playing conditions.

- In the Southwest, most facilities being built have continuous cart paths for better traffic control and to save wear and tear on the course.

With the thought that superintendents might use it, the report's price was cut to \$20 for NGF members and \$35 for non-members, Hinckley said.

The NGF, located at 1150 South U.S. Highway One here, expects to release another publication in early October, "Golf Operations and Statistical Report."

"That could become the statistical book that this one is not," he said, adding that the daily-fee course report will be available first, followed shortly thereafter by the report on private courses.

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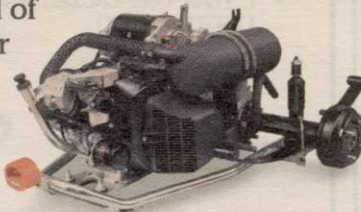
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*As reported by the Center for Golf Course Management, a subsidiary of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

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Tourney benefits Delaware bay

BETHANY BEACH, Del. — Salt Pond Golf Club sponsored a Birdie for the Bays '93 golf tournament on Sept. 27 to benefit Delaware's inland bays.

Proceeds from the \$50 per person event will be split between the Delaware Inland Bays Estuary Program and the Chesapeake Bay Studies Program at the Gunston School in Centreville, Md.